



Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

# Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities

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OF DEBATE IN PLENARY ON 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2016**

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# Powers and Membership

## Powers

The Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Assembly Standing Order 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and has a role in the initiation, consideration and development of legislation.

The Committee has the power to:

Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;

Approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of the primary legislation;

Call for persons and papers;

Initiate inquiries and make reports; and

Consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

## Membership

The Committee has 11 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, with a quorum of five members.

The current membership of the Committee is as follows:

Committee Chairperson: Nelson McCausland<sup>5</sup>

Deputy Chairperson: Gordon Dunne<sup>6</sup>

William Humphrey<sup>3</sup>

David Hilditch

Cathal Ó hOisín

Rosaleen McCorley<sup>2</sup>

Karen McKevitt

Dominic Bradley

Oliver McMullan<sup>1</sup>

Basil McCrea<sup>4</sup>

Leslie Cree<sup>7</sup>

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1 With effect from 12 September 2011 Mr Oliver McMullan replaced Mr Gerry Kelly

2 With effect from 10 September 2012 Ms Rosaleen McCorley replaced Mr Pat Sheehan

3 With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr William Humphrey replaced Ms Brenda Hale

4 With effect from 04 March 2013 Mr Basil McCrea replaced Mr Robin Swann

5 With effect from 23 September 2014 Mr Nelson McCausland replaced Ms Michelle McIlveen as Chairperson

6 With effect from 23 September 2014 Mr Gordon Dunne replaced Mr William Irwin as Deputy Chairperson

7 With effect from 06 October 2014 Mr Leslie Cree replaced Mr Michael McGimpsey

## List of Abbreviations used in the Report

A&B NI	- Arts & Business NI
ABSA	- Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts
ACE	- Arts Council England
ACNI	- Arts Council of Northern Ireland
AfA	- Arts for All
ART	- Aggression Related Trauma
ASD	- Autism Spectrum Disorder
BBC	- British Broadcasting Company
BEAT	- Black Experience Archive Trust
BME	- Black and Minority Ethnic
CAC	- Crescent Arts Centre
CAF	- Community Arts Forum
CAP	- Communities Arts Partnership
CAPtabase	- CommunityArtsPartnership-tabase
CASH	- Community Arts Funding
CAW	- Community Arts Weekly
CAYT	- Crescent Arts Youth Theatre
CCA	- Centre for Community Art
CCG	- Connswater Community Greenway
CFNI	- Community Foundation Northern Ireland
CHS	- Continuous Household Survey
CIIF	- Creative Industries Innovation Fund
CIS	- Creative Industries School

CLC	- Creative Learning Centre
CPD	- Certificate of Professional Development
CSR	- Corporate Social Responsibility
CYP	- Creative Youth Partnership
DCAL	- Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure
DCMS	- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEL	- Department for Employment and Learning
DENI	- Department of Education Northern Ireland
DFA	- Digital Film Archive
DHSSPS	- Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DoE	- Department of Environment
DSD	- Department for Social Development
EBAF	- East Belfast Arts Festival
EBP	- East Belfast Partnership
ELCCP	- East Lancashire Community Cohesion Project
ELCCP	- East London & City Culture Partnership
EQIA	- Equality Impact Assessment
ESC	- Educational Shakespeare Centre
ETI	- Education Training Inspectorate
FE	- Further Education
GLA	- Greater London Authority
GLTB	- Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Bisexual
GPS	- General Population Survey
HLF	- Heritage Lottery Fund

HLO	- Hub Lead Organisation
HSC	- Health and Social Care
IMD	- Index of Multiple Deprivation
ISAN UK	- International Standard Audiovisual Number United Kingdom
JAM	- Junior Academy of Music
LGBT	- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LGD	- Local Government Districts
LGR	- Local Government Reform
LMA	- London Metropolitan Archives
LSE/UMIST	- London School of Economics/University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology
LSOA	- Lower layer Super Output Areas
MADE	- Music, Art Dance and Everything in between
MAG	- Ministerial Advisory Group
MDM	- Multiple Deprivation Measure
NDCS	- National Deaf Children's Society
NEET	- Not in Education, Training or Employment
NICFC	- Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children
NICVA	- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIEA	- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIMDM	- Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure
NISRA	- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NITA	- Northern Ireland Theatre Association
NITB	- Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NS-SEC	- National Statistics Socio-economic Classification

NV	- Northern Visions
NvTv	- Northern Visions Television
OFMdFM	- Office for the First Minister and deputy First Minister
OU	- Open University
PFG	- Program for Government
PICAS	- Programme for InterCultural Arts Support
PMLD	- Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties
PRONI	- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
PwC Report	- PricewaterhouseCoopers Report
QFT	- Queens Film Theatre
QoL	- Quality of Life
QUB	- Queen's University Belfast
RFO	- Regularly Funded Organisations
RPA	- Rural Payments Agency
RSA	- Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
SARC	- Sonic Arts Research Centre
SASH	- Shankill Area Social History group
SEN	- Special Education Needs
SHS	- Scottish Household Survey
SIAP	- Support for the Individual Artist Programme
SLIG	- Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group
SOA	- Super Output Area
SOAS	- School of Oriental and African Studies
SROI	- Social Return on Investment

THE	- Times Higher Education
TOM	- Targeting Older Men
TSN	- Targeting Social Need
UAYD	- Ulster Association of Youth Drama
UNCRC	- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USDT	- Upper Springfield Development Trust
VCS	- Voluntary and Community Sector
VIP	- Volunteer Inclusion Programme
VOYPIC	- Voice of Young People in Care
WEA	- Workers Educational Organisational
WIMD	- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
WOMAD	- World of Music, Art and Dance
YAA	- Young Arts Academy
YEHA	- Youth, Education, Health and Advice
YPBAS	- Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey



## Executive Summary

The core motivation for the Committee undertaking its inquiry into inclusion in the arts of working class communities is Members' strong belief in the benefits that participation and inclusion in arts activity can bring to individuals and communities. Such benefits include health and wellbeing, the development of personal and community capacity and skills and a range of other socio-economic benefits. To this end it is important to the Committee that everyone in the community has regular access to the arts and the benefits these provide. This sentiment was echoed by the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín when she briefed the Committee for this inquiry:

*"The arts are not a luxury to be enjoyed by an elite few; they should be enjoyed by all who wish to enjoy them regardless of community background, age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, political opinion or income level".*

The Committee does not believe that access to the arts and culture should be diluted for working class communities. The arts should be part of the everyday lives of all of those who live here. However, the Committee also acknowledges that people cannot and should not be forced to engage with the arts and culture.

Prior to undertaking this inquiry, the Committee had received briefing on social exclusion in the arts in Northern Ireland. The briefing particularly focused on engagement in areas of high deprivation and made comparisons with other jurisdictions. It also considered the potential benefits of widening engagement with the arts. The research strongly suggested that inclusion in the arts is lower for those in disadvantaged communities. However, the evidence provided to this inquiry suggests that the situation is much more complex. Research tends to focus on ticketed events where data can be more easily gathered and does not deal with more informal, unticketed arts events. The Committee is aware through the evidence it has gathered for this inquiry that working class communities often engage with informal, unticketed arts and culture events, and that members of these communities would not necessarily regard these events as "the arts"; rather they see them as part of their cultural identity. Members are clear that there is a great deal of arts and cultural activity going on in working class communities; however, this inquiry has a greater focus on how working class communities are engaged by arts and cultural venues.

The purpose of this inquiry is to examine the accessibility and outreach activity of arts venues and bodies and how these impact on inclusion in the arts of working class communities. The Committee's aim was to pinpoint and understand barriers to inclusion in the arts faced by members of working class communities and to seek ways to overcome these. In doing this the Committee also sought out best practice.

A number of respondents to the inquiry questioned the Committee's use of the term "working class", indicating that other socio-economic terms or measures might be more appropriate. However, the Committee used this term as it was agreed that it had greater resonance with the communities that Members wanted to hear from and that it was a more common phrase. However, throughout this inquiry report the terms "marginalised", "disadvantaged", and "deprived" are also used to describe these communities.

In this report the Committee does not use a specific index to measure deprivation or disadvantage because such indices were not widely referred to in submissions to the inquiry. It will be for those developing an Arts and Culture Strategy to decide specific indices that are most appropriate to gauge deprivation and disadvantage with respect to the aims of the Strategy.

The Committee heard from a wide range of bodies, organisations, and individuals while gathering evidence for this inquiry. These included the key arts venues in Belfast, such as The MAC and the Lyric, the Crescent Arts Centre etc., as well as arts and culture venues from all over Northern Ireland. The Committee also heard from pillars of Northern Ireland's culture landscape, such as the Ulster Orchestra. A great deal of key evidence was received from individuals, both practitioners and participants in the arts. Executive Departments also contributed, such as OFMDFM, DCAL, DEL, DETI and DHSSPS; as well as key Arm's Length Bodies such as Libraries NI, National Museums NI, NI Screen etc. The Committee also hosted two very successful discussion events for the inquiry: one at the Flowerfield Arts Centre in Portstewart; and the other at the Lyric Theatre. The Committee is grateful to those who made such a useful contribution to the inquiry at these events.

Through this inquiry the Committee identified a number of broad barriers to working class communities being included in the arts. These are: economic/financial barriers; barriers linked to geography or location; educational barriers; barriers around the availability and structure of funding for the sector; barriers with respect to awareness and information; lack of value placed on the arts; and community, cultural, or psychological barriers. Obviously some of these barriers are beyond the control of the communities the inquiry focuses on; however, there are many barriers that can only be eroded with the active co-operation of the communities and individuals in question.

It was clear from the evidence that the Committee received that there is no shortage of arts and cultural activity going on here and that it is often best practice. It is also clearly dispersed right across Northern Ireland, both in urban and in rural areas. However, the evidence also showed the Committee that there is a need for a co-ordinated and over-arching approach to the arts and culture. This must come in the form of an Executive Strategy that is supported and resourced by all the relevant departments and ALBs. The Committee believes that the arts and culture can and should be part of the work carried out by government on a daily basis, both centrally and locally. That is why the creation of an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy is the key recommendation of this inquiry and why the majority of the other recommendations are based on the development of such a strategy.

Part of the purpose of this inquiry was to compare the situation in both rural and urban working class communities. It is apparent that, while there are complex sets of barriers to inclusion in the arts for both, rural working class communities face particular difficulties and that is why the Committee believes that rural-proofing of any approach to providing greater opportunities for inclusion in the arts and cultural activities. In the same vein, the Committee is conscious that those with special needs and/or disabilities faced particular challenges in accessing and engaging with the arts, but this is much more acute for those living in rural working class communities. Again, this is an issue that must be addressed when strategies around participation

in the arts and cultural activities are been developed; and this should include partnership with local councils.

The Committee has long been of the view that it would be advantageous if publicly owned art could be brought back into the communities from which it originated. The Committee is also aware that there is a great deal of publicly owned art that is never accessible to view. The evidence received for this inquiry showed the Committee that there is a need for art to be brought to people and to be available in places that they access on a daily basis, such as schools or libraries, or other public buildings or spaces. Members understand that there are a great number of logistical and other issues around doing this; however, it is important that these are overcome this kind of initiative would provide access to art without the transport costs and unfamiliarity of going to a gallery, museum, or other arts venue to see it.

The inquiry showed the Committee that partnership is necessary to ensure that access to and participation in the arts and culture is widened out as much as possible. This will mean partnerships between the Executive Departments, partnerships between government and the arts and culture sectors, partnerships between arts and cultural venues and local communities and partnerships between central and local government and the communities that they serve; and also a better understanding better arts and business must be facilitated to allow funding and expertise to flow. Opportunities for community organisations to partner up around funding applications and sharing funding also need to be established.

Partnership must also be the basis for funding the arts and culture. When funding is being considered it must last for periods that are appropriate to the creation of enduring relationships in communities and lasting project legacy. All these partnerships must be based on clearly understood aims and objectives and expected outcomes. It is only through this carefully considered framework and through taking a strategic approach that disadvantaged communities will be presented with greater opportunities with respect to arts and cultural activity. Disadvantaged communities must have a strong voice in deciding how they will be best served.

Evidence from the arts and cultural venues and bodies in particular illustrated the need to have professional arts practitioners going into communities to engage directly with groups and individuals. This inquiry has shown that such activity is key in showing disadvantaged communities what the arts and culture can offer them. However, the Committee has also learned that such activity is both labour and resource intensive and must be funded over a reasonable period to allow it to be embedded and for worthwhile legacy to be achieved. Exposure to this activity from an early age is also key and the Committee is clear that children and young people must have regular planned access to the arts and cultural experiences. Access at an early age is more likely to allow an interest to develop and is also more likely to provide mitigation against family or community antipathy or apathy towards the arts.

The Committee also heard that it is important that after interesting young people in the arts that they are provided with recognisable pathways to access careers in the sectors. This is an issue that the Committee considered during a previous inquiry into maximising the potential of the creative industries here. This will require proper investment and incorporation into the education curriculum at all key stages.

The inquiry highlights the need to greater information. This means better data-gathering on who is attending what kinds of arts and cultural activities and events so that a strategic approach can be taken to encouraging greater participation and engagement, particularly for hard-to-reach communities. Additionally, the inquiry showed the need for better and more information on what is available in terms of the arts and culture. Evidence suggests that this kind of information is more likely to be accessed by working class communities if it is available electronically or through social media. This is also likely to be an effective way to recruit volunteers for the arts and culture from working class communities. This inquiry has shown that volunteering is a useful way to build confidence and capability in both individuals and communities. It is therefore essential that encouraging volunteering is part of any strategic approach to widening access to, participation in, and engagement with, the arts and culture. The Committee sees the natural extension of this as the encouragement of these volunteers to seek positions on the boards of arts organisations. The Committee appreciates that this will require a great deal of support; however, it is the best way to ensure that arts organisations and venues take on board the views and needs of disadvantaged communities.

From undertaking this inquiry the Committee has realised that there are no simple answers to ensuring that there is greater social inclusion in the arts. However, Members offer this report as a strategic way forward to achieve the aim of greater inclusivity.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. In order to democratise the arts and culture and create the widest possible inclusion, the Committee strongly recommends that an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy is brought forward that is owned, supported, facilitated, and resourced by all the Executive Departments. This Strategy should be innovative and should be cognisant of existing arts and culture strategies across departments, avoiding any duplication of effort or resources. The Strategy should operate in a similar way to the Programme for Government, with co-ordinated targets, key performance indicators, and a monitoring and review process.
2. The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is thoroughly 'rural-proofed' and adequately resourced to ensure that disadvantaged rural communities are able to access and participate in arts and cultural activities and events on the same basis as their urban peers. This will also help to redress the current imbalance.
3. While individuals and groups with disabilities and/or special needs were not the key focus of this inquiry's terms of reference, the Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is thoroughly 'proofed' and adequately resourced with these individuals and groups in mind.
4. The Committee further recommends that this Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should seek to creatively bring publicly owned art to public buildings and spaces to allow all communities to enjoy and be inspired by locally relevant art. Particular focus should be given to using our schools and libraries as exhibition spaces and arts and culture hubs, and creating partnerships between museums, schools and libraries to bring the arts and culture to young people in disadvantaged communities.
5. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy creates specific partnerships with the theatres and theatre companies to facilitate them working with disadvantaged communities. Any Memoranda of Understanding between the Executive and these bodies should set out clearly what is expected of them, with targets and a monitoring regime. Partnerships should also be appropriately resourced.
6. The Committee recommends that the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy has a specific strand which examines and seeks to address the particular difficulties that face disadvantaged rural communities when trying to access the arts and cultural activities.
7. The Committee recommends that the Department and the Arts Council examine options for ensuring that community groups in disadvantaged areas are consulted on the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy; and that this consultation continues with respect to the delivery and continued evolution of the Strategy. This consultation should include groups from all over Northern Ireland and there should be a balance between rural and urban participants.
8. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy examines how best the 'Test Drive the Arts' scheme can be developed further to

widen access to the arts to disadvantaged communities, particularly with regard to those in rural areas . It would also be worth the Strategy exploring the idea of 'social clauses' for publicly funded performance venues; however, resources would have to be provided through the Strategy to support this.

9. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should tackle the issue of providing access to a range of musical genres for disadvantaged communities. To facilitate young people and musical groups/bands in disadvantaged communities, the Strategy should also look at how the provision of costly equipment, such as musical instruments, might be facilitated.
10. The Committee recommends that a transportation strand is developed as part of the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy to ensure access for disadvantaged communities, and also young people and rural communities. Consideration should be given as to how existing public service transport provision might be utilised.
11. The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is underpinned by access to arts and cultural activities and events through the school curriculum at all Key Stages. Education has a key role to play in the Strategy and this role should be supported by the development of Memoranda of Understanding with key pillars of our arts and culture infrastructure, such as libraries, museums, music, bodies, public service broadcasting, the publicly funded theatres and others. The substance for these Memoranda must be properly resourced to the benefit of all young people, but particular focus should be on young people in working class communities.
12. The Committee further recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy develops clear pathways into arts and culture-focused careers through the expansion of existing apprenticeships and the creation of new ones. Additionally, the Strategy should examine creative ways to use digital technology, gaming etc., and existing bodies which promote the application of technology, as well as existing activity in the creative industries here to further develop employment in the sector.
13. The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy considers the issue of the short length of cycles for funding and other criteria around the awarding of grants that makes the development of project legacy difficult. The Committee suggests that the Strategy examines the use of tiered funding periods which take account of the levels of deprivation in the target community and the need for legacy work. Additionally, the Strategy should build on work already being undertaken to build capacity in community-based groups applying for funding, particularly groups based in disadvantaged communities.
14. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy supports the development of funding and 'in-kind' relationships between business and arts and culture organisations, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. Consideration must be given as to how Invest NI might encourage participation in these relationships when providing Foreign Direct Investment and other grants to their clients. Consideration should also be given to the creation of a specific central and local government fund for the promotion of participation in

the arts and culture by disadvantaged communities. This fund would target groups in disadvantaged communities using specific, relevant funding criteria and minimal application paperwork.

15. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy seeks to develop better data gathering around participation in arts and cultural activities so that information about these can be better targeted at new audiences, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. Consideration must be given to undertaking this in partnership with local councils.
16. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy supports the development of an online arts and culture platform where funding partners can find each other. To be effective and have a full reach across Northern Ireland this platform must be developed in conjunction with local councils.
17. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy establishes a digital platform that promotes participation in arts and cultural activities and events across central and local government and the private sector. Such a platform requires considerable promotion and should be cognisant of lessons provided by similar platforms. Such a platform would provide the added benefit of being a one-stop-shop for tourists seeking such activities and events. The ability to access arts and cultural activities, performances and events via such a platform is more likely to encourage participation by disadvantaged, hard-to-reach, and other less traditional arts audiences.
18. The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Cultural Strategy seeks to support and resource theatres and arts centres to develop outreach and access projects within their local communities. This should be undertaken in conjunction with local councils with the aim of encompassing all publicly funded arts and cultural venues. The development of relationships between these arts and culture hubs and their local communities to create familiarity and overcome barriers which inhibit participation. A second element of this must be support to facilitate performances and exhibitions from local communities in the venues. This would have the effect of giving local people a feeling of 'ownership' of the venues, so minimizing the intimidation factor. A further element of this should be the consideration of the possible location and delivery of venues for community culture and arts usage.
19. The Committee recommends that there is a volunteering strand for disadvantaged communities in the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy. This will allow the development of capacity and employability skills in disadvantaged communities and also have the added benefit of increasing disadvantaged communities' exposure to arts and cultural activities in their own communities.
20. The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should be underpinned by a strategic partnership with local councils. This will facilitate a more joined-up approach, activities and resourcing with respect to the arts. Consideration should be given to the Executive entering into Memoranda of Understanding with each of the local councils, which would include targets and responsibilities, to ensure tangible delivery on these strategic partnerships and will feed into the councils' community plans.

21. The Committee recommends that the Executive re-examines the processes for recruiting and appointing members to the boards of public bodies. The Committee believes that the current processes limit the likelihood of representation from disadvantaged communities on these boards; and, as a consequence, the voices of these communities are often not heard in the development of public policy.
22. The Committee recommends that the Department/Executive undertakes research into the development of Service Level Agreements between government and local arts providers to integrate arts into service provision for marginalised people, particularly the young. This would place the arts on the same footing as health, education, and social statutory providers.



## Introduction

## Background

1. On the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure (“the Committee”) agreed to conduct an inquiry into inclusion in the arts of working class communities. This decision followed on from some of the findings that the Committee had made in its inquiry into Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries, particularly around the ability of those in disadvantaged communities to access the creative industries and career pathways into these. The Committee had also received a briefing from RalSe in the latter part of 2013 which examined social exclusion in the arts in Northern Ireland. This provoked further discussion amongst Members, leading to the decision to examine the level of inclusion in the arts of working class, or disadvantaged/marginalised, communities.
2. The Committee agreed the objective and terms of reference for the inquiry on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013; and that the focus of the inquiry should be seeking ways to ensure that disadvantaged communities have regular and meaningful access to the arts.
3. A number of respondents to the inquiry questioned the Committee’s use of the term ‘working class’, indicating that other socio-economic terms or measures might be more appropriate. The Committee used this term as it was agreed that it had greater resonance with the communities that the Committee wanted to hear from and that it reflected common parlance. However, throughout this inquiry report the terms ‘marginalised’, ‘disadvantaged’, and ‘deprived’ are also used to describe these communities.
4. Additionally, the Committee did not use a specific index to measure disadvantage. This is because such indices were not widely referred to in the responses to the inquiry that the Committee received. It will be for those developing an Arts and Culture Strategy to decide the specific index that is most appropriate to gauge disadvantage with respect to the aims of the Strategy.
5. At its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Committee agreed to make a further and final timebound call for evidence based on the terms of reference to ensure submissions from the widest range of stakeholders, both in terms of sectors and geographically. It was agreed that these submissions would form a separate annex to the inquiry. It was also agreed that the Committee’s Twitter feed should be utilised to publicise the call.
6. Also at the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the Committee agreed to include the Rural Development Programme in the annexes to the inquiry report as a reference for how the arts and culture can be supported in rural communities.
7. During the Confederation of Ulster Bands briefing to the Committee, some Members’ questions to the witnesses were ruled not permissible by the Committee Chairperson. An amendment to the Inquiry report was suggested

by Ms McCorley to reflect this issue; however, it was not agreed by the Committee. The suggested amendment can be found [here](#).

## Objective and Terms of Reference

8. The purpose of the inquiry is to examine the accessibility and outreach activity of arts venues and bodies. The inquiry will further seek to establish the impact of these on the inclusion in the arts of working class communities. Overall, the aim of the inquiry is to pinpoint and understand barriers to inclusion in the arts faced by members of working class communities and to make recommendations as to how these might be overcome.
9. The Terms of Reference for the inquiry are below:
10. Investigate the accessibility of the arts in Northern Ireland to working class communities and to ascertain the key challenges and barriers to the involvement of those communities in the arts;
11. Examine the outreach activity of our arts venues and bodies with respect to how they make a meaningful contribution to social inclusion within working class communities; including the degree to which they can help tackle particular social issues;
12. Identify any examples of good practice in accessibility and outreach work – either within Northern Ireland or elsewhere – which could usefully be replicated by arts venues and bodies here; and
13. Make recommendations for improvements in policies, delivery mechanisms and collaboration among key stakeholders which will maximise the potential of our arts venues and bodies to address social inclusion issues in both urban and rural working class communities and across communities in Northern Ireland.

## The Committee's Approach

14. The Committee launched its inquiry on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013, making a specific call for evidence from identified key stakeholders and a general call for evidence through the Assembly's website, *Facebook* and the Committee's *Twitter* account.
15. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014, the Committee took oral evidence from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, with the Minister leading the briefing.
16. The Committee was also briefed on two occasions by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the body charged with developing the arts locally.
17. The Committee also considered over 40 responses to its inquiry. It further considered oral evidence from 24 stakeholders in addition to the Department

and the Arts Council. These stakeholder briefings took place between April 2014 and January 2015.

18. Two stakeholder events were also held with discussions structured around questions derived from the inquiry terms of reference. The first of these took place on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at the Flowerfield Arts Centre in Portstewart. The second was held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at the Lyric Theatre. More than 50 organisations/individuals were represented over the two events.
19. The Committee visited the Flowerfield Arts Centre, the Lyric Theatre, and the Spectrum Centre during this inquiry. The Committee also undertook a visit to the new Performing Arts and Technology Innovation Centre at the Bangor campus of the South Eastern Regional College to see how career pathways into the arts can be facilitated.
20. Submissions received, minutes of evidence and research papers commissioned by the Committee can be found in the Appendices to this report.

## **Acknowledgements**

21. The Committee would like to express and record its appreciation and thanks to all those organisations and individuals who submitted written evidence, gave oral evidence, attended stakeholder events, contributed to the launch of the inquiry, or supported the Committee's visits with respect to the inquiry.

## **Consideration of Evidence**

### **Context**

22. The Committee has a strong belief in the benefits that participation and inclusion in arts activity can bring to individuals and communities. These benefits include health and wellbeing, the development of personal and community capacity and skills and a range of other socio-economic benefits. To this end it is important to the Committee that everyone in the community has regular access to the arts and the benefits these provide. The Committee further believes that this access should not be diluted for working class communities. The arts should be part of the everyday lives of all of those who live here.
23. Prior to deciding to undertake this inquiry, the Committee received a briefing from the Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) which examined social exclusion in the arts in Northern Ireland. The research paper (Appendix 4) particularly focused on engagement in areas of high deprivation and made comparisons with other jurisdictions. It also considered the potential benefits of widening engagement with the arts. The paper highlighted that while overall arts attendance figures suggest that 80% of adults go to at least one arts event a year; however, this falls to 55% for older people; 60% for

those with a disability; and 77% for those from the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland. Highest attenders at arts events are 'full time students' and 'professionals' at 93%; while those adults who have 'never worked', or whose occupation is described as 'unskilled manual', have attendance of 60%. This would appear to suggest that inclusion in the arts is lower for those in disadvantaged communities; however, the evidence provided to this inquiry suggests that the situation is much more complex. It was also pointed out by the Arts Council that the research paper focuses on ticketed events where data can be more easily gathered and does not deal with more informal, unticketed arts events. The Committee was aware of this issue and sought evidence regarding attendance at informal and unticketed arts events during this inquiry. The Committee realises that data gathering on attendance at arts events is also an important issue that need to be addressed to allow inclusive audience strategies to be developed.

24. The paper goes on to look at the evidence available to support the notion that the arts facilitate social inclusion. While the link can be complicated and difficult to prove, the paper does highlight specific forms of intervention that can be seen to be successful. Such examples include specific programmes to involve older people in the arts and how these have alleviated isolation and increased wellbeing. Additionally, there are a number of studies that have shown the benefits of people with mental health issues being involved in the arts and how this can lead to education and employment opportunities, as well as improving their wellbeing and allowing them to participate in 'mainstream' activities. Further research has also shown how the arts can be used to re-engage those young people who have rejected the classroom environment and those who are in prison. Despite these positive examples the paper also highlights the danger of an approach that is too focused on outcomes having the potential to blunt true artistic expression.
25. The paper goes on to look at the participation in the arts of specific groups and the location of arts venues with respect to areas of multiple deprivation. While the publicly funded arts infrastructure has developed considerably over the last number of years, there are still areas of high deprivation which are at some distance from a dedicated arts venue. Additionally, the paper highlights that there is a disparity between urban and rural areas when it comes to funding. Access to arts activities is more restricted in rural areas. The Committee sees this as an issue and it is reflected in the terms of reference for this inquiry. The issue is also considered at a number of points in the body of this report. The paper highlights that barriers to participation in the arts are complex and multi-dimensional; something that has been borne out by the evidence provided to this inquiry and is explored in detail below. The paper also indicated that patterns of arts attendance in Northern Ireland are broadly similar to neighbouring jurisdictions, allowing for different methods for collecting data.
26. This paper and the other discussions that the Committee had provided the broad context for the development of this inquiry. In undertaking this inquiry the Committee is seeking to underline its view that the arts matter and also to ascertain the best ways in which to ensure that access to and inclusion in the arts is something that all communities can take for granted.

27. The statistics show clearly that the arts are popular in Northern Ireland. The **Audiences NI Review of 2014** provided an analysis of box office data for 32 arts organisations with computerised ticketing systems for 2013. The review found that at least 22% of households in Northern Ireland booked tickets for arts events that year. There were 424,380 visits to performances of arts events in 2013 at 32 ticketed venues, equating to 1,303,003 tickets worth £19,743,793.01, a 4% increase in tickets sold on 2012 and a 6% increase in ticket revenue. The average price of a ticket was £15.15. The top four genres were:

Theatre 'Entertainment' - 284,141 tickets;  
Drama - 199,500 tickets;  
Musicals - 134,301 tickets; and  
Cinema Screenings - 106,414 tickets.

28. This illustrates that there is a ready appetite for the arts in Northern Ireland; however, better and more specific data collection would allow a better understanding of how interventions can be made that will more effectively widen access to the arts for working-class communities.

### **The Role Played by the Department and the Arts Council**

29. **The Department's** submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3) highlighted research it had undertaken to understand the relationship between poverty and the arts. The research identified that people living in the least deprived areas are more likely to attend the cinema, museums, the theater, exhibitions, classical music, jazz, opera, and ballet than people the most deprived areas. People who live in the most deprived areas are more likely to attend community festivals, carnivals, and the circus than those living in the least deprived areas.

30. The submission went on to outline a range of specific programmes that would be accessible to disadvantaged communities such as: the cultural programme that accompanied the World Police and Fire games in 2013; the Department's contribution to the 'Backin' Belfast' campaign which provided free show tickets at Christmas 2013, and the Test Drive the Arts campaign which is run by Audiences NI and funded by the Department; Culture Night; After School Film Clubs; the Creative Learning Centres; the Digital Film Archive; exhibitions, including the Best festival, QFT's Learning Programme, and Cinemagic's programmes; the UK City of Culture in 2013; the Community festivals Fund; the East Belfast Arts Strategy; and the play 'Crimea Square' at the Spectrum Centre.

31. During her briefing to the Committee, **the Minister** (Appendix 2) stated her view of the value of the arts:

*"The arts are not just something that people do if they have nothing else to do. The arts are a way of life. The arts are an economic driver, and it is about time that we started to appreciate the potential of the arts and artists to generate our economy rather than see them as something*

*that people do in their spare time or as a luxury. The arts are an employer as well as something that people access to make them feel good. Yes, the budget will be stretched and continually challenged, but I will continually fight the corner for the arts because they need greater investment”.*

32. She went on to expand on her view:

*“The arts are not a luxury to be enjoyed by an elite few; they should be enjoyed by all who wish to enjoy them regardless of community background, age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, political opinion or income level”.*

33. The Minister highlighted collaborations that her Department is undertaking in the arts sector, including the Ulster Orchestra’s ‘El Sistema’ programme, which is discussed elsewhere in this report. The key benefit of the programme is that it is being targeted at deprived communities and ends in a public performance in the area that is accessible to parents and the wider community. Thus, the orchestra is being brought into the community in an accessible and less intimidating way.

34. The Minister highlighted some of the benefits of children from deprived backgrounds being involved in the arts, particularly in terms of improved educational outcomes:

*“Many art forms have a lot to offer in improving confidence and communication skills. That is particularly important among young children from low-income families. In 2011, a report by the Cultural Learning Alliance concluded that students from low-income families who take part in the arts and activities at schools are three times more likely to get a degree. Participation in the arts can also build up character capabilities. Research has shown that children from deprived backgrounds are more likely to lack self-confidence. A fear of failure among those children can hold them back educationally and socially. Therefore, participation in the arts builds confidence and spurs individuals on to try new things and pick themselves up if they fail”.*

35. The Minister also illustrated how the Department’s work has developed career pathways into creative professions:

*“The arts can provide the inspirational launch pad for young people and others into careers in creative industries. The work of the DCAL learning centres, managed through NI Screen, blends artistic expression and the use of digital technology skills. Those creative skills are the core foundations for many creative enterprises such as animation, visual effects, film and television production”.*

36. Like many other contributors to this inquiry, the Minister spoke very positively about the support her Department has offer the ‘Re-imaging’ initiative in communities:

*“...the re-imaging programmes, which are enabling residents to rebuild their communities. The re-imaging programmes are an example that is at the heart of communities. Again, they are mostly in working-class areas that are seeking to renew and reclaim the public spaces that belong to the wider community as a whole. The aim of the funding is to encourage local communities to work creatively with artists in tackling issues and to connect the arts to areas not usually associated with them”.*

37. **The Arts Council of Northern Ireland** briefed (Appendix 1) the Committee twice during this inquiry and provided a written submission (Appendix 3). In addition, the Arts Council is the body tasked with developing access to, and participation, in the arts. The Committee regards the Council as having ‘ownership’ of any strategy to facilitate this inclusion going forward, particularly in light of the reconfiguration of the Executive Department in 2016.

38. In both its written and oral submissions to the Committee, the Arts Council pointed out the limitations of the Committee’s initial research paper, suggesting that it does not capture all the community arts activity that goes on as it focuses “exclusively” on the publicly funded arts. Non-ticketed, non-venue based arts were not been captured, nor was the value of the voluntary arts. The Committee would respond by saying that the scope of the request for the paper did not include these issues as the Committee was focused on clearer, more measurable activity. At that point Members accepted that the paper had a limited focus; however, the intention of this inquiry is to build on that information.

39. The Arts Council clarified in its written submission that ‘working class communities’ would be defined as those living in neighbourhoods that are in the 20% of the index of multiple deprivation and people in socio-economic groups C2, D and E, as per the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s definition. The Committee accepts this definition and used the term “working class communities” as it better reflects common parlance. The Arts Council made some important contextual points in its written submission that are worth highlighting:

*“When framing the question of working class communities’ access to the arts, it is important to consider the wider societal context, especially the prevalence of economic inequality in Northern Ireland and the attendant lack of educational and cultural opportunities that often arise as a consequence”.*

And:

*“Evidence suggests that Northern Ireland has levels of social exclusion that are well above other regions of the United Kingdom, living standards that have persistently lagged behind GB (with the main factors being lower levels of employment and productivity, as exemplified in our highest inactivity rate in the UK of 27%”.*

40. Additionally, the submission made a key point about the role of the arts in education that the Committee would echo:

*“For many years the Arts Council has argued the central importance of high quality arts education within the curriculum, especially at an early stage in a child’s development. Numerous studies have shown that such an approach confers whole life benefits in terms of skills development, confidence building, cognitive enhancement as well as future personal enjoyment”.*

41. In its Inquiry into maximizing the potential of the Creative Industries the Committee argued strongly for the STEM to STEAM agenda being pursued in the school curriculum.

42. The Arts Council already has a set of strategic plans for the arts until 2018 which are contained in its ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ document (Appendix 5). The strategy has a number of strands, including youth, older people, community and voluntary etc. In his foreword to the document, Bob Collins, the Chairman of the Arts Council says:

*“Everybody has a cultural life. The opportunity to engage in or to enjoy the arts should be available to all because the potential to enjoy the arts and to develop, to whatever degree, a capacity for artistic expression is present in all. Everybody contributes to the public support of the arts and everybody should be able to benefit from that investment. But we know that there is an underlying inequality in terms of those who do and those who do not engage with the arts. That is why access is of such importance”.*

43. The Committee agrees with these sentiments and they underlie the purpose of this inquiry. In its review of the previous five years, ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ highlights:

The Arts enrich the cultural fabric of our towns and cities;  
The Arts reach deep into communities touching people’s lives;  
The Arts create jobs;  
People are getting involved in the arts, thanks to investment; and  
The Arts do us proud abroad and help change the image of Northern Ireland.

44. Again, the Committee supports these views about the arts and Members see these as being arguments for developing a clear, strategic Executive approach to the arts. The introduction to the strategy illustrates the role that the arts can play in relation to delivering on the Programme for Government priorities. More generally it seeks to:

*“...Create opportunities, Tackle Disadvantage and Improve Health and Well-being; Protect Our People, the Environment and Create Safer Communities; and Create Safer Communities; and Build a Strong and Shared Community”.*



45. Again, this reinforces the need to view the arts as a key tool for the achievement of government aims. The ambitions are contained in the document are many and varied. They include making “excellent” art available to everyone and supporting the artists who create this. The strategy also talks about the Arts Council’s provision of core funding for a range of organisations, with mention of specific criteria required to receive funding including proven impact in engaging new, diverse audiences, particularly marginalised and disadvantaged communities. The document also refers to protecting the “health and wellbeing” of these organisations over the longer-term. There were criticisms of whom and how the Arts Council funds in submissions for this inquiry. Some of the issues around funding are considered in the section of this report looking at barriers. Not unexpectedly, the document also talks about the need to seek partnerships and to collaborate, not least in terms of using this to support access to other funding streams. The strategy stresses a focus on delivering for communities and makes reference to the investment received by key arts venues, such as the Lyric and MAC and the expectations that come with this. These aims are gathered up in the themes of the strategy:

Champion the Arts  
To promote Access  
Build a Sustainable Sector

46. In their first briefing to the Committee, the representatives from the Arts Council argued strongly for the democratisation of the arts. The Committee also believes that everyone should have unhindered access to the arts and should, if they choose, be able to enjoy the so-called “high arts”, such as ballet or opera. As stated above, the public investment put into the arts is made by us all and therefore we should all benefit from its fruits – not least those people in marginalised communities who often may be the furthest from these arts. The representatives also highlighted the barriers to inclusion in the arts that they believe face working class communities, including lack of time, location of venues, lack of public transport, lack of information, and feeling “uncomfortable and out of place” in certain arts venues.

47. The Chairman of the Arts Council, Bob Collins, made this important point to the Committee:

*“...too frequently, there is a concern or a perception that the arts are in some way elitist and that the kinds of artistic engagement that the Arts Council supports and funds is for the few rather than for the many. That is absolutely at variance with every element of the Arts Council's philosophy and policy, as well as its practice”.*

48. As has already been highlighted, the Committee also believes that no art form should be ‘out of bounds’ for marginalised communities and any strategic approach to inclusion in the arts must facilitate this and must tackle ingrained perceptions that there are art forms that are only for the ‘elite’.

49. Mr Collins also stressed the need to give children access to the arts at an early age:

*“There is no doubt that the imaginative capacity of children is dissipated as they advance through the education system, and their ability to perform and to realise the fullness of their own potential is not equally enjoyed. There are some who can, through their educational experiences, have enhanced engagement; there are others who cannot. We venture to suggest that that is a crucial consideration in the context of this inquiry”.*

50. The Arts Council’s first inquiry briefing to the Committee took place before the 2015-16 budget envelope was announced (Appendix 2). During the briefing Roisin McDonough talked about the conversations that the Arts Council had had with the organisations its funds regarding the Department’s promoting equality, tackling poverty and social exclusion (PETPSE) priorities. She highlighted that the funded organisations have integrated the principles of access, participation, outreach and engagement into their bids and activities. She also referred to the zero-based budgeting exercise which the Department asked all of its Arm’s Length Bodies to undertake in 2013-14, including targets for PETPSE.
51. Nóirín McKinney referred to the Arts Council’s capital investment in recent years of £30m to develop the arts infrastructure outside Belfast and Londonderry. The chief aim of the investment had been to ensure that there was an arts venue within 20 miles of everyone in Northern Ireland. She added that the Arts Council’s view was that no “infrastructural cold spots” remain. However, she admitted that this provision does not necessarily negate the barrier that transport creates to inclusion – something that is considered at length below. She also admitted that there is still a “less-developed” infrastructure in rural areas. Again, this is an issue that concerns the Committee. Ms McKinney highlighted that the Arts Council believes that its small grants programme may help to go towards addressing this issue in rural areas; and this will be supported by other locally-based initiatives undertaken by funded organisations in rural areas.
52. Bob Collins went on to discuss one of the issues that was highlighted in the Committee’s Creative Industries Inquiry – partnership and collaboration. He specifically highlighted the potential of partnerships between the Arts Council, the museums and the Department of Education. As he pointed out, almost every community in Northern Ireland has a school – a publicly owned facility – or church that can be used as a venue; and there is considerable scope for those venues to be used for exhibitions. This is also the case for libraries. Mr Collins reflected on how there is voluntary arts activity going on in all of these venues. However, consideration of this issue through other work streams has led the Committee to consider just how this might be done more strategically and on a much greater scale.
53. It was also discussed that some of the boards of public bodies in Northern Ireland might not be particularly reflective of the population at large. Mr Collins offered an explanation:

*“That is not because of any weakness of the individuals on the board, but because the appointment process is almost calculated to draw from*

*a very narrow field: white, male, middle class and with experience of the public service”.*

54. Again, this is an issue of which the Committee has been made aware previously and it is one which the Committee believes needs to be examined across the public sector.

55. Ms McDonough further highlighted a number of the Arts Council's programmes that are community-based, such as Reimaging Communities, the Arts and Older People programme, and the Intercultural Arts programme. With respect to the Intercultural Arts programme, in its submission to this inquiry, Arts Ekta (Appendix 3) highlights their belief that the programme was more about:

*“...increasing the infrastructure of minority ethnic arts to improve social integration...prominence has been placed on increasing audience numbers rather than affording equal access and opportunity to artistic representation of culture based on ethnicity.”*

56. It is clear from this that there is some work for the Arts Council to do with organisations representing ethnic minority groups to ensure that the Intercultural Arts programme is more fully aligned to the needs wishes of ethnic minority communities.

57. There was, however, particularly wide support for the Reimaging Communities programme. Ms McKinney also highlighted the positive impact that festivals can have on communities. She made reference to the Belfast Festival at Queen's and the strategic review of this. The briefing was obviously before the announcement that Queen's University would no longer provide funding; however, it was just after the Ulster Bank reduced its funding for the Festival in Spring 2014. Ms McKinney talked about the success of niche festivals and Ms McDonough highlighted:

*“We recently undertook an analysis of how many festivals we fund. Some of them are dedicated festivals in their own right, and an organisation is established in order to run a festival, and many of them are community-rooted. Other organisations may be year-round organisations that have a festival as a bolt-on to their core activity. We have noticed a proliferation of locally-rooted festivals across Northern Ireland have flourished, and I think it has been an all-island phenomenon. People seem to love festivals and their focus and accessibility is very popular”.*

58. The second inquiry briefing (Appendix 2) from the Arts Council took place in November 2014, following the announcement of budget reductions for 2015-16. Nóirín McKinney outlined the Arts Council's approach to the reductions and the likely impact that it would have on the 'Ambitions for the Arts' Strategy. She confirmed that there would continue to be investment in supporting individual artists and the creation of work of excellence. She also confirmed the need for continuation of core funding to organisations and the provision of strong infrastructure. She highlighted that a focus on community interventions

would remain too. However, she admitted that, inevitably, a reduced budget means reduced investment and reduced outcomes. Some of the funding reduction can be offset by new strategic partnerships – with cultural tourism, education and learning, health and wellbeing, and wider economic and business partnerships. This includes the development of 100 creative apprenticeships and paid internships in partnership with Creative and Cultural Skills. The Committee believes that such partnerships must be a vital part of a wider strategy for the arts and culture and that this is the best way forward to protect, and perhaps enhance, funding for the arts and culture and to promote the arts, culture and creative industries as important career pathways into growth sectors. Ms McKinney also highlighted the contribution made to the arts by volunteers. Again the Committee is very supportive of, and grateful for, the efforts of volunteers.

59. Ms McKinney set out the impact of the 11.2% reduction applied to the Arts Council's budget for 2015-16:

*“Funding cuts, we fear, will also set back the ambitions to extend outreach work through innovative programmes which will encourage work in rural areas and areas of weak infrastructure...it just exacerbates the existing inequalities in accessing the arts...The cuts will impact on promoting equality, tackling poverty and social inclusion”.*

60. Lorraine McDowell went on to highlight some of the considerations that the Arts Council will make in relation to providing grants, including: risk – how well recipients have managed grants in the past; where the organisation fits into the arts infrastructure; the need for a geographical spread of recipients; whether services are provided to other organisations; and the added value that recipients bring to the sector. She also highlighted that past performance and current ambition are also key – the Arts Council wants to leave move for “the growth of ambition”. There is a desire to keep things moving rather than letting them stand still.
61. Nóirín McKinney also highlighted the importance that the Arts Council places on working with the new super councils. They are keen to ensure that these councils consider the arts and culture when developing their plans. These partnerships are already in place with Belfast and Londonderry, co-funding the creative and cultural Belfast fund, with plans for the same with Londonderry. However, some of the former councils did not prioritise the arts and culture in their funding plans. The Committee is a strong advocate of these partnerships and of involving the new councils in any strategic approach with regard to the arts and culture.
62. Ms McKinney referred to the Arts Council's support for the Ulster Orchestra, of which the Committee is very supportive. She also highlighted how orchestras in other parts of the UK receive much more funding through their relationship with the BBC.

### **What role can museums play?**

63. **National Museums Northern Ireland's** submission (Appendix 3) to this inquiry sets out its view of its role with respect to wider society and to specific aims around tackling poverty and inequality and social exclusion:

*“National Museums Northern Ireland plays a vital role at the heart of our society – supporting key objectives of the Programme for Government in ways which enrich the experience of so many of our population and offer opportunities to explore our history and to imagine our future.*

*National Museums has a long standing commitment to tackling inequality, poverty and social exclusion and has strived to ensure that we offer a programme which attracts the widest possible audience, reflective of our society”.*

64. The submission reflects on the delivery of a ‘Social Inclusion Programme’ in 2014-15 funded by the Department which focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion and specifically targeted individuals and groups from the top 25% of areas of multiple deprivation. The Programme initiatives included:

Community Volunteering, Work Inspiration and Employability Programmes; Partnership and Lifelong Learning opportunities for older people, minority ethnic communities and other groups from socio economically deprived backgrounds;

Formal education programmes (day visits, residential programmes and summer schemes) for schools and community organisations;

Outreach programmes aimed at breaking down barriers and encouraging non-traditional museum users to visit the museum's sites; and

Specific parental engagement and early intervention programmes for Nursery and Primary schools in the *Achieving Belfast* initiative, aimed at empowering parents to find ways of supporting their children's learning.

The submission highlights that in 2014-15 NMNI is launching will launch five new strategies designed to develop contact with communities and contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation that some many people face:

A new **Community Engagement Strategy**, placing continuing emphasis on developing engagement with people living in areas of multiple deprivation;

A new **Collections Engagement Strategy** designed to ensure that as many of the national collections as possible are available to the public, including a new initiative to bring art that is currently in storage to a wider range of venues;

A new **Digital Engagement Strategy** offering more collections content and images online and optimising the opportunities afforded by e-communications and social media engagement;

A new **Social Responsibility Strategy** with initiatives to support employability skills, charitable activity, community development and helping to tackle biodiversity and sustainability;

A new **Infrastructure & Investment Strategy** that aims to develop master plans for each of the museum sites, in conjunction with the Department, other partners and funders and that receives cross-departmental support.

65. In its submission NMNI is aware of the significance of partnership, not just as it allows access to audiences and expertise etc., but because it allows NMNI to pool resources and develop relationships with communities through partners. It will also facilitate the mutual development of greater capacity and understanding of communities. Partnerships are viewed as long-term to ensure that benefits are not quickly lost and so that sustainable relationships and trust can be built with communities. As with most inquiry contributors, NMNI highlights that its ability to tackle social issues and provide greater access to and engagement with working class communities can only go so far without proper resourcing.
66. The submission also pointed out that NMNI, like the Department's other Arm's Length Bodies, undertook a zero-based budgeting exercise in 2013-14 which included visibility of specific activity against the Departmental priority to promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion (PETPSE). It was also highlighted that PETPSE targets were set against expectations for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 budgets that are now not the case. Budget reductions going forward will obviously have an impact on planned PETPSE activity. NMNI's other work and more specifics about its outreach and education activities are referenced throughout this inquiry report.
67. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), the **Museum of London** highlighted a range of programmes and schemes that it undertakes to engage with marginalised communities. The museum's strategic plan (2013-18), titled 'Inspiring a Passion for London', has a particular focus on engaging with every schoolchild in London. The museum highlights that it is keen to move with the times and to entertain, as well as educate, without "*dumbing down*". They have focused on digital media as a way of reaching out to new audiences, in addition to maintaining free admission to the museum while offering discounts to paid-for exhibitions. The museum seeks to embed engagement with communities across all planning and programming as it considers this to be more effective than targeting small number of people from hard-to-reach groups. By aiming to double the number of visitors to the museum new audiences will be reached across all classes and communities.
68. In achieving this broader appeal the museum has also sought to democratise its content. Digital media has proved to be very useful in supporting this. The ever-widening ownership of smartphones has allowed the museum to share its content with a range of new audiences. In 2010 the museum used GPS technology to create its award-winning 'Street museum' smartphone app to link 300 photos and paintings from its collection with real London locations. The app has now been downloaded over 500,000 times. The National Trust, and other international museums, have now copied the idea. In March 2014 a crowdsourcing project 'London Street Views 1840s' was launched by the museum. This engages members of the public in recreating a virtual London street scene based on London's historic *Tallis* maps. The project allows non-traditional and younger audiences to engage with the museum. The museum has also undertaken projects focusing on profiling families who do not visit the museum and seeking ways to engage them. Further projects have involved partnership with the London Archaeological Archive (LAA) based on the museum's Volunteer Inclusion Programme (VIP). The VIP brings people of

different ages, experience, and backgrounds together. The programme with the LAA brings VIP participants together and teaches them new skills as well as giving them an insight into their local history. The museum's submission set out a number of innovative approaches to engagement that make use of digital media and highlighting how collections relate to local people and areas.

### What role can libraries play?

69. The Committee believes that, like museums, libraries have a key role to play in making the arts accessible to working class communities. With a presence in so many of our communities, including many deprived communities, libraries present a facility that is comfortable and familiar to most people. Here they can be introduced to the arts in a way that may be less intimidating than going to an arts venue. In its submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), **Libraries NI** highlighted that:

*"There is a significant potential to improve access to and participation in the arts, if arts organizations were encouraged to use the library network as a means of engaging with local communities".*

70. With 96 libraries, two heritage libraries, 15 mobile libraries, 10 homecall vehicles and through outreach and online services, Libraries NI's submission highlights that it has considerable reach across Northern Ireland. Out of the 96 libraries, 28 serve the 10% most deprived 'Super Output Areas' (SOAs) and a further 28 libraries serve rural communities. This means the libraries are ideally placed to be a key element of any strategic approach to widening access to the arts and culture across socio-economic boundaries and in rural as well as urban communities. The 'Together: Building a United Community' (TBUC) strategy already specifically recognises the role libraries play to:

*"...discover and share the stories of the people and places across the region and examine historical events from the distant and more recent past".*

71. One of Libraries NI's key service priorities is 'Culture and Creative Development'. The body has developed a strategy for 2014-17 for this with objectives which include commitments to: increase programming supporting the development of the creative industries; increase programming which contributes to understanding of cultural diversity and shared cultural heritage; increase programming in community and voluntary arts in areas of social need and for those at risk of social exclusion; provide access to stock, including opportunities for creativity and creative experience in multi formats and platforms; position libraries as a recognized facilitator, disseminator and provider of culture and creative development; and increase awareness of libraries as accessible venues and as platforms for culture, arts and creativity. Libraries are also very active during the annual March Creativity Month.

72. The submission also stated that libraries are community hubs for verbal arts, performing arts, the visual arts, Northern Ireland's traditional arts and provide

opportunities to explore and experience cultural diversity. The City of London's submission also highlighted its increased use of libraries as multi-purpose arts spaces and the benefits of partnerships between libraries and schools – something Libraries NI has enthusiastically embraced.

### **What role can other Arm's Length Bodies and Executive Departments play?**

73. In its submission to the Committee (Appendix 3), **Northern Ireland Screen**, like OFMDFM, referenced partnership with Northern Ireland's three Creative Learning Centres (CLCs): the Nerve Centre in Derry/Londonderry; Nerve Belfast and the Southern Education and Library Board's AmmA Centre in Armagh. They highlighted that these centres provide training for young people and teachers in the use of new creative digital technologies. The submission stressed that all CLC activity will give priority to young people in disadvantaged and marginalised groups and those living in poverty; with a minimum of 70% of all Creative Learning Centre activity focusing on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion.
74. The submission also referenced NI Screen's support for Cinemagic, an award winning festival, which aims through the use of film, television and digital technologies to educate, motivate and inspire young people through film screenings, industry workshops, practical master-classes, film-making projects and outreach activities. Cinemagic also delivers a proportion of Northern Ireland Screen's Film Club programme to extended schools in areas of social deprivation, social exclusion and rural isolation.
75. Additionally, NI Screen is involved in After School Film Clubs that have been established with the aim of introducing children and young people to the benefits of the world of film. It suggests that the clubs have considerable potential to contribute to the Executive's efforts to promote a shared future and a cohesive society. Film Clubs are exclusively set up in the most deprived and hard to reach areas. The expansion of Film Club into 270 extended services schools and other schools in disadvantaged areas across Northern Ireland and a target to increase club membership by 25% is well under way.
76. The submission also outlined NI Screen's involvement in various outreach activities including: the Belfast Film Festival; support and partnership with the Queen's Film Theatre 'Learning Programme'; the CoderDojo programme which supports young people to learn about coding, website and app development and games design etc.; the FabLab initiative at the Nerve Centre, Derry/Londonderry and the Ashton Centre, Belfast which has enabled local communities to access new computer controlled open source 3D printer technology, laser cutters and milling machines to develop ideas and bring them to life; the Digital Film Archive (DFA) which is accessible at 20 sites across NI including museums, arts centres and public libraries. The DFA presentations are also being delivered for hospice/hospital/health charities and carers' groups.



77. NI Screen also works collaboratively with a range of bodies, such as PRONI and NMNI to maximize the potential that the creative industries have to address poverty and social exclusion in local communities.

78. In terms of overarching policy context for this inquiry, the submission from the **Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister** (Appendix 3) provided a broad summary of government activity. With respect to the 'Children and Young People's' Strategy, OFMDFM highlighted that within the outcome of 'Enjoying, Learning and Achieving' there are indicators relating to the arts: the percentage of pupils (Years 8 to 12) who took part in (or did) Arts activities in the last year; and the percentage of these pupils who enjoyed the last Arts event they went to. These indicators are monitored through various attitude surveys; however, they are not reported on according to level of income. The OFMDFM 'Play and Leisure Signature Programme' seeks to deliver on Executive commitments that include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 31:

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

*States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

79. Article 31 of the UNCRC is also quoted in the Scottish Youth Arts Strategy 'Time to Shine' (discussed below) and it is increasingly referenced with respect to child-focused policy development. It essentially provides a 'right' to participation in the arts and culture for children.

80. The OFMDFM 'Child Poverty Strategy (2011-14)' also sought to increase participation in "accessible and affordable culture, arts and leisure services" and to "promote affordable, accessible play and leisure provision". It is the Department's responsibility to report on these actions and in the April 2013 to March 2014 report it stated:

*"[the] Arts Council's 5 year strategic plan 'Ambition for the Arts' (2013-2017) aims to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life and recognises that this can only be achieved through working with a broad range of partners across all sectors, public, private and voluntary. ACNI provides support through the Annual Funding Programme and Project Lottery Funding to arts organisations in developing access to and participation in the arts.*

*In the context of its wider strategic plan, the Arts Council has set out a Youth Arts Strategy. It places emphasis on the entitlement of Children and Young People to engage in a diverse range of arts-led cultural opportunities in safe and enabling environments. In the broadest possible sense, youth arts includes participative arts and work created for young people as audiences.*

*The Youth Arts Strategy sets out a programme aimed at our most disadvantaged and hard to reach young people, with a priority on a mental health and wellbeing project targeting young people at risk”.*

81. The Arts Council’s Youth Arts Strategy is also discussed below. The report also highlights some of the opportunities that would be accessible to children and young people from low income families:

- Belfast Community Circus outreach programme;
- WheelWorks – Art Cart Digital Arts Outreach Programme;
- Beat Initiative – Carnival Arts training to increase confidence, nurture skills and create avenues to employment;
- ‘In Your Space’ (L/Derry) - dedicated circus skill workshops delivered to people from section 75 communities;
- Kids in Control – Physical Theatre community outreach programme;
- New Lodge Arts - Arts Academy delivers workshops to children and young people in north Belfast, including Summer Arts Academy;
- Play Resource Warehouse – is a provider of art resources and free materials, the organisation launched a new pilot project “kids in Transition” to use arts as a tool to help the transition from pre-primary to post primary education;
- The MAC, The Crescent Arts Centre, The Millennium Forum, The Nerve Centre, The Black Box venues all have dedicated Education and Outreach programmes that target and engage children, young people from disadvantaged communities;
- The Grand Opera House Youth Musical project offers bursaries to young people in socially disadvantaged areas to provide participatory opportunities in the theatre;
- NI Screen - After School Film Clubs to run in 300 Extended Service Schools. (Free to access service) 269 After School Film Clubs with 5,528 members. Clubs have organised 1,839 film screenings with audience of 24,632 children. 5,134 film reviews by children uploaded to club website; and
- Creative Learning Centre Programmes training young people in the use of creative digital technologies. Free to access service. CLCs have worked with over 2,417 young people in school and in community and youth settings delivering 242 training sessions. 62 training sessions for 27 youth and hard to reach groups provided in community settings.

82. In addition, the OFMDFM submission referred to specific targeted funding programmes, such as the Intercultural Arts, which aim to create accessible provision in a way that also helps foster the expression of cultural pluralism, build dialogue and promote mutual understanding, these include:

- NI Screen’s Digital Film Archive (DFA) Outreach Presentations provide free access to culture and history. 46 DFA outreach presentations delivered per year. DFA sites have made 92 presentations including young people and families. Partner organisations have provided 80 presentations;

- Cinemagic Screen Festival for Young People – 110 screenings for 7,500 young people and 100 education events for 6,000 young people;
  - Foyle Film Festival Education Programme - 50 screenings and events for an estimated 1,400 young people.
83. OFMDFM is currently working on a new Child Poverty Strategy and with consultations last year. The consultation did not make specific reference to the arts; however, OFMDFM sees scope for them to be included in discussion with Executive colleagues.
84. In its submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3), the **Department for Employment and Learning** highlighted the range of accredited and non-accredited (hobby and leisure) courses across the arts, performing and visual arts, and the creative arts.
85. The **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's** response to the Committee (Appendix 3), described the therapeutic value that is placed on the arts by the Health and Social Care Trusts. The response went on to describe the work of Arts Care, an arts and health charity, which works in partnership with the Health and Social Care Trusts. Arts Care engages artists-in-residence, clown doctors, and project artists who create programmes and workshops.
86. It is clear from the submissions from the Department, the Arts Council, and other Arm's Length Bodies and Executive Departments that there is a great deal of activity aimed at the inclusion of disadvantaged communities in the arts and cultural activities. However, moving forward with the reduction in the number of Executive Departments, it is vitally important that there is a robust arts and culture strategy that is owned, fully supported, facilitated, and resourced by all the Executive Departments. In this way the ambition to embed the arts and culture into the everyday lives of all our communities can be realised. In order to realise the recognised wellbeing benefits of creativity, Arts Care makes arts activities accessible to patients, clients, residents, and staff in health and social care settings. A key aim of the group is to bring the arts to those from deprived communities who might not have availed of arts facilities in their local communities. The response illustrates the any positive benefits that participation in the arts and culture brings to individuals and groups in health and social care settings. It also provides a variety of examples of the activities undertaken in each of the Trusts.
87. It is clear from what is said that there is a strong link between engaging in arts and cultural activities and positive health and wellbeing benefits.

### **Recommendations:**

88. **In order to democratise the arts and culture and create the widest possible inclusion, the Committee strongly recommends that an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy is brought forward that is owned, supported, facilitated, and resourced by all the Executive Departments. This Strategy should be innovative and should be cognisant of existing arts and culture strategies across departments, avoiding any duplication**

**of effort or resources. The Strategy should operate in a similar way to the Programme for Government, with co-ordinated targets, key performance indicators, and a monitoring and review process.**

- 89. The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is thoroughly 'rural-proofed' and adequately resourced to ensure that disadvantaged rural communities are able to access and participate in arts and cultural activities and events on the same basis as their urban peers. This will also help to redress the current imbalance.**
- 90. While individuals and groups with disabilities and/or special needs were not the key focus of this inquiry's terms of reference, the Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is thoroughly 'proofed' and adequately resourced with these individuals and groups in mind.**
- 91. The Committee further recommends that this Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should seek to creatively bring publicly owned art to public buildings and spaces to allow all communities to enjoy and be inspired by locally relevant art. Particular focus should be given to using our schools and libraries as exhibition spaces and arts and culture hubs, and creating partnerships between museums, schools and libraries to bring the arts and culture to young people in disadvantaged communities.**
92. The Committee had further discussion with respect to the recommendation above regarding bringing public art into communities. Members are very aware that projects around this issue have found that insuring arts works in transit, and ensuring that adequate liability insurance is held by venues is an issue. The Committee believes that this issue requires consideration by those developing the Arts and Culture and is keen to see some kind of creative resolution to the problem. Members consider that there should be examples, perhaps internationally, that overcome the issues around insurance.

### **What role can the theatres and theatre companies play?**

93. In its submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) the **Lytic Theatre** highlights that it is located at the intersection of four Super Output Areas (SOAs); placing it in an area of considerable deprivation. The theatre's approximately £3m annual turnover comprises grants, sponsorship and earned income. As a commissioning theatre, the Lyric has some scope to support the development of local talent; in addition, the theatre makes use of its professional staff to lead a of outreach programmes within the local community and further afield. The theatre also benefits from a dedicated education space. In its submission, the Lyric expressed the concern that there is a perception that organisations are failing to make the arts accessible for working class communities. The organization believes that it submission illustrates that there is considerable evidence that a great deal of work is being undertaken to make the arts accessible to everyone.
94. The Lyric Theatre has been part of Northern Ireland's cultural life since 1968 and the current building was completed in May 2011. The Lyric is Northern Ireland's only commissioning theatre and it is the largest employer of professional theatre practitioners here. A third of these are under 25. In addition, 40,000 people visit the theatre to take part in its creative learning programme, or use the theatre's other facilities. The theatre also provides entertainment for audiences of over 80,000 a year. The submission highlights that 61% of the theatre's audiences come from outside Greater Belfast. Less than 10% of total bookers for the theatre come from the BT9 postcode in which it is located.
95. The theatre indicates that it receives a third less public funding than similar theatres in the neighbouring jurisdictions. The theatre is proud to highlight that it has nurtured a great deal of local talent over the decades, such as John Hewitt, Graham Reid, Gary Mitchell, Martin Lynch, Marie Jones, Liam Neeson, Ciaran Hinds, Adrian Dunbar, Conleth Hill, and Dan Gordon. The Lyric's submission suggests that it is active in supporting the social inclusion agenda through its classes, workshops, study guides, debating forums and its carefully selected programme of plays and related events. The theatre's dedicated education space allows children from all areas and social backgrounds to have access to the arts in a "safe, supportive, and professionally regulated environment".
96. In its submission the theatre suggests that there are greater barriers to the involvement of working class communities than ticket prices. Rather the barrier is perception-based. The submission goes on to suggest that the theatre's work with schools has highlighted that transport costs and the unavailability of staff willing to take on extra-curricular activities that can prevent people from attending. The theatre has also heard from community groups that transport costs are often why people do not avail of community ticketing schemes. In response, the theatre has used its own reserves to provide transport to people from deprived areas. The submission cites a number of schools and community groups which have benefitted from this. The submission echoes the issue that many people from lower economic groupings do not see the theatre as an activity that "people like me do", that attending the theatre is not within their "entertainment or social repertoire".

The theatre can be an intimidating place for them with many customs and practices with which they are not familiar.

97. The submission highlights that the Lyric operates a programme of activities designed to remove some of the economic barriers to the arts for working class communities, such as 4,987 community ticket scheme tickets being sold at just £5 each over the past three years. This represents a discount of up to 75%. Community groups from all over Northern Ireland can apply; however, they must be registered charities. In its briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), the Lyric acknowledged that this requirement for charitable status might be a barrier. The theatre has also been the biggest contributor to Test Drive the Arts Scheme. Over the past here years 6,373 100% discounted tickets have been allocated to people who have not previously visited the Lyric. The submission also highlighted the work of its Creative Learning Department and the bursaries to which it has access. Additionally, the theatre operates a summer scheme. Like the bursaries, the summer scheme is open to all and cost free. It allows young people from different backgrounds to mix and enjoy the theatre together. The theatre also offers groups a tour and basic information about what happens at performances to allow participants to become comfortable in the theatre. The Lyric believes these kinds of familiarization visits are important for young people to prevent negative perceptions about theatre developing. The theatre's 'Pat and Plain' project supported this with six plays written by Dan Gordon. During the project four years, 1,978 children and 336 staff from 42 primary schools across Northern Ireland participated. The schools gave 130 performances to an audience of 13,565. The plays were published and are provided free of charge to schools which did not participate in the project.
98. The theatre also has projects to tackle perceptions after they have developed, including work with the NI Prison Service, specifically with young offenders. This particular project works on the young people's social skills and helps with their re-integration into society. Projects have also been undertaken with mental health groups and older people, including those in residential care. The theatre has also sought to stage plays which focus on working class communities, or are written by working class playwrights about working class communities, such as 'Mixed Marriage' and 'Weddins' Weeins and Wakes' which look at people from Belfast's working class communities.
99. The submission also highlighted the recent trend for live streaming of theatre productions in cinemas. The Lyric suggests that with some investment such events could be rolled out here, allowing live theatre staged in Belfast or other venues to be broadcast directly into the heart of working class communities.

The submission ends by re-emphasising the need for greater funding for the arts.

100. **The MAC Theatre** responded to this inquiry (Appendix 3) to provide information about their services and customer feedback. The submission notes that a survey of their customers indicates they do not view the venue or the programmes and elitist of snobbish. Further the submission highlights that the MAC's learning and participation programme delivers wide-ranging audience development strategies to attract and retain audiences from under-

represented communities, including schools, communities, families and children, adults, and young people. It states:

*“We take very seriously the fact that too many people in Northern Ireland think the arts are not for them – we think that the enjoyment of and participation in great art should not be ‘owned’ by any one section of the population”.*

101. The MAC’s Learning and Participation Programme is education-based and communities, families and children, adults, and young people. The programme is facilitated by two learning and participation officers. In addition, the theatre has the MAC Artist Collective, consisting of 40 artists across all disciplines who are experienced in community-based practice. The theatre intends to develop work over the next three years with the MACCommunity, a partnership with community groups, to create tailor-made projects for young people. The MAC also supports the MADE festival (Music, Art, Dance and Everything in between), which is for 14 to 18 year olds and lasts for a week. It is co-curated by the MAC’s Youth Panel. Other youth work includes the Den Collective, a group of 20 young people aged 14 to 18, which meets in the Den weekly together with the Learning and Participation Officer to contribute ideas to the MAC’s artistic programme. However, it is not clear from the submission how many of these young people are from disadvantaged communities.
102. An initiative specifically aimed at men from deprived communities was the Lighthouse Project, run in conjunction with Lighthouse, a suicide prevention charity. This was a men’s initiative which ran from September 2013 to March 2014, comprising 15 participants from different and “traditionally opposing” communities. None of the participants had experience of the MAC before the project and none were regular “arts attenders”. They were introduced to the MAC through the Mystery of Tears exhibition and went on to create photographic artworks that were exhibited by the MAC.
103. The submission also highlighted that 182 schools have attended performances at The MAC, participated in workshops and/or had a tour of the venue. Passport to the MAC, a transport scheme that provides free transport to the MAC’s Christmas show for schools, invited 900 primary and 49 special needs schools to participate. The theatre also undertook School Road-shows in 2015/15 with 40 schools receiving visits across Northern Ireland.
104. When briefing the Committee (Appendix 2), Anne McReynolds, Chief Executive at The MAC, highlighted that it was critical that the widest range of people from the widest range of backgrounds be involved there. She echoed the view of many of the witnesses to this inquiry that *“...too many people in Northern Ireland think that the arts are not for them”*. She highlighted that The MAC seeks to reach out and appeal to the broadest possible audience – schools, communities, young people, families, etc. – while always *“...striving to be excellent”*.
105. Ms McReynolds went on to outline the work that The MAC undertakes with schools across Northern Ireland. Activities include gallery and building tours, competitions, and creative workshops. The MAC also produces

resource packs for teachers and has sought their input to programmes and the venue's approach to involving children and young people. A particular example of this is the 'Passport to The MAC' scheme. Teachers' feedback had indicated that ticket prices were too high for schools, so a special reduced rate was introduced. In addition, teacher raised the issue of transport, so The MAC raised funds to provide a subsidised transport scheme.

106. Ms McReynolds outlined to the Committee how The MAC has sought to target schools with higher than average numbers of pupils receiving free school meals. The work with schools has been supported by the 'Family room' concept, where families with young children can enjoy free weekly storytelling sessions, or participate in art workshops. Ms McReynolds stressed the work that is done to make The MAC a comfortable space where people can access the arts and culture in a relaxed environment. She also highlighted that The MAC's audience base outside greater Belfast continues to grow.

107. During the briefing Ciaran McQuillan reflected on The MAC's community engagement, particularly that with marginalised and hard-to-reach communities. He highlighted the 'Sounds of the City' project, a music heritage project that reflected the histories of the communities surrounding The MAC: Sailortown, New Lodge, and Dee Street etc. The exhibitions and events that flowed from this involved 1,500 participants and were seen by an audience of approximately 3,000. He went on to outline other examples of community engagement, including the MADE festival each October which brings a week long programme of arts performances, exhibitions and workshops for the 14-18 age group. The programme itself is designed and taken forward by the venue's Den Collective youth group. Again, MADE has also targeted marginalised communities and groups that work within these communities.

108. Ms McReynolds once again stressed The MAC's intention to provide democratic content and to provide full access to the arts and culture for all audiences, irrespective of their socio-economic background. She stated:

*"We are more than interested in, and are deeply committed to, delivering programmes across our visual arts theatre programmes and our learning and participation programmes, which are relevant to ordinary people. It would be silly of us not to do so. It is of deep regret to me that this concept of the arts and arts organisations and venues being elitist is still being discussed in 2014. We have worked so hard to counteract the mistaken assumptions that only a certain kind of people goes to the arts. That is what the MAC was all about".*

109. While Ms McReynolds admitted that The MAC is essentially a Belfast venue, Ciaran McQuillan highlighted how they try to engage with rural communities:

*"We are making real attempts to involve schools and communities in rural areas. In schools, our Masterpiece for the MAC competition is specifically designed so that it is not based around transport and having to get to the MAC. A lot of the work happens in schools; we have had schools from as far away as Garrison on the western tip of Fermanagh,*



*where transport is a problem, involved in that process. On the community side, we have engaged with community groups from Newry, community choirs from Downpatrick and groups from different areas of Antrim that have been involved in projects in the building. There is an automatic thing to make connections with communities on our doorstep, but we are looking to go beyond that”.*

110. Ms McReynolds also stressed the engagement that The MAC has with local artists and theatre companies, both in terms of giving them work and in commissioning work from them. She described the HATCH scheme which invests in five artists over a period of 18 months who are theatre or dance practitioners. They get free space at The MAC, and free support around fund-raising, marketing and development etc. The MAC also has artists in residence for six months at a time. Mr McQuillan also highlighted the partnerships that The MAC has with other arts venues and how this allows The MAC to make contacts on the ground in the local communities surrounding them. He also admitted, echoing a number of contributors to this inquiry, that it can take considerable to establish those connections within communities and that they need worked at to be maintained. The MAC has already operated reduced price ticket and transport assistance schemes for community groups.

111. Members felt that it was important to hear the perspective of theatres and theatre companies in this inquiry and invited the **Northern Ireland Theatre Association** (NITA – now part of Theatre NI) to brief the Committee. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) the body stated:

*“The arts are unique and powerful tools, which can act like a "door opening" for many; youth at risk, prisoners, disabled, unemployed, lone parents, those living in areas of significant economic, social deprivation and community relations tension. Many people from these areas and groups are likely to come from or identify themselves as working class communities”.*

112. It also highlights that:

*“Public investment in the arts is predicated on a social return for society, particularly those most at need. To that end the Arts Council’s conditions of funding mandate that all artistic projects developed with public funds, also have a social component designed to ensure outreach and inclusion of hard to reach/TSN communities/or those often described as working class. All Regularly Funded Organisations (RFOs) are required by the Arts Council to complete the RFO survey annually, which monitors how funding has been used by arts organisations”.*

113. Emma Jordan put the briefing (Appendix 2) in context by suggesting that the inquiry needs to answer certain questions with respect to the inclusion of working-class communities in the arts:

*“What does success look like? What benchmark should we be striving to support as a sector? What level of working-class participation, engagement and representation in the arts should be achieved? If a clear answer can be determined, what policy and action must follow? What steps must the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), in collaboration with the other Executive Departments, the Arts Council and our 11 new district councils take to deliver it? How will it take advantage of the people working on the ground in the sector?”*

114. The Committee agrees that it is important that strategies are devised for working-class communities to be included in the arts and that clear, realistic targets are set. Again, the Committee believes that these should be part of an arts and culture strategy that will be delivered across Executive Departments.

115. However, during the briefing, Mr John Davison highlighted how other Executive Departments are not stepping up to the mark with respect to funding for the arts, even when outcomes are beneficial within their remit. He gave the example of the Replay Theatre Company which works with children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Replay’s work cuts across Health and Education; however, funding still comes from DCAL alone. He stated:

*“I think that the Executive need to take some leadership and say that they place a value on the arts as a contributor to those areas. They are sending out a message at the moment that, because DCAL receives the smallest percentage of the Executive Budget and arts receives a small percentage of that, it is not that important and that it is really not for communities out there. It is not even a case of working together; rather of seeing it as a priority of the Executive”.*

116. Ms Ali Fitzgibbon added:

*“The arts is one of five learning areas; the Department of Education is convinced of the value. We would say that the evidence and recognition of the value is there, but that is not following through in terms of departmental policies, planning, budgets and allocations and interdepartmental working”.*

117. Ms Fitzgibbon went on to highlight that one of the barriers to inclusion in the arts is information – not knowing what is available. She suggested that individual arts venues and local councils through their tourism offices do not always understand how to do this and how to “sell” the arts. However, she indicated that there have been improvements, with Belfast City Council as a notable example. However, she also suggested that, while the arts sector is being asked to deliver on strategies it is not always clear how this is to be achieved:

*“...we are being asked to deliver them [strategies], but without addressing exactly how we pay for the bread and butter of who is going*

*to pay for the drama facilitator, the car hire or the buses. The responsibility is falling to us as a sector to make up that patchwork”.*

118. This goes back to the issue of providing adequate resourcing and supporting for arts strategies and making very clear what is to be done and by whom. This issue of funding as a barrier is examined more fully later in this report.
119. It is important that the theatres and theatre companies are considered as part of an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy. However, their participation must be on a specific, funded and realistic basis. There must also be recognition of the good work already being done.

#### **Recommendation:**

120. **The Committee recommends that the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy creates specific partnerships with the theatres and theatre companies to facilitate them working with disadvantaged communities. Any Memoranda of Understanding between the Executive and these bodies should set out clearly what is expected of them, with targets and a monitoring regime. Partnerships should also be appropriately resourced.**

#### **What is the role of the arts and cultural centres?**

121. The **Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre** previously sat under Limavady Borough Council. The Centre's submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) highlighted efforts being made to build on existing arts and culture provision to further engage with communities in the surrounding areas. The Centre has sought to establish itself as cultural hub for Limavady and to give local people "ownership" of the Centre's services and programmes.
122. The Centre's service provision includes a rolling programme of events and engagement programmes. These extend to all the people of the area, with specific projects to engage schools and hard-to-reach communities. The borough is largely rural and the Centre recognises that this means more effort is required to achieve good community engagement. The arts service is supported by heritage and museum services which are all located together, facilitating a more joined-up approach. The Borough Council has funded a dedicated, full-time Arts Outreach and Events Officer who has developed and managed the Centre's outreach programme. This includes delivery of a minimum of 25 creative arts courses per year to community groups in various locations. Specific community arts projects are delivered by the Arts Outreach and Events Officer and Arts and Cultural Services Officer. The submission highlights a number of examples of outreach programmes, including the 'Tale that wags the Dog' project, the Brighter Gold Homecoming project, and the 'Myths and Legends of the Roe Valley' project.

123. The Centre has also worked to widen its arts events programme to open up its venue-based work to as broad an audience as possible. More than 70% of its art exhibitions are accompanied by interactive workshop and learning materials. In 2013 the Centre's Film Programme began 'Classic Saturday Screenings' which involved matinee screenings of classic films specifically designed to engage older people, local healthcare groups and day care facilities. This is mirrored by the screening of 'Family Films' to appeal to family groups and bring them into the venue. There are a range of other family-focused activities 20% of which are free. Additionally, every August is 'Children's Month' when a range of child-focused arts activities are put on to encourage children's participation. The Centre's Theatre Programme seeks to accommodate outreach work with visiting theatre groups where possible.
124. The Centre's submission highlights the importance of nurturing relationships with existing voluntary arts groups and individual practitioners as this will give greater access to rural and harder-to-reach communities and will also support the strengthening of the cultural fabric of the area. This has also involved partnership with a range of local festivals. Leading on from this, the Centre also undertakes to seek feedback on its work, using this to shape future programmes and projects. This also helps to promote a greater feeling of local 'ownership' of the Centre's work. As is the case with a number of the other venues, the Centre provides discounted rates for the hire of its facilities to third sector groups. Further, the Centre has introduced special ticket rates for community groups for selected events. With respect to developing audiences, the Centre has its 'Cool for Schools' and 'Youth Writers' initiatives. Additionally, the Centre has also participated in Audiences NI's 'Test Drive the Arts' initiative.
125. The Committee has visited the **Crescent Arts Centre** and is grateful for some of its staff briefing (Appendix 2) the Committee with respect to this inquiry. The Centre's Chief Executive, Dr Keith Acheson, highlighted to Members a number of the venue's key delivery areas:
- Its role as a community arts centre with concessionary pricing for many of its classes and workshops, which are accredited and non-accredited;
  - Provision of access to arts activities through a dedicated outreach and education officer;
  - Provision of dedicated office and desk space for seven art-related partner organisations;
  - Curation of a visual arts space used by community groups and professional arts alike;
  - Production of two annual festivals – CityDance and the Belfast Book Festival; and
  - Hiring out space to community and corporate groups for meetings and conferences etc.
126. In terms of outreach activity, the Crescent delivers approximately 100 projects across Belfast annually. Projects are generally tailored for specific communities and often deal with local issues. The Crescent has also worked to bring different community groups together to share their experiences. The Centre has also provided travel assistance to facilitate these meetings. Participants include children and young people, the elderly, inter-generational

groups, black and ethnic minority groups and groups which focus on various physical and mental health issues.

127. Dr Acheson highlighted the Crescent's aim to promote and support community arts work across Greater Belfast and to facilitate relationship-oriented programmes of events to create cohesive networks. Additionally, the Crescent focuses on areas of deprivation where people experience barriers to participation in the arts such as unemployment, low incomes, health issues, transport costs, and a range of other social and economic issues. He went on to illustrate how the Crescent's activities can positively alter behavioural patterns by encouraging greater social interaction from all sections of the community which contributes to a more sustainable community. Additionally, programmes provide participants with a range of transferable skills, such as better communication and the ability to work as part of a team. The development of skills also provides participants with greater confidence and a wider range of methods for expressing themselves.
128. Dr Acheson also highlighted the Crescent's Sing for Life Choir which runs in conjunction with Cancer Focus NI. The Choir is aimed at people suffering from cancer, their carers, and relatives. There are approximately 80 participants and the Choir gives public performances. Feedback from participants suggests that the Choir gives them a reason to get out and the ability to talk to other cancer sufferers has been good for them. Additionally, studies have shown that lung capacity can increase and general self-esteem and confidence can improve as part of being involved in group singing. This reflects the other evidence that the committee has heard of the positive health benefits of participation in the arts.
129. It is clear that arts and cultural centres have a vital role to play in bringing the arts to disadvantaged communities. Considerable work has been done over the past number of years to expand the coverage and scope of these centres. However, in most cases the centres are funded by local councils and the resources available to them can vary considerably from area to area. Partnership is required between central and local government to maximise access to inclusion in the arts and culture for working class communities, particularly those in rural areas. The partnership will be considered later in this report.

#### **Recommendation:**

130. **The Committee recommends that the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy has a specific strand which examines and seeks to address the particular difficulties that face disadvantaged rural communities when trying to access the arts and cultural activities.**

#### **What do communities need from the Arts?**

131. As part of this inquiry, the Committee received a briefing (Appendix 2) from the **East Belfast Partnership** about the development of an **East Belfast Arts Strategy** (Appendix 5). What was particularly interesting for the

Committee was that this provided a ‘live’ example of the development of an arts strategy, supported by the Department, for a community [East Belfast] that was seen to have more limited arts infrastructure and access than other parts of the city. In effect, it looked at the issue of inclusion in the arts on a smaller scale while the Committee’s inquiry looked at it on a much greater scale. However, many of the issues considered for this Strategy are extremely relevant to the development of larger scale strategies for the inclusion of deprived, disadvantaged, or marginalised communities in the arts and culture.

132. Mr Roger Courtney briefed the Committee. He highlighted how the Partnership believes that the arts can act as an important regeneration tool for East Belfast, hence the development of an arts festival. The festival made a substantial loss in its first year and was recalibrated on a smaller scale thereafter. From the festival the Partnership decided to investigate how the art in East Belfast could be developed. Generally, East Belfast had less arts infrastructure and activity than other parts of the city; however, the area contains many creative people and a considerable historical creative legacy, with the likes of C.S. Lewis etc. Mr Courtney suggested that people in the local area had bought into the idea that they did not “do” arts and culture that, somehow, these things belong to other communities.

133. Mr Courtney went on to highlight that, although there have been significant development in arts venues across Belfast, working-class people in East Belfast will not “cross the bridge” to other parts of the city. Mr Courtney suggested that the issue might not be how to get disadvantaged communities to come and engage in the arts that exist, rather how do you support them to engage in the arts and recognise and develop their own creativity – to develop the sort of arts that interest them. Once that is achieved they will look more to the arts outside their own community and their appetite for it will be increased. For him a key issue is investing in the arts that working-class people are more likely to go to, particularly community festivals. He also suggested that theatres need to work more closely with community groups to support the engagement of disadvantaged communities in the arts. To do that he considers that you first need to build the capacity of those community groups:

*“There is a real decision to be made about investing in that kind of community arts participation from the ground up, as opposed to simply saying to bigger arts organisations, “Well, you should do some outreach”. In my view, it needs to start from the bottom up.*

*My conclusion is that I do not think that the real issue is that we know what we need to do. The question is what are you going to stop doing in order to fund that, or how you are going to persuade the Finance Minister that actually, you know what, the art is one of the most important things that you can invest in for the future of Northern Ireland”.*

134. The East Belfast Arts Strategy document (Annex Five), highlights the benefits that an arts strategy would produce for the area, including: celebrating and communicating cultural differences through festivals and carnivals etc.

and ultimately developing better community acceptance of these, leading to great community cohesion; developing community pride and confidence through the promotion of the community's cultural assets, achieved through displays, festivals, exhibitions performances and engagement; increased investment in the community flowing from better quality of life and greater community vibrancy, also a desire to build on achievements and seek additional development funding; and knock-on benefits to local schools, colleges and businesses through community growth and regeneration.

135. A vibrant arts sector in the community would also be expected to widen participation and engagement in the arts, while also providing more opportunities for the arts and creative industries to lead economic regeneration. This is also likely to promote greater civic pride in the local community and also promote arts-driven tourism and a more sustainable night-time economy. Ultimately, a new identity could be created for the community which is positive and leads to greater community cohesion.

Key aims are to promote:

- Creativity and enjoyment of the arts;
- Regeneration;
- Social inclusion and diversity;
- Community participation;
- Collaboration and partnership;
- Income generation; and
- Organisational development.

136. It is acknowledged that to be successful a strategy like this must be agreed and have the potential to secure long-term investment. It must also be embedded in the community and be reflective of the community, otherwise it will be seen as 'parachuted-in' and will not receive support. It must also engage not only local people, but key local stakeholders such as schools, churches, leisure facilities and businesses. Success is also more likely if it is linked to wider strategies and activities elsewhere. Benefits to the local community need to be well-publicised.

137. Clearly a great deal of local community inclusion in the arts can be delivered within a community festival. Studies have indicated that these festivals represent an activity in which members of disadvantaged communities are likely to engage. Such festivals play an important role in encouraging participation in the arts and cultural activities. The role that festivals can play in widening the inclusiveness of arts and cultural activities is considered later in this report.

### **What about the role of other institutions?**

138. **The Ulster Orchestra** is a key part of Northern Ireland arts and culture landscape. The Committee has supported efforts to ensure the long-term future of the Orchestra and believes that it can play an important role in

bringing the arts into hard-to-reach communities. The Orchestra's submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) highlights its desire to be more "relevant" and "service-driven", and to increase opportunities for it to engage with a wider cross section of the public. Having said that, the Orchestra already has well-established and successful outreach programmes in place; however, it is seeking to build on and diversify these going forward.

139. The Orchestra states that it has prioritised overcoming barriers to participation within areas of high deprivation and marginalised communities. The Orchestra will seek to achieve this through balancing its performance and outreach activities to ensure that it reaches a broader spectrum of people, while also expanding its reach across Northern Ireland and beyond. The changes that the Orchestra has undergone recently will allow it to work in smaller ensembles which will be more active across the province, giving greater access to the Orchestra's work. This outreach will have a particular focus on areas of social and economic disadvantage. Priority will also be given to the development and nurturing of new community partnerships, as well as the strengthening of those already in existence.

140. The same will be the case for partnerships across the education sector which will seek to promote inclusion and tackle particular social issues. This will include educational workshops for schools and the Paper Orchestra NI project which focuses on schools in areas of high deprivation and is cross-community. The Paper Orchestra aims to:

*"...familiarise children with instruments involved in an orchestra and how to take care of them; to allow them to experience the excitement of performing in front of family and friends as part of an orchestra; and to instil an interest in music and learning an instrument".*

141. The project has already been successfully piloted and will be expanded. This initial work will allow the Orchestra to establish a longer-term presence within communities and sustain partnerships with schools and community groups. As 'El Sistema' in Venezuela, this project has shown an ability to build confidence and self-esteem in young people within disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the Orchestra will undertake workshops with post-primary schools and adults with special educational needs.

142. In terms of engagement with adults generally, the Orchestra has developed initiatives such as 'Move to the Music', which focuses on isolation and loneliness amongst elderly people aged 70 and over. The programme provides door-to-door free transport, free tickets for a performance and refreshments. The original three areas of focus were Down (rural Ards, Castlereagh, and Down District), county Antrim (primarily centred on Ballymena) and county Armagh. Partners in the project are Age NI and the Open Door Club, as well as the Community Transport Network. The project has expanded to cover Newry, Dungannon and Moyle Districts.

143. Another of the adult outreach projects is 'Hear our Voice', which encourages participation in classical music activities by targeted community



groups: the elderly; adults with special educational needs; and those living in areas of specific social and economic disadvantage. The Orchestra has also partnered with Women's Aid in the 'Don't Silence the Violence' project where abused women had a safe space to tell their stories.

144. **Queen's University's** submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) highlighted the work of the university's School of Creative Arts and the arts and cultural venues, facilities, events and organisations with which the School works. The submission also highlighted the School's Sonic Laboratory which is unique in the world. Additionally, the submission drew attention to the purpose-built 'black box' for film studies which gives students to opportunity to film in a multi-purpose, professionally equipped studio. The submission also stressed the accessibility of the School to the general public.
145. Also highlighted was the Queen's Film Theatre (QFT), Northern Ireland's only dedicated, full-time cultural cinema. QFT Learning delivers a year-round outreach programme to 6,000 schoolchildren and young people annually. The QFT is also involved in a number of other schools-related programmes and partnerships. It is also involved in a number of lifelong learning projects and has been confirmed as the British Film Institute's Regional Hub Lead Organisation (HLO) for Northern Ireland. This is a four year investment under the UK Audience Network for Film which will see the QFT taking the lead on developing audiences for cultural cinema across Belfast and Northern Ireland. A key aim will be to engage with and develop audiences in areas or communities which are classed as hard-to-reach.
146. Queen's also has the 120-seat, courtyard-style Brian Friel Theatre, which provides state-of-the-art equipment and allows students to engage with industry level production and performance skills. The Naughton Gallery was also highlighted. This is a registered museum which features a rolling programme of works from the university's own collection, touring exhibitions and shows by local and international artists. The Gallery receives approximately 20,000 visitors annually, with around 3,000 of these being under the age of 16. Since 2001, the university has operated its 'art@queen's' education and outreach initiative through the Gallery. The initiative delivers a workshop programme to a range of groups. The Gallery's 'Community Alphabets' project brings community groups together with professional artists to create their own unique alphabets.
147. The submission went on to highlight the university's contribution to the Ulster Bank Festival at Queen's. However, since the submission was made the university has had to withdraw its financial and other support for the Festival as budget reductions have an impact. The Festival has since been relaunched as the Ulster Bank Belfast International Arts Festival.
148. The submissions provided by the Ulster Orchestra and Queen's University illustrate the role that the arts and cultural institutions can play in bringing the arts and culture to a wider audience. It will be important that the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy takes this on board.

**What is the view of the umbrella arts organisations?**

149. In its submission to this inquiry, **Voluntary Arts Ireland** noted how the provision of arts venues has improved over the past number of years and this has supported a much greater level of wider community access to and involvement in the arts. The organisation also highlights the existence of self-organising and self-sustaining voluntary arts groups exist all over Northern Ireland, including in the most marginalised communities. It further suggests that a significant proportion of participants in these groups are from working class communities. The submission also highlights the range of targeted interventions within hard-to-reach and special interest communities by local government. The organisation suggests that:

*“It would appear that although accessibility to the arts is not perfect in Northern Ireland it has clearly improved. What is less clear is whether or not the arts provision always engages effectively with the various communities it seeks to serve. The barrier may no longer be that there is simply no provision in an area or within a community (of interest as well as place) but that avenues for citizens to participate in their local venues or activities are too narrow”.*

150. During the **Community Arts Partnership’s** briefing to the Committee on this inquiry the body’s Chairperson, Mr Joe McVey, highlighted that there is a high level of demand for, and interest in, community arts across Northern Ireland. He outlined the wide variety of arts activities in which the Partnership is involved, including poetry in schools, intercultural work, work with marginalised communities, intergenerational work, etc. He went on to give some insight in to the kinds of barriers to participation in the arts that disadvantaged communities face and how resources are key to breaking down those barriers. Like many other contributors to this inquiry, Mr McVey highlighted the need for community arts projects and programmes to have some kind of legacy. He stressed the need for ongoing support and engagement with communities after the initial activities have ended.

151. The Partnership’s Chief Executive, Mr Conor Shields, reflected on the fact that the body is interest in helping disadvantaged communities find their own solutions to issues and giving them ownership of the means of improving their situation. He stressed the importance of the arts in relation to people’s health, emotional and intellectual security, confidence and education. Mr Shields also highlighted how involvement in arts projects can also improve the employability of people from disadvantaged communities, something that has been a theme of this inquiry. He stated:

*“We dedicate all our work to supporting the transformative power of the arts and to helping everybody to see themselves as creative beings. That gives them a chance to become creative actors in their own lives”.*

152. Mr Shields went on to suggest that the way forward with respect to funding for arts projects was partnership-working and looking more to collaborations between businesses and community arts organisations. Like many contributors to this inquiry, he highlighted the difficulties faced by many small organisations in filling in forms and applications for funding. In many

ways this paperwork becomes a barrier to involving disadvantaged communities in the arts.

153. Community groups, arts-focused or otherwise, must have a voice, not only in the development of an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy, but also on its implementation and continued evolution, particularly with regard to ensuring that the Strategy has a focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged communities.

**Recommendation:**

154. **The Committee recommends that the Department and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland examine options for ensuring that community groups in disadvantaged areas are consulted on the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy; and that this consultation continues with respect to the delivery and continued evolution of the Strategy. This consultation should include groups from all over Northern Ireland and there should be a balance between rural and urban participants.**

**What view does a playwright have?**

155. The Committee was keen to hear from creative arts practitioners and was grateful that the playwright **Mr Martin Lynch** agreed to brief the Committee. Much of his focus was on the need to empower people from disadvantaged communities to be creative. He felt that access to the arts and accessing of the arts varied across the community divide in Northern Ireland and believes that this is a historical issue. He reflected on difficulties recruiting actors from Protestant working-class communities for plays, while not experiencing the same difficulties with respect to Roman Catholic working-class communities. He suggested that this also had some to do with different levels of arts infrastructure and exposure to the arts. In many ways it reflects the cultural attitudes of different communities which are explored in another section of this report.
156. Mr Lynch was critical of the existing arts establishment's approach to education and outreach which, as suggested by many contributors, brings projects to an area of a specific timeframe, then leaves without a legacy after raising expectations. He also suggested that there was an element of "tick-boxing" to some projects. Funding is often designed in such a way that it is difficult to bring a project back to a particular community within a certain period. This issue is considered further in this report as a barrier to access to and participation in the arts. He indicated that there is a lack of a tradition of amateur drama in most working-class communities. He suggested that such a tradition may be more evident in rural communities.
157. Mr Lynch went on to suggest that the arts could provide disadvantaged communities with a form of self-expression to articulate their frustrations. Often these frustrations are expressed in much more anti-social ways. He believes that participation in the arts can empower working-class communities and give them a voice. He pointed to a number of successful artists from disadvantaged

communities whose works are now part of the theatre scene; however, he highlighted that these artists have not been evenly split across the community divide in Northern Ireland. He also stressed the importance of bringing the arts into schools, not just to introduce young people to theatre etc., but as way of giving them a range of highly transferable skills, and enriching their lives:

*“When a person gets involved in the theatre, they become rounded. They get a new vision of who they are, what the world is and who the other side is”.*

158. Mr Lynch also expressed a view that the approach to the arts by local government was inconsistent, with some councils understanding the arts and being able to make a success of them and other councils having no real idea how to approach them. Like many other contributors, he believes that the new, larger councils are a positive move and provide a “fantastic opportunity”. He believes that councils can get their arts offering right as councillors are embedded in local communities and can bring their experience of what people on the ground want and need to bear. He contrasts this with the arts establishment which he considers is largely working to strategies and guidance.
159. The need to bring the arts and culture to local communities is clear; as is the need to facilitate involvement in arts and cultural activities for young people in disadvantaged communities as early as possible. This is likely to be best achieved through a specific education strand to the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy. The additional benefit to these young people will be the provision of outlets for self-expression and exploration of their own talents. Education is dealt with later in the report.

## **BARRIERS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

160. At the core of this inquiry is the Committee’s desire to understand the barriers that, in some cases, prevent working class people from fully accessing all that the arts have to offer. Something that has struck Members throughout the inquiry evidence gathering process is the complexity of the barriers impede disadvantaged, marginalised or deprived communities from playing a full part in the arts. Barriers are often multi-layered and inter-linked. As the evidence below illustrates, not all the barriers are placed as obstacles by external sources, many come from within communities and individuals themselves.
161. The Committee is extremely grateful for the considerable evidence that it received in written and oral form with respect to this aspect of the inquiry. The density of the information received would have supported sufficient analysis to populate a number of specific inquiries. To allow this inquiry to reflect its terms of reference, the focus remains on working class communities. However, all the evidence submitted to the inquiry is contained in the accompanying annexes.

162. Members would like to record their particular appreciation for those individuals who provided very personal reflections on the barriers that they have overcome to engage with and enjoy the arts.

163. The Committee was presented with a wide range of suggested barriers that might prevent the inclusion in the arts of disadvantaged, marginalised or deprived communities. A certain amount of statistical analysis was also available to Members. The Department's research paper: 'Impact of poverty on engagement in the arts in Northern Ireland' (October, 2013) flags up ten main barriers as considered by those living in the 20% most deprived areas:

- Costs too much (35%)
- Difficult to find the time (21%)
- None of these (19%)
- Not interested (18%)
- Family commitments (12%)
- Health is not good enough (10%)
- Events aren't publicised enough (9%)
- Not enough facilities close to where I live (9%)
- Lack of transport or cannot easily get to events (9%)
- Lack of high profile performances (5%)
- Do not have anyone to go with (5%)

164. It is interesting that the third highest category is "None of these", indicating that the real story regarding barriers to inclusion in the arts for these communities is more complex. The barriers above are largely mirrored by the barriers to engagement in the arts highlighted below by young people in receipt of free school meals:

- They cost too much (24%)
- It is difficult to find the time (22%)
- There's nothing on that I would like (19%)
- I'm not really interested (18%)
- Nothing would put me off (16%)
- Lack of transport (14%)
- Other reason (12%)
- I don't have anyone to go with (10%)
- I wouldn't enjoy them (10%)
- There aren't enough facilities or events close to where I live (9%)

165. With respect to young people, the Ulster Association of Youth Drama (UAYD) (Appendix 3) highlighted specific issues which have resulted in an increasing number of barriers to inclusion in youth drama in working class communities. These include:

- A reduction in the number of youth theatre groups run by local authorities and arts venues, and an increase in profit-making drama groups;
- Increased overhead costs passed on to customers through enlarged fees for participation in youth drama;
- Fewer subsidised or free youth drama activities and projects;
- Limited financial support for young people to pursue an interest in the arts and to develop their own artistic practice;

- Fewer options for funding support for youth drama groups;
- Substantial ticketing costs for youth drama performances; and
- Reliance on volunteers, lack of qualified drama practitioners and use of unsuitable spaces impacting negatively on young people's experiences of drama.

166. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland stressed its concern regarding the underestimation of access to arts; disability access is of particular concern. The body highlighted that in its experience the most frequently cited barriers to access are:

- Lack of time
- Location of venue
- Lack of public transport
- Lack of information
- Feeling uncomfortable or out of place

167. In its submission (Appendix 3) the Ulster Orchestra highlighted a number of factors that affect its accessibility with respect to working-class communities, including:

- A lack of general interest from within communities in particular forms of artistic expression, including classical and orchestral music.
- Costs, not only in terms of ticketing but also in terms of transport and other associated costs.
- A lack of targeted educational provision for the development of musicality within many (but not all) schools in working-class areas, and a lack of support within the home and community for classical and orchestral music.
- A need for artistic institutions to adequately communicate the value of art to working-class communities, including providing role models for communities.
- A need for artistic institutions to change perceptions towards institutions, such as the Ulster Orchestra, sometimes viewed as elitist or 'out of reach'.
- A need to strengthen the links between already successful engagement work in working-class communities and the Orchestra's artistic output as a whole.

168. In its written submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3), the Barbican in London highlighted the following groups as being less likely to engage with the arts:

- People with little or no formal education
- People in lower socio-economic position
- People from black and minority ethnic groups
- People in poor health and/or with a limiting long-term illness or disability
- People on low incomes
- People who live in social housing

169. In its submission (Appendix 3) the Crescent Arts Centre barriers to access:

- Religious divide

- Language
- Health problems
- Disability
- No. of dependents
- Lone parent households (limited access to childcare)
- Transport
- No or low qualifications
- Unemployed

170. The National Museums Northern Ireland submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3) also highlighted barriers specific to a venue itself:

- Organisational barriers – such as opening times, the feeling of welcome or inclusivity;
- Physical barriers – such as accessibility of the building, their location or the facilities that are offered;
- Sensory barriers – such as how the needs of people with sensory impairments are met;
- Cultural barriers – does the content reflect or acknowledge the interests and life experiences of the people it is trying to attract; and
- Financial barriers – such as the cost of entry or the cost of transport to get to a venue

171. Voluntary Arts Ireland (Appendix 2) introduced some quite specific and complex issues in their submission:

- There is a steady creep towards urbanisation with much of the provision centred in bigger towns and cities – affecting rural areas in particular where access to public transport is limited;
- Access to suitable transport not always consistent. If you have a disability for example you may also need to travel with a friend or family member which can mean doubling the cost;
- Access to good quality broadband– most information and communication is now delivered online. If you do not have access to this many opportunities will pass you by;
- The lack of digital skills – with art increasingly involving digital production participation can be hampered if you have not developed these skills;
- Fragmented connections between grass-roots groups, local authorities and the professional arts sectors which often lead to poor promotion of events/activities and less participation by citizens; and
- The trappings of art forms – so the performance/exhibition traditions and language rather than the art itself – are often significant hurdles.

172. As highlighted above, there is a complex web of barriers and issues that may mitigate against those from disadvantaged, deprived, or marginalised communities engaging with and participating in the arts. However, for the purposes of further analysis and the recommendation of potential solutions, all of the barriers identified above would generally fall into the one of the following broader categories: **economic/financial barriers; barriers linked to geography or location; educational barriers; barriers around the availability and structure of funding; barriers with respect to awareness and information; lack of value placed on the arts; and**

**community/cultural/psychological barriers.** It is clear that some of these barriers are beyond the control of the communities the inquiry focuses on; however, there are many barriers that can only be eroded with the active co-operation of the communities and individuals in question.

### **Lack of Value placed on the Arts**

173. This is almost a starting point for overcoming most of the barriers that have been highlighted as preventing people seeking to engage with the arts from any background or community. If the arts are not valued then it is likely that strategies and funding to ensure that people can access and participate in them will not be developed to any great degree. Throughout this inquiry the Committee has heard about the real value of the arts across a range of issues and areas. Members have heard about how the arts and culture can contribute positively to people's health and wellbeing, how introducing young people to the arts can give them confidence and support a range of other aspects of their development. The Committee has also heard a great deal about how government – central and local – must adopt a more strategic and joined-up approach to the arts and culture.
174. With respect to this inquiry specifically, the evidence suggests that it is only when sufficient value is placed on the arts that they will be developed as a part of all of our everyday lives. It is also clear from the evidence that it is even less likely that those from disadvantaged and deprived communities will engage with the arts and feel included in them if they are not properly valued by government and wider society.
175. This barrier of lack of value being placed on the arts feeds into many of the other barriers considered in this section of the inquiry report. If greater value was placed on the arts they would be better embedded in schools' curricula and activities, there would be more and better structured funding, different communities' cultures would be better recognised and supported as part of the arts sector and, in so doing, there would be greater engagement and inclusion in the arts of working class communities.
176. During the Belfast stakeholder event (Appendix 2), Arthur Scott from the Department said:
- “I want to pick up on the theme of the value of the arts, which plays into how artists are valued in the work that community groups do, particularly across government and the wider public sector in Northern Ireland. It is a message that the Minister and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure have been very keen to try to advocate in government and across the public sector. Often, the focus, particularly now, in a time of scarce resources, is on economic value, but the arts are worth so much more in terms of their educational potential, social inclusion, and health and well-being. The arts will not provide an answer to the problems or challenges that we face as a region, but they can provide very important staging points in the development of skills, self-confidence and personal realisation, and even perhaps by creating and*



*inspiring personal ambition. The pitch for the community organisations that the Department uses across government is that those non-financial wider benefits have to be recognised. Sometimes, in the debate for the allocation of resources, there is too much emphasis on the economic value of arts and not enough on the other very important aspects, which tie in very clearly to agreed priorities in the Executive's Programme for Government”.*

177. Mr Scott sums up the value of the arts and makes a valid point that the arts sector must play its part in highlighting this value. As the evidence in this report has also shown, the value of the arts must be recognised by government policy – both at the centre and locally. It is essentially through enshrining this value in policy that it will be accepted and believed. This again makes the argument for an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy.

178. Anne Delaney of New Lodge Arts (Appendix 2) shared with the Committee her view of the value of the arts in disadvantaged communities:

*“There are a raft of issues affecting young people in the north Belfast area, such as interface violence, drug abuse, suicide, self-harm, poor mental health, poverty, low educational attainment, a lack of role models, depression and drug dependency. Our programmes continue to have a positive impact on young people by building aspirations, providing training and development opportunities, promoting health and well-being, building good relations and increasing creativity. We want to enable young people to be artists; not simply to receive the arts but to make and be actual contributors”.*

179. Many of the other barriers to inclusion in the arts of working class communities are symptomatic of the lack of value that society places on the arts; therefore this issue is woven throughout the consideration of those barriers below. As has been stated already in this report, an understanding of the value of the arts and culture is essential to them being placed at the heart of government activity. This is also the best way to ensure that they are made accessible to disadvantaged communities.

## **Economic/Financial**

180. These were perhaps the most clearly identified and specific barriers. There was considerable agreement in both written and oral evidence about the economic and financial barriers that can act to limit inclusion in the arts of working class communities. It would be too simplistic to suggest that dealing with these issues alone would promote a surge of engagement with the arts of disadvantaged communities; these barriers, like the others, are interlinked and inter-dependent. However, in addressing some of these barriers it would make it more likely that others could be tackled.

181. Within this set of barriers **cost** was highlighted again and again by contributors. This ranged from the costs of tickets of arts events to the cost of equipment to participate in the arts. During the inquiry evidence gathering

process there was a great deal of discussion around the cost of ticketing – often this was highlighted first in contributors' lists of barriers.

182. In its written submission (Appendix 3) to the Committee, the Northern Ireland Theatre Association (NITA) stated:

*“Price is often considered the primary barrier to inclusion for the arts and theatre. Experience tells both venues and production companies that concession, free, or subsidised tickets can increase audiences from working class communities. Similarly having the ability to offer community engagement projects free of charge, or for a small fee, opens up the experience and participation in theatre to a wider audience”.*

183. There was some criticism of the larger theatres and arts venues around not doing enough to provide subsidised or free tickets that are properly targeted at the appropriate individuals, groups and communities. In her briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Katrina Newell from New Lodge Arts indicated that big organisations absorb a great deal of the public funding available for the arts. She suggested that, in return for this funding they should sign up to a “social commitment” that ensured their efforts to engagement with communities was not just a “tick-box exercise”.

184. Ms Newell highlighted that the Lyric Theatre provides New Lodge Arts with free or reduced-rate tickets; thus enabling the organisations to take young participants to performances. However, she stated that other organisations only offer these concessions when they were struggling to fill seats and the offers tend to be last minute – she stated:

*“In our minds, it is less about inclusion and more about simply filling seats”.*

185. She went on to suggest that the ticketing of these larger organisations might include “social clauses” which set out a requirement to provide a certain number of reduced price or free tickets. She highlighted that this would make these larger venues more accessible to young people – perhaps helping to get them into the habit of engaging with the arts at an early age. She stated:

*“Social clauses would allow us to open up young people’s imaginations, feed their work and give them aspirations to be on that stage or to create work to be hung in that gallery”.*

186. This issue of inspiring young people links into educational barriers and community and psychological barriers. The belief is that if young people – particularly those from deprived or marginalised communities – engage with and participate in the arts that their families and others from their communities may well follow; thus, creating a bridge to the arts for working class communities.

187. In their evidence to the Committee the Northern Ireland Theatre Association (NITA) (Appendix 2) also spoke about the issue of ticket pricing. Emma Jordan highlighted that it would be “necessary” to include ticket price subsidy in theatres’ and theatre companies’ community outreach. However, she indicated that this was different from free tickets. She elaborated:

*“There must be value placed on the art. Part of your initial contract with your audience or attendee is that there is value placed on the art. It is not the notion of free ticketing which, in my experience, has not worked. However, providing that initial way in through the subsidy is really important”.*

188. This reflects discussions that the Committee had with witnesses during evidence briefing for this inquiry around something that is free is often not valued and that free tickets, or free events, are often seen as not worth as much. This issue also linked to another barrier to engagement which is lack of value placed on the arts. That barrier is considered separately in this section of the inquiry report.

189. During the NITA briefing (Appendix 2), Ali Fitzgibbon highlighted that this issue of free tickets and free events is one where there is insufficient data capture. This issue also applies to informal, non-ticketed arts; something that has been highlighted as a gap in the Committee’s original piece of research. It is clear that more work is required to establish whether or not free ticketing works at all in terms of bringing working class communities to the arts, or whether it must be applied as part of a wider strategic approach.

190. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) the Arts Council of Northern Ireland suggested that “evidence is split” on whether the cost of attending the arts is actually a barrier. The submission highlights that, in comparison to the cost of other cultural or leisure activities – such as music concerts or sporting events like football matches – subsidised arts events are quite “modestly priced”. The submission also stresses that those organisations funded by the ACNI are “encouraged to engage beyond a traditionally perceived ‘audience for the arts’”. In their written submission (Appendix 3) the Belvoir Players, a well-established and high profile amateur theatre company, also highlighted that there is a perception that arts events, such as theatre productions, are expensive to go to. However, they also stress that amateur or community theatre is often much cheaper to see and is already embedded in the community. It may be a case of cost not being a standalone barrier. It is likely that interest in, and understanding of, theatre is also an issue.

191. It is then perhaps appropriate at this stage to examine how one of the large arts venues in receipt of ACNI funding deals with the issue of free or discounted tickets. The Lyric Theatre has been praised above with respect to this. In its written submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3) the Lyric Theatre stated that it:

*“...operates a range of programmes designed to remove some of the economic barriers to the arts for working class communities. In the last 3 years they have awarded 4,987 community ticket scheme tickets to local community groups. Tickets are priced at just £5, a discount of up to 75% on the full face value. Community groups from across Northern Ireland are invited to apply for tickets and must be a registered charity”.*

192. The requirement to be a registered charity to apply for discounted tickets has been cited as a barrier by some witnesses; however, in their briefing to the Committee the Lyric stressed that they were willing to talk to groups to see if solutions can be found.

193. Additionally, the Lyric highlighted to the Committee that it operates a Summer School where young people can work with professionals, sponsored at the time by the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Lloyds TSB. They also operate a term time Theatre School with weekly classes. There are also a variety of bursaries available for these schools, also previously sponsored by the Harbour Commissioners. The theatre has also worked with Rostulla Special School and Hydebank Wood Young Offenders' Centre, in addition to a Mental Health project with the Beechcroft Residential Unit at Knockbracken. The theatre also undertakes other collaborative work with community groups and community arts venues.

194. In the Lyric Theatre briefing session (Appendix 2) with the Committee, Ciarán McAuley, the theatre's Chief Executive also highlighted:

*“We operate a number of smaller programmes that make tickets available at heavily reduced cost or zero value. These schemes are designed to remove the economic barrier to attending theatre by providing entry either for free or at a cost equivalent to or cheaper than a ticket to see a film in a multiplex cinema. They help tackle social isolation and improve mental well-being by providing the beneficiaries with a socially inclusive activity during which they are exposed to theatre of the highest professional quality”.*

195. The Lyric is a commissioning theatre and this means that it is in a position to provide access to professionals involved in the creative process and who can provide training in a variety of transferable skills. Against this backdrop Mr McAuley also stated:

*“...we get ticket sales of £1 million and it costs £1 million to put on productions, we do not make a lot of money in shows. Producing theatre does not make any money... but we are a theatre that tries to increase what is very low pay for theatre practitioners and artists. We work with Equity to try to push that up and make sure that they get a fair living”.*

196. This perhaps suggests that large arts venues do not have significant profit margins or cash reserves from which to fund outreach activity and that this is where public subsidy can add value. However, it is also clear from the

evidence received by the Committee that these issues are best resolved as part of an overarching strategy that looks at all the issues the Committee has identified in the round and provides solutions on that basis.

197. Another significant player in the arts establishment that was referenced a number of times in the inquiry evidence gathering process was the Ulster Orchestra. The Committee has stated its support for the Orchestra on many occasions and believes it to be an important part of Northern Ireland's arts and cultural offering. However, Members would like to see the Orchestra facilitated to grow its outreach into disadvantaged, deprived and marginalised communities. For many an orchestra is seen as part of the so-called 'high arts' which can be perceived as out of reach to many and just something that they are not interested in. However, the Committee considers that world class orchestral music, and professionally played music in general, is something that should be readily accessible to all of our communities.

198. In its written submission to the Committee (Appendix 3) the Ulster Orchestra highlighted that its policy is to price all its concerts affordably to reach out to all members of the community:

*"Tickets range in price from £6.00 to £22.00 (Ulster Hall) and £8.00 to £28.00 (Waterfront Hall) and from the 2014/15 season all tickets to our season concerts for students, children and the unwaged will be priced at £5.00. We will continue to offer a reduced Christmas Community Concert at the rate of £3.00 in the Ulster Hall, which is open to all community and charitable organisations. We also offer a group discount that provides a free ticket for every ten tickets booked and further discounts for booking over 30 tickets".*

199. This policy would mean that some tickets for the Orchestra's performances are a similar price to a cinema ticket. The submission goes on to highlight:

*"It is also part of our sponsorship policy that when securing contracts with corporate sponsors and supporters, we designate up to 50 tickets per concert to be allocated to community groups from across Northern Ireland. To expand on this, from the 2014/15 season 50 tickets for every lunchtime concert (9 concerts in total) will be allocated to groups working with the homeless, elderly and people with special educational needs. We have also been proactive in targeting community groups working in working-class areas, allocating 352 complimentary tickets to 12 community groups from working-class areas since October 2013 (these were the number that were taken up by these groups; the number offered was higher), and providing reduced price tickets to approximately 1,000 people from various community groups and charities in the 2013/14 season".*

200. Again, it appears that there may be perceptions about the high cost of Orchestra attendance that are not necessarily borne out. It is perhaps rather

that repertoire and lack of familiarity are more of a barrier. Those issues are discussed further in other parts of this section of the inquiry report.

201. One high profile initiative designed to overcome the cost of tickets being a barrier to participation in the arts is 'Test Drive the Arts NI'. This Audiences NI initiative began in 2004 and more than 22,000 people have benefitted from it. Essentially free tickets are made available from unsold capacity by venues and organisations. Currently over 100 organisations participate across Northern Ireland covering a variety of art forms. The initiative can be used to open up new venues and art forms to people who have not been familiar with them before. The initiative has been augmented at particular times, such as Christmas, by the Department. There are some criticisms of the initiative.
202. Evidence below from the MAC and Ulster Museum about their engagement with community groups etc. combines the idea of free/discounted access with the idea of making the venue more welcoming.
203. As highlighted in the NITA submission (Appendix 3) excerpt at the beginning of the consideration of this barrier, offering community arts events for free is also a good way to support working class engagement with the arts. Similarly, being able to see community-based arts and cultural events in the large arts and culture venues can also help to make these venues more inviting. This issue is considered in more detail as part of community, cultural and psychological barriers; however, being able to take community works and events to large venues can have cost issues.
204. In their briefing to the Committee the Etcetera Theatre Company (Appendix 2), which is community based, highlighted that issue of cost might pose a barrier to community works and events from being put on in the larger venues. William Mitchell talked about taking the play 'Tartan' to a number of venues. The play is community-based and with a particular focus on the loyalist community in disadvantaged areas of Belfast. The play was put in a range of venues, however, Mr Mitchell highlighted:

*"The first major challenge was that we had to pay the MAC significantly more than we had to pay the others, which took a chunk out of the budget. It is purely business. The main distinction I would make is that the MAC had a business approach to the arts, and we believe that Skainos and Spectrum, albeit that they have businesses to run, had less of a business approach, if that makes sense. They were a bit more flexible about what we could do and how they could support it, extending beyond giving us a contract and telling us what it would cost.*

*Given that we were opening here at Skainos, we needed a longer lead-in time than anywhere else. We had not factored that in, but we negotiated a cost reduction with Skainos. The MAC gave us a community rate, but it was based on its programme; it had to fit into its programme or it was a non-goer. That is OK; it is a major theatrical establishment. However, we had a bit more flexibility in those other*

*venues for the reasons that I outlined. In fact, the Cultúrlann gave us it free of charge, so we did not have to pay anything”.*

205. It would be unfair to single out The MAC in this respect; as Mr Mitchell points out, it is a commercial concern and the Lyric’s evidence above reflects on the fact that it is difficult to make money out of theatre.

206. Ruth Cooper, Replay Theatre Company, also highlighted this issue as part of the NITA written submission (Appendix 3):

*“As a touring production company, Replay make it as easy as possible for audiences to see our work by; touring extensively throughout NI to a wide range of locations and settings taking work directly to audiences in their locality; pricing tickets according to audience needs; and subsidising these costs through grants and other funding streams to make it more affordable. With council-run public venues operating on a full cost-recovery system, work such as Replay’s Early Years programming (which has lower audience capacity numbers and therefore lower box office potential) experiences difficulty in reaching wider community audiences as some venues are precluded from bringing this work to their venue if the production cannot break even or yield profit despite the demand and popularity of work of this kind amongst their customers”.*

207. It is perhaps the case that consideration needs to be given as to how community works and events can be supported to be put on in the larger arts venues and council-run venues. Again, it would be important to consider this issue from a strategic viewpoint as part of a set of coherent aims and objectives.

208. During the inquiry evidence gathering process that Committee heard about and from organisations that are community-based and have significant numbers of members, such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Confederation of Ulster Bands. Both of these organisations presented oral evidence to the Committee (Appendix 2) and the issues they raised are dealt with across the different barriers to inclusion within this section of the inquiry report. However, a particular issue relevant to the barrier of cost was raised by both, and that was the expense of buying instruments. Both organisations support and promote traditional cultural expression through music and work with large numbers of young people who learn instruments through these organisations. In this way large numbers of people, young and old, from a variety of communities, including disadvantaged and deprived communities, are participating in the arts. Many would not see themselves as being involved in the arts; instead they regard themselves as simply being involved in the traditional musical culture of their community. This is explored more fully in this section.

209. During the Comhaltas briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Breandan Mac Giolla Uir highlighted:

*“Comhaltas feels that everyone should have the opportunity to engage in the arts, especially with us, and that cost should not be a barrier...A tin whistle can cost £4, and it at least gets someone on that road to starting...We have instrument rental schemes for more expensive instruments such as pipes, harps, concertinas and instruments like that. People can rent them for a while, so they are not out that huge money before a child or young person starts playing the music. We also do family discounts. Essentially, Comhaltas works with families and people all across to make sure that every child has the opportunity. If a family is in difficulty money-wise, we look to work with them to ensure that the child gets an opportunity. Cost or poverty should never be a barrier to people”.*

210. Grainne Scullion continued:

*“We are a community-based organisation, so we are very lucky that some people gift us instruments that they might no longer play or that are sitting around the house with nobody playing them. We then pass those on to people who are in need of an instrument but cannot afford to buy one”.*

211. In many cases the young people who play these instruments in cultural organisations are not playing this or another instrument at school. This was also reflected in evidence from the Confederation of Ulster Bands (Appendix 2). Musical expression has been described in evidence to this inquiry as a way for young people to express their culture which is not anti-social. It would therefore appear that music - and other cultural pursuits – might be a useful way of giving young people confidence and providing a platform for them to cross community divides. However, as part of this a strategic approach needs to be taken which ensures that this expression of culture does not raise other issues. Finding ways to support the cost of learning/owning musical instruments by young people would seem to be a positive way to use an existing cultural interest to open up wider exposure to music and the arts.

212. The cost, of both attending and participating in arts and cultural activities and to purchase equipment, is clearly a significant issue faced by members of disadvantaged communities. The Committee would suggest that solutions to these issues are most likely to be found and funded at government level.

### **Recommendations:**

213. **The Committee recommends that the Executive Arts and Culture Strategy examines how best the ‘Test Drive the Arts’ scheme can be developed further to widen access to the arts to disadvantaged communities, particularly with regard to those in rural areas. It would be worth the Strategy exploring the idea of ‘social clauses’ for publicly funded performance venues; however, resources would have to be provided through the Strategy to support this.**



214. **The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should tackle the issue of providing access to a range of musical genres for those in disadvantaged communities. The Strategy must look at options for bringing professional musicians into schools and supporting them to engage with local bands and disadvantaged communities. To facilitate young people and musical groups/bands in these communities, the Strategy should also look at how the provision of costly equipment, such as musical instruments, might be facilitated.**

### **Geography/Location**

215. There are also a number of facets to the barrier of geography or location. A key part of the terms of reference for this inquiry is to look at how issue affect urban and rural dwellers. From the evidence that the Committee has received it is clear that transport is seen as a big issue preventing working class communities from engaging with the arts. Almost inevitably this will be a bigger issue for rural dwellers as the transport infrastructure in rural areas is not as developed and public transport is not as frequent or plentiful.

216. In its written submission to the inquiry (Appendix 3) the Lyric Theatre stated:

*"Whilst it may be the immediate assumption, it is our opinion that ticket prices are not the only barrier to some people attending the theatre. Even in cases where we have offered heavily discounted or free tickets, groups are unable to come or those invited remain unwilling to attend. In recent years our work with schools has taught us that it is often the cost of transport or the unavailability of staff willing to take on extra-curricular activities that prevent people attending. Similarly, having spoken to community groups who do not avail of our community ticketing scheme we are repeatedly told that the barrier is not the ticket price but the cost of transport. Have offered free tickets to local students and there wasn't much uptake".*

217. On the face of it, this would suggest it is not necessarily the cost of a ticket for an arts event that acts as a barrier, but the availability, and perhaps cost, of transport to get there. During briefing sessions for this inquiry the Committee heard a variety of opinions on this issue. In fact, it was one of the most discussed potential barriers to the inclusion in the arts of disadvantaged and deprived communities.

218. During the Lyric Theatre's briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Ciarán McAuley stated:

*"We have had relationships with Translink, and we ran projects with them. We have not had anything recently. Our most recent correspondence with Translink was to make an appeal about late-night transport, particularly for rural communities. If you come from anywhere further north or east than Ballymena, the last train leaves Belfast at a time that does not allow you to catch a show at the theatre and get to the station in time to get home. It is not easy simply to change your*

*schedule to allow transport to leave later at night, but we could probably do more work in that area”.*

219. This is a point that was raised by other contributors to the inquiry. Transport schedules do not necessarily match the times of arts events, particularly the theatre finishing times. This issue is more acute for rural dwellers.

220. A major arts and culture body, National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) has three sites that are located at some distance from each other, with the Cultra and Omagh sites much more difficult to access using the public transport system than the more centrally located Ulster Museum. During the NMNI briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Paddy Gilmore made the following comment when asked how the organisation deals with the issue of transport to its sites:

*“That is where the discretionary money comes into play. Our Live and Learn programme, for instance, is funded by the Big Lottery. We have just received word that we have an extra £200,000, so we have six years of funding as opposed to five. On the strength of that, we also received £500,000 for a programme with Clanmil called Treasure House. So, we have £1.7 million to spend in that area. In many ways, it is quite easy for us to provide transport for all the community groups and older people's groups that we work with...However, generally we would not be able to provide free transport within this year's budget. We can certainly provide free entry, free programming and so on, but we definitely would not be able to provide free transport, because a transport bill can mount up quite significantly. It is when we have discretionary money, such as the social inclusion programme, that we are able to provide it”.*

221. This highlights something that the Committee heard from a number of other groups – transport is an expensive issue and can be difficult to provide from programme budgets. NMNI has considered this problem and has found the solution in going out to the communities. However, he also highlights an issue that was picked up by some of the other contributors to the inquiry:

*“What we would do, for instance, is go out to a group, a school or an organisation and work with them in their local area, give them the outreach and provide transport to and from the local area. The cost thing is interesting, and it is definitely a barrier. However, one of the other things that we have found about transport is that people feel reassured when they come from their local community to one of our museums, should it be only two miles down the road, if transport is there for them, because a lot of people do not travel out of their local community that much. There is that apprehension, and we have found that; therefore it is very important that transport is provided there as well. The transport issue is a perennial one. It is quite expensive, but having said that, there seems to be a lot of transport in this country in many ways”.*

222. The suggestion that some people and groups may be apprehensive about travelling from their own community to a venue and are more reassured and confident when transport is laid on is important. The Committee heard from one community-based arts group that they would not be able to make use of a large venue's free tickets without the provision of transport. However, in the same briefing the organisation indicated that they would be able to get to the same venue easily on foot if their own production or event was being put on by the venue. This suggests that the cost of transport might be an excuse not to engage with arts that are unfamiliar; however, it is not seen as an issue when it comes to going to see something more familiar and that might have come from the community itself, or where it transport is provided so that participants do not have to think about how to leave their local community.

223. The issue of reluctance to leave your own local community is considered further in the community, cultural and psychological barriers part of this section of the inquiry.

224. As part of Belfast City Council's briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Eimear Henry stated:

*"From my experience, we need to be careful not to put too much emphasis on transport...There are greater barriers that need to be addressed...there are a number of venues on people's doorsteps, and you find the arts in all sorts of unusual places. It is not a case of having to get a bus into the city centre to see something. I also think that it is about building relationships, certainly with the schools sector, with teachers so that they understand the role and the real value that the arts can play in terms of delivering to kids and their education objectives. Sometimes the cost of transport can be seen to be a major barrier, but I definitely think that there are other barriers that should be a priority when you look at what needs to be addressed".*

225. In the case of NMNI, the organisation is of a sufficient size to make arrangements with Translink, as the Committee heard from Paddy Gilmore during the NMNI briefing (Appendix 2):

*"In the Folk and Transport Museum we have quite a good package deal with Translink on special event days. We have had trains running in from Botanic, so there is a fairly good value-for-money relationship there. We also ran shuttle buses for the Titanic programme, so we have done that".*

226. A great deal of the discussion around the provision of transport to arts venues and events etc. looked at how the arts can be introduced to young people at an early age to counter negative perceptions or misconceptions about the arts developing and taking root. This will be expanded on in the educational barriers part of this section. In the NMNI briefing Paddy Gilmore highlighted to the Committee:

*“The difficulty with education and library boards, as far as I can see, is that they do not see it as their role to provide transport to museums”.*

227. It would seem to be the case that if the arts are to become an integral part of the lives of disadvantaged, and indeed all, children here, then there needs to be government intervention to ensure that this happens. Paddy Gilmore supported this point more generally:

*“Over the past couple of years where we provided free transport for a lot of our free programmes, we negotiated regional deals ourselves, so the actual cost of transport has come down. We have been able to facilitate the farthest-flung rural areas, if that is the correct term. We have transport for any area of the Province, but there is a cost to that.*

*We have not cracked the nut, but I do not think we are on our own on that. A report for the Welsh Government found that transport is an issue there. It is an issue all over, and I am honestly not sure what the answer is. Certainly, the answer is not throwing money at it. There has to be more coordination and a more strategic view. One recommendation in the Welsh report is to set up a cross-departmental committee to look at the transport issue and see whether the problem can be solved. I do not think we have solved it, but certainly we have had some economies of scale and efficiencies”.*

228. As Mr Gilmore highlights, throwing money at the problem of transport is not the answer. Again, as with other issues and barriers, it must be approached strategically as part of a wider plan to embed access to, and inclusion in, the arts in all our communities.

229. The Committee wanted to hear rural voices during the inquiry and undertook a stakeholder discussion event at the Flowerfield Arts Centre in Portstewart (Appendix 2). During that event Louise Rossington from Big Telly made the following comment:

*“I think that confidence is also a big issue, and I think that there is a big difference between urban and rural dwellers. We have certainly found that, particularly with our older peoples' programme of work, where we work across the whole of Northern Ireland. In urban centres, confidence levels are much, much higher, even for people who have never done any artistic activity, than they are in rural areas. That is a big issue, and that requires a different kind of work and a different way of working. I also think that price can be an issue, and that is where schemes like Test Drive the Arts are a big incentive. I also think that those sorts of schemes need to be expanded. They need to be given the funds to be able to expand into more areas”.*

230. This is an interesting and important point. It cannot simply be assumed that marginalised and disadvantaged communities experience the same barriers in both urban and rural locations. It is clear that people coming from deprived rural communities, indeed rural communities generally, have different

and complex barriers and issues to deal with when engaging with the arts when compared to urban communities. This is something that must be addressed in any strategies to promote inclusion in the arts.

231. Transport is obviously an issue and it has a number of different aspects. Psychologically the provision of transport from their own community to arts and cultural events can make leaving their familiar surroundings less intimidating for people from disadvantaged communities. Another aspect to this is the expense people from rural areas face when seeking transport to and from arts and cultural events. The NMNI evidence (Appendix 3) to the Committee show how issues around transport can be solved; however, this has been at a cost to the organisation's already pressed programme budgets. Some respondents to this inquiry have pointed to the utilisation of the school bus fleet and Translink's public subsidy as possible solutions.

**Recommendation:**

232. **The Committee recommends that a transportation strand is developed as part of the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy to ensure access for disadvantaged communities, and also young people and rural communities. Consideration should be given as to how existing public service transport provision might be utilised.**

**Education**

233. Reflecting on the huge quantity of evidence that the Committee received for this inquiry, education and educational barriers represented one of the most often highlighted issues. The very fundamental nature of education and how it shapes people and their experiences make it a key consideration in this inquiry. Members heard how a failure to properly introduce the arts to young people at an early age can reinforce a sense of alienation from the arts and can allow negative family or community attitudes towards the arts take root unchallenged. The evidence presented to the Committee has also shown that those communities with the lowest levels of educational achievement are generally the most deprived and disadvantaged and also tend to be the least involved in the arts.
234. In their submission to the inquiry the Replay Theatre Company highlighted the following:

*"Academic research and government reports cannot overstate the importance of the Early Years (from 0-4 years) in strongly influencing children's outcomes in later life. Experiences at this stage in a child's life are the foundations for creating confident learners and participative citizens. Several studies outline the significance of arts access and participation from the earliest age in supporting children's personal and social development, enriching basic abilities and key competencies such as self-expression and confidence. Another benefit relates to preventative spending, with access to the arts for children from an early age helping to establish a life-long interest whereby the child and their*

*family will continue to engage with the arts and take part in this shared experience in the years to come”.*

235. The Committee heard similar evidence from a number of contributors. The evidence strongly suggested that early exposure to the arts when a child’s mind is at its most open and responsive can lead to a lifetime interest in the arts and allows the individual to be more comfortable engaging with, and exploring, the arts. Additionally, the evidence suggested that engaging in arts activity by children and young people can have a very positive impact on their wellbeing and general development. It might then be suggested that children and young people who come from working class communities and are disadvantaged and deprived in so many ways may have the most to gain from early engagement with the arts.

236. In their submission to the inquiry the Ulster Association of Youth Drama highlighted the benefits of involvement in the arts by young people:

*“Many children’s first experiences of drama occur in schools. If drama is treated as an inferior subject, or in secondary level education is not taught by someone with this specific expertise, will young people want to pursue their interests outside of school?...young people should be experiencing the arts and participating in projects from an early age right up to when they leave school. If this occurs, the next generation of young people will have parents that have had these experiences. This can lead to these parents understanding the benefits and encouraging their children and grandchildren to get involved. Barriers and perceptions of the arts are then being tackled”.*

237. It is clearly suggested that engaging children and young people in the arts in school may well have the added benefit of bringing that engagement to those connected to them and the wider community; creating a culture of appreciation of the arts. This is explored in more depth in this section of the report in the consideration of community, cultural and psychological barriers to engagement and inclusion in the arts.

238. During the NITA briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Ali Fizgibbon from Young at Art commented:

*“We have been working with Stranmillis College, training the third-year students on its degree enhancement programme on how to use critical appraisal skills with live performance with their children in order to improve things like literacy, visual literacy, articulation, confidence and opinion-forming. Actually, it is not terribly challenging to deliver that kind of work, but it is the domain of a very large Department with a very substantial budget in the Department of Education, which has a priority. One of the five learning areas in the primary curriculum is the arts, but the level to which that is being manifested in provision in schools and provision for children to visit theatre venues...is not there. That is all devolved down towards DCAL’s budget and then down to the Arts Council’s budget. So, essentially you have one of the smallest budgets within the Executive addressing one of the most major challenges,*

*which is actually not just a challenge for the present, in that children have the right to engage in the arts as much as adults in the present, but also in that you are also looking at what those children will feel about the arts and theatre experiences in 10 or 15 years' time and whether there are opportunities available in other regions like Scotland and Wales, which have really high-level early years programmes. What opportunities are our children missing because there is not a level of joined-up thinking?"*

239. As the Committee has highlighted on a number of occasions, the arts should be something that is a part of everyone's everyday lives, not an optional add-on. The suggestion above is that the arts should be 'mainstreamed' by the Executive and should not be seen as the sole responsibility of one small department. Obviously other departments within the Executive undertake arts related activity; however, it would appear to be fragmented and without strategic direction. Ms Fitzgibbon goes on to say:

*"I go back to the interdepartmental strategy on creativity, if I can cast your minds back a significant number of years. That showed real, imaginative, cross-departmental working and led to the changes in the primary curriculum, which I think are huge. That may need to be re-examined and reinvigorated to address some of the issues you are talking about. My experience is that parents come with their children, so you get the parents seeing and having a different, positive, creative experience, and you develop an adult audience at the same time as you work with the children".*

240. Returning to the benefits of engaging with the arts to children and young people, Foras Na Gaeilge highlighted an initiative that was undertaken in the Fatima Mansions in Dublin called ArkLink. A 2007 summary report of the ArkLink Initiative can be found at Appendix 5. ArkLink is an initiative of The Ark, A cultural centre for children in the Fatima Mansions area of Dublin. This is a very disadvantaged local authority housing estate, built in the late 1940s, renovated in the late 1980s and demolished and rebuilt from 2005 to 2007. This summary report reflects on the initial five-year pilot stage to December 2005, funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Irish Youth Foundation. The Ark is described as:

*"...Europe's first custom-built Children's Cultural Centre, programmes, promotes and hosts high quality cultural work, which is by children, for children and about children. The Ark is a charitable organisation, founded on the principle that all children, as citizens, have the same cultural entitlements as adults. We work with a diverse range of Irish and international artists to develop original, inspirational and playful programmes for children, aged 3—14 so that they can extend their imaginations and horizons".*

241. Parents of children involved in the Initiative talk about their being better behaved, more confident, more thoughtful, more relaxed, and more likely to bond with other children and be supportive of them. Additionally, there were

improvements noted in participants' manual skills and concentration. Parents were also pleased that children could amuse themselves creatively inside on rainy days and were being exposed to experiences by the Initiative that they simply wouldn't have been able to give them. Improvements in participants' schoolwork was also noted. Other benefits included greater integration on the estate – as the children met more as part of the Initiative so did their parents. The inhabitants of the estate also began to feel more positive about themselves generally.

242. Key factors in the success of the Initiative included: using artists experienced in working in contexts of social change and social engagement; artists being seen within the community; taking a child-friendly approach to all aspects of the Initiative; using local parents as support workers; fostering an increasing sense of ownership of the initiative by the host community; and providing choice within a clear structure. The Initiative illustrates that participation in the arts not only has apparent and direct benefits for the children and young people involved; it also has much wider benefits for their families and the wider community. This again would suggest that the arts have extremely positive applications within and beyond the classroom and can be used to facilitate personal, social and community benefits.

243. Using the arts to engage and benefit children and young people is not new, nor is it an isolated phenomenon. In 2013 the Scottish Government launched *'Time to Shine'*, Scotland's Youth Arts Strategy for ages 0 to 25 (Appendix 5). The longer-term intention of the Strategy is to develop Scotland as an "international leader" in children and young people's arts and creativity. Its key themes are: **Participation** – creating and sustaining engagement; **Progression** – nurturing creativity and talent; and **Provision** – developing infrastructure and quality.

244. The Strategy also seeks to build on established links between culture, education, youth employment and personal development – again, reinforcing the relationship between these that has been evident in this inquiry. The Strategy is linked to the *'Curriculum for Excellence'* and is focused on the development of the individual and the use of art and culture to underpin other areas of the curriculum and to further stimulate the creative economy. Key questions asked as part of the consultation on the Strategy were: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How will we get there? Creative Scotland led on the drafting of the strategy with a deliberate choice to go for 0 to 25 to be as holistic as possible. The Strategy focuses on being inclusive and seeks to tackle disadvantage and other factors which may inhibit participation. In many ways these are the questions that can be asked about any government's approach to the arts and culture. The key themes of the Strategy also consider many of the issues that this inquiry is examining:

***"Participation:** Many factors impact on how, or if, young people engage in the arts: where they live; their family environment; their peers; cost, transport and availability of local cultural infrastructure;*

***Progression:** Creating effective access to a range of initial experiences is the first step in supporting and nurturing young people's talent and ambition. We must ensure that we have the mechanisms in place to*



*identify potential and create the link between first access and continued opportunities; and*

**Provision:** *Scotland has a pool of highly talented, dedicated and passionate artists, practitioners and organisations, working hard to deliver high quality arts activities which cover the twin ambitions of: engaging as many young people as possible; and supporting the on-going development of those with a particular talent. This strategy champions that work, celebrates their contributions and proposes ways to create mechanisms to allow more collaborative working and sustainability.”*

245. The seven key principles of how the Strategy will be achieved also tie in with a number of the themes of this inquiry, including the need for joined-up government, using the arts and culture to tackle inequalities and embracing modern technology to facilitate this:

- Place young people at the centre of the strategy’s aims and ambitions, but also at the centre of plans to deliver the strategy;
- Work within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence* and the other policy frameworks that support young people (including museums, libraries, schools, skills, health, etc.);
- Work collaboratively; create mechanisms for better information sharing, peer support and networking;
- Be proactive in using digital technology;
- Work with national and local government – Article 31 of the UNCRC declares that: States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts; States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity;
- Tackle inequalities – socio-economic and Section 75; and
- Continually strive for quality improvement (biennial evaluations of the strategy).

246. As indicated above, Scotland is not alone in have a highly focused strategy to use the arts and culture to improve the lives of children and young people and to ensure that these are part of their daily lives. During the NITA briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Ali Fitzgibbon of Young at Art highlighted an international example:

*“Denmark has 5.5 million people. It has a similar urban/rural split [to Northern Ireland]...It is considered to be one of the world experts in creating professional theatre for young audiences. In the mid-1970s, in response to a real issue around educational development, they established the principle that every child should see a piece of quality professional theatre every year they were in school. They then did the mathematics and established that, if one third of a population of 5.5 million people were of school-going age, and if the average theatre company could perform 100 times a year, they needed 130 theatre*

*companies, so they changed the funding model to fund 130 theatre companies. That created a body of community, but it also created a body of children who were active learners, were creative and were developing skills in emotional literacy, visual literacy, different kinds of capacities, and learning about diversity and all the different things that roll out of what happens when quality theatre comes into a child's life.*

*The knock-on effect was that Danish children's theatre became the single greatest cultural export of Denmark. They reckon that, two years ago, a piece of Danish theatre was performed somewhere in the world every four minutes. There is an economic tipping point. You start with what you think has to happen, and you cost it accordingly”.*

247. As has already been established, drama is part of the curriculum for at least primary schools in Northern Ireland; however, this inquiry suggests that it is not necessarily receiving the focus that it should, despite the clear benefits that participation in arts and cultural activities brings children and young people, not least those from the most deprived and marginalised communities. Again, as suggested above, a holistic approach to the children and young people's engagement with the arts and culture that crosses departmental barriers. Again, if the arts and culture are viewed as the particular responsibility of one department then there is a greater risk that they become marginalised when there are difficult budgetary decisions to be made.

248. As John Davison commented during the NITA briefing:

*“This is the opportunity to look at what other Departments could be involved. The Department of Education has a curriculum requirement for drama. We suggest that there could be a lead in the Department of Education to provide a commitment to funding and to do that analysis to see what it would cost to bring a theatre performance to a school or schools to theatre performances at post-primary and primary level”.*

249. Emma Jordan added:

*“We have companies that present their work in a school context. If we want to develop a culture of engagement with art at a societal level, it is important that young people and children go to our arts venues that they feel that they own that space and that they engage with the work and the idea of art and culture on that level. That is maybe a little bit of a sea change in terms of policy”.*

250. Of course it would be completely wrong to say that Northern Ireland has no strategic approach to engaging children and young people in the arts and culture. The ACNI has developed a Youth Arts element for its ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ Strategy, 2013 to 2018 (Appendix 5). With respect to Youth Arts the ACNI comments in the document:

*“Children and young people [0-25] participate in the arts across all art forms and in contexts ranging from arts venues, festivals, schools,*

*colleges and universities, and including libraries, health care settings, museums, youth clubs and community and voluntary groups. Their engagement sometimes takes place alongside adults but it occurs primarily through organisations, programmes and initiatives dedicated to them.*

*Council's support and resourcing of Youth Arts is based on the knowledge that the arts are a means to improving quality of life, enabling self-expression, enhancing learning and employability and furthering the exploration of personal and social identity for children and young people as they grow and develop.*

*The Council recognises that the arts are central to future policy for children and young people in educational, social and economic development. Engaging in the arts enriches children and young people's lives, enhances social cohesion and opens up personal and collective dialogue while providing the opportunity to learn skills which are increasingly important to our economy".*

251. The Strategy makes it clear that the ACNI believes that the arts and culture can "...enhance social equity, interdependence and empowerment"; not least for the disadvantaged and marginalised communities which are the focus of this inquiry. Fundamentally, the ACNI believes that using the arts and culture as a medium for social change can allow young people, and older people, from these communities to become "...artists and active culture makers...", with all of the benefits that this entails.

252. The Committee heard a range of evidence of work that is undertaken in the sphere of arts and culture with children and young people by large and small venues, by established and new groups, and by community-based groups.

253. During their evidence to the Committee (Appendix 2) the Crescent Arts Centre highlighted that it reaches out to all the primary and post-primary schools in its area highlighting, however, budget constraints mean that they cannot undertake specific programmes or activities with them all. As Ann Feely from the Crescent indicated:

*"The primary-school age range is one of the most important to get to participate in the arts. We strive to do that constantly, and we will certainly look at that again and try to deliver more programmes for younger children".*

254. The Ulster Orchestra, one of Northern Ireland's key arts and culture pillars, also undertakes educational outreach activities with primary and post-primary schools and with adults with special needs. In line with the Department's priority of Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion (PETPSE), the Orchestra has focused on projects that aim to tackle social issues. The Orchestra, like many other contributors to this inquiry, stressed the importance of developing relationships and collaborating when

undertaking educational, or indeed any, outreach. During the 2012/13 financial year, the Orchestra worked with 125 schools in all Northern Ireland's counties, with 25% of these being located in the 20% of areas with the greatest levels of multiple deprivation.

255. A key project was the 'Paper Orchestra' which operates on the 'El Sistema' model. Beginning in January 2014, this project involved working with the Good Shepherd PS in Poleglass and Wheatfield PS in the Greater Shankill, supported by the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and the Greater Shankill Area Partnership. Both schools are in areas of high deprivation and are from opposite sides of the religious divide.

256. The purpose of the project is to familiarise children with the instruments involved in an orchestra and how to take care of them and to foster an interest hearing and playing music. The children made their own paper instruments and also engaged in music tuition workshops led by members of the Orchestra. The first phase of the project ended with free community performances of 'Peter and the Wolf' by the Orchestra alongside the Paper Orchestra at venues within the areas of both of the schools. It is hoped that the Orchestra will be able to develop and expand this project going forward as part of its new business model which seeks to put the Orchestra at the heart of communities. Additionally, the Orchestra is working with post-primary and special schools and with adults with special needs.

257. During her briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), the Minister reflected on the Paper Orchestra project:

*"Although the children made their own instruments, such as cardboard violins, it is intended that, with the Ulster Orchestra, we will bring instruments into schools and other areas".*

258. During the past few years, the Committee has received briefings from **The Talent Tribe** regarding performing arts training and the need for industry-focused facilities. In its submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), The Talent Tribe highlighted its ambition for the creation of a Creative Industries School (CIS). This would be focused on providing hands-on experience at college level for students seeking careers in the creative industries, particularly performing and related arts. The CIS would seek to work in a complementary way with existing provision, but would use the industry itself to support training. The CIS would build on Northern Ireland's growing reputation in the creative industries. In addition, it would provide an environment where young talent could be identified and nurtured. The submission also highlighted how specific benefits for disenfranchised communities could be realised

259. During her briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2) Fedelma Harkin of Talent Tribe reflected on her time teaching in St. Louise's Comprehensive College, particularly on evidence given to the Committee during the NITA briefing by Emma Jordan, a former student of Ms Harkin's:

*"I spent 17 years teaching theatre and media...in a deprived area...I was very proud to read what one of my past students said in a*

*presentation to the Committee...I think that her [Emma Jordan's] exact words were that, in the school that she attended — St Louise's Comprehensive College — creativity was "at the heart" of the curriculum. It seems to happen in some schools but not in others...My former student felt that creativity permeated all the other subjects, and I feel that strongly, too. You can be a scientist, but, if you are not creative, where do you go? What employer does not want an imaginative, creative and innovative person? All of those qualities are transferable".*

260. With reference to drama 'taster sessions' that the Talent Tribe offers young women in deprived areas, Ms Harkin commented:

*"...you cannot run taster sessions and just leave it there; there needs to be a strategy. Using the model of the Talent Tribe is the easiest way that I can think of explaining it. Loads of kids engage and play in sport and may continue playing every week. They have a wee manager, competitions and all of the rest of it, and some move to the next level. It is the same with us. In the same way, these young women run taster and introductory sessions for the ones below, and they manage the little teams. At the top of the pyramid are those who engage in the industry and take it forward".*

261. The suggestion is that those who are not familiar or comfortable with the arts and culture need to be supported in their engagement over the longer-term. This can be greatly facilitated by peer mentoring and facilitation from within the community and the result can be empowerment:

*"Many of the kids we work with do not even have a role model never mind support. That increases the divide and it means that the communities they come from do not have a voice...We know that it is a powerful outlet for people that they feel listened to".*

262. Ms Harkin also stressed the need for collaboration:

*"I collaborate. I spent years in the BBC, and it is about collaboration. So, I welcome it. At the minute, especially, some people are nervous about collaboration or see threat in it: I do not. I think that, as Northern Ireland plc, we are stronger. The essence of what we do is that we do not try to replicate what schools are doing...We are trying to train for the creative industry. So, in terms of engagement, there is overlap, and I think that we should be doing that. In fact, at the minute, we are in the process of developing a major project with the Grand Opera House, which is being very supportive about giving the Opera House over to the community".*

263. As well as reinforcing the benefits to young people from marginalised communities engaging in the arts and culture and the additional benefits to those communities themselves, Ms Harkin also stressed the need for there to be career pathways to follow on from this engagement:

*"The thing is this: if I were sitting here now as a producer, and you came to me and said that you would like to direct, I would ask for your show-reel. Where does someone who wants to do this start? A person from the industry said to me one day that this is the only profession he knew where someone could come to him and say that they wanted to be a director, and, when asked for their show-reel, was told that they had made a film when they were at Queen's. He said, "Name another profession where you can try to use your homework to get a job". It is a fair point.*

*Our idea for the creative school is to use that industry. The money is not to build an edifice; it is to have a virtual relationship, which means the regional aspect is taken care of. You can study wherever you are, and we can sell that around the world. We are known around the world for turning out talent and all the rest of it..."*

264. The need for clear pathways into arts and culture careers for young people was also highlighted by Desima Connolly from Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre at the Portstewart Inquiry Discussion event (Appendix 2):

*"I used to bring artists into schools, and a number of school-kids did not recognise when I introduced an artist that these were people who making their living from animation or film work or visual arts or writing. It is about opening those doors to that whole area of potential career development, which, thankfully, is being tackled through the creative industries fund etc, and I know that that will be an ongoing thing".*

265. Also at the Portstewart Inquiry Discussion event the Committee heard from Louise Rossington (Big Telly) who stressed the importance of promoting arts subjects at school through the STEM-to-STEAM agenda, something which the Committee promoted in some of the recommendations coming from its Creative Industries Inquiry:

*"I am a very strong supporter of the STEM-to-STEAM agenda, and I think that it is fundamentally important that all children at a primary-school age are introduced to the arts by being taken to a venue, whether that is a professional venue or a community venue, to see an arts event, so that they are not just experiencing art in their own environment but also have that experience and have some of that barrier broken down by being taken to that venue, which, in later years, may otherwise be seen as this big, scary place that the person has never been to in their life nor wants to go into".*

266. In her evidence to the Committee Fedelma Harkin reflected further on career pathways leading from engagement in the arts and culture through Talent Tribes project with deprived young women:

*"As regards the actual outcomes for those young women, three of them have gone on to get employment in other jobs outside the organisation.*

*The transferable skills are bound to have helped them on that interface and interview...Two of them are being written in as cast for the Hole in the Wall Gang's new series called 'Number Twos', which I am sure all of you will enjoy as it focuses on Stormont”.*

267. Jean Mallon added:

*“I came into the Talent Tribe through an internship in 2011. It was through a volunteer scheme for people who could not find jobs. I came in through a completely different discipline as a graphic designer. I fell in love with it immediately. I was working with young people, going out and doing projects. In the first week, we were filming with an American film company. I thought that this was a world that I really wanted to get into. Like many of the girls in this project, I did not know half of the jobs that are available in the creative industries. I thought that a production manager was someone who stood by a conveyer belt. When I realised just what you actually had to do to become a production manager, I took it on on top of the job that I had. I built up the skills, trained on the job, made all the mistakes, and then worked with the young people. I have been doing it for four years now”.*

268. During the Spectrum Centre’s briefing (Appendix 2), Bobby Foster told the Committee:

*“I go around the primary schools, and we have produced two activity books. One is called 'The Shankill at War', which looks at the Belfast Blitz's impact on the Shankill and what you would have seen or heard. It was passed by three principals to make sure that it was classroom-friendly and tied into something that the kids could relate to today. For instance, there is a page full of groceries, and the child is asked, if he or she were going to Tesco or Sainsbury's with mum, how many of those grocery items exist. They then pick out what they can identify from then to now...you are introducing them to the arts at an early age, teaching them poetry and getting them to write stories”.*

269. Obviously a great deal of work is already being undertaken with schools by a range of arts and culture groups, and the Committee commends this. There has also been considerable advocacy for the STEM to STEAM agenda, which the Committee strongly supports. However, with respect to getting young people from disadvantaged communities involved in arts and cultural activities, school remains the most significant factor. Involvement through school ameliorates negativity around participating in arts and cultural activities that might be experienced at home, or from friends or the wider local community. It is therefore vital that schools have a strong and well-developed with the arts and culture sectors, including theatres, libraries, museums, the Ulster Orchestra and individual artists and creators. These relationships can be established schools and then supported by groups in young people’s own communities.

## Recommendation:

270. **The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy is underpinned by access to arts and cultural activities and events through the school curriculum at all Key Stages. Education has a key role to play in the Strategy and this role should be supported by the development of Memoranda of Understanding with key pillars of our arts and culture infrastructure, such as libraries, museums, music organisations, the publicly funded theatres and others. The substance of these Memoranda must be properly resourced to the benefit of all young people, but particular focus should be on young people in disadvantaged communities.**
271. **The Committee further recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy develops clear pathways into arts and culture-focused careers through the expansion of existing apprenticeships and the creation of new ones. Additionally, the Strategy should examine creative ways to use digital technology, gaming etc. and existing bodies which promote the application of technology, as well as existing activity in the creative industries here to further develop employment in the sector.**

## Funding

272. The issue of funding was discussed in almost all of the briefings received by the Committee for the inquiry and was included in virtually all of the written submissions. It also featured heavily at the Portstewart and Belfast Inquiry Discussion events. Perhaps more than any of the barriers to or issues around inclusion in the arts discussed as part of this inquiry, funding was seen to be at the heart of what prevents engagement and what can be done to promote engagement. The Committee not only heard about the need for more funding, but also the need to consider how funding, the application for it, and the delivery of it, needs to be restructured.
273. In their written submission to the Committee (Appendix 3), the Belvoir Players described funding as:
- "...a major issue in working class areas and one with which we ourselves are familiar. There are a lot of professional theatre companies who will do work in the community, over a period of approx 4-6 weeks, this will be the only access to the arts this community will have, and this will be limited to one group. If funding were to be more accessible, including simplification of the application process, then groups in working class areas could avail of funding. We would also add that, in terms of funding for groups, there should be less emphasis placed on professional or amateur and more on the artistic skills available and how they can benefit the local area".*
274. This comment sums up some of the key issues which were identified with respect to funding, other than needing more of it. Many of the groups that



contributed to the inquiry highlighted that the application process for many funding streams is fairly tortuous and is best done by someone with time and experience. For many small community and voluntary groups there is simply no-one like this available to help them. The result can often be that they do not apply for all the funding that they could, or they continually miss the mark because of their lack of experience and understanding. A further issue is that, in many cases project funding is very time-bound and, sometimes, cannot be applied for again for the same project in the same area. This phenomenon of 'parachute' funding means that there is little project legacy and the value of the work done can often evaporate quickly. Additionally, funding may not last long enough to build enduring relationships within the community and the experience of 'parachute' projects can, on occasion, put those they seek to target off as they become wary of people dropping in to their community, raising their hopes and aspirations and then disappearing again.

275. In addition, there was a reflection at both the discussion events that those professionals who work in the sector are often doing so for very low wages. They are often paid for the time that they are undertaking an activity; however, they may not receive payment for their preparation time. This can make careers as professional artists and other creative professionals less attractive as they may not pay a living wage. The knock-on factor in this could be that working in the creative professions is only viable for those with other sources of income, or some other kind of subsidy. In the case of individuals from working class or disadvantaged communities this will be a further barrier to their participation.

276. At the Belfast Inquiry Discussion event (Appendix 2), Una Nic Eoin from Prime Cut Productions commented:

*"It [funding] needs to be sustainable. The reality is that, if you have shorter funding periods, you increase the administration and cut down on the delivery. It is as simple as that. It is a self-perpetuating monster. Eventually, instead of, say, 10% of the time being spent on fundraising and 90% on delivery — commensurate with that are the investment in time and, therefore, money — it is about 50:50 and will get worse and worse".*

277. The clear suggestion seems to be that those who have the capacity to apply for funding are spending increasing amounts of their time doing it as funding periods continue to get shorter, so organisations are always looking out for funding opportunities. This is likely to have an impact on how much of their time and energy is left to apply to the programme itself. The impact on working class communities would seem to be worst as these communities are often the least well equipped to apply for and win funding, and they are most in need of the engagement and benefits that the projects would bring.

278. This issue was emphasised by Lorna Gough from Coleraine Education Community Project at the Portstewart Inquiry Discussion event (Appendix 2):

*"My funding will run out in September, with the possibility of an extension to April. I have spent three years building up relationships*

*with parents and pupils and getting them involved in things that they would not necessarily have been involved in otherwise. If that continuity disappears, what happens?*

*The funding guidelines have changed through the years. After working with one set of guidelines, they suddenly decide to move the goalposts. Where does that leave you? I always try to put in a bit of qualitative experience at the end of my reports. I think that it is really important for people to read about the qualitative experiences, rather than looking at facts and figures that relate to Government targets. Let us look at people on base level, which is what a lot of people here are doing”.*

279. Like many of the contributors to the inquiry, Mrs Gough appears to be suggesting that funding needs to be considered more strategically and with a longer-term perspective. Funding might be better based on delivery and results on the ground as part of a strategic approach, rather than on some more abstract basis.

280. Ms Nic Eoin adds:

*“I am very much a believer in rigorous analysis. We need to see whether things are working or not, but we do not need to be spending 90% of our time ticking boxes, especially ones that have no relevance to anyone — for example, the gender preference of children aged six to 10, which is common.*

*There is an awful lot of time and, therefore, money wasted. That needs to be cut back on —100%. Once there is a funding model that is about delivery, the arts and the work getting out to the people who need and benefit from it, as opposed to a cycle of administration that seems to be purely about keeping people in positions of analysis, we might get down the business that we are all paid to do”.*

281. She also commented:

*“...if we are going to talk about the value of the arts in education, health and across every sector mentioned so far, including employment and the rest of social welfare, do we not need those Departments also to start recognising that and releasing money, as was mentioned? In that way, there would not only be joined-up thinking at government level but in the administration that is part of that, so we would not have to fill out between six and eight funding forms for one project versus the one that we can and should do.*

*Even at local government level, there should be joined-up thinking between the councils and Stormont so that we could do one return whereby you have the same information that you need for all your information and feedback”.*

282. This brings in the theme of achieving better outcomes through joined-up working on the part of government departments and councils. This was a key theme that emerged from the Committee's Creative Industries inquiry. The point is an important one around government sharing the information it receives from organisations its funds and also the need for a more strategic approach to funding of the arts and culture across the Executive, something that is highlighted at a number of points in this inquiry report. Additionally, councils are an important source of funding for groups that are seeking to engage disadvantaged and deprived communities in the arts and culture. Many contributors highlighted that any strategic approach to funding and promoting the arts and culture across the Executive must also reference and engage the councils.
283. At the Belfast stakeholder event Ms Brona Whittaker from Arts and Business NI suggested that the Arts Council might develop a specific fund for outreach and engagement. Organisations could apply to this fund to undertake criteria-based access and participation work. She further suggested that there might be ways of involving local councils in such a fund so that urban and rural work might be joined-up and local councils could work with the Arts Council more strategically in this regard.
284. There was also considerable discussion at both the stakeholder events around ensuring that arts professionals are involved in any engagement work with disadvantaged and deprived communities. This discussion highlighted the need to pay these professionals a decent wage and also recognise their preparation time. It was discussed that more often than not, the arts professionals are only paid for the time that they are present on a project or engaging with participants; however, this means that they are not being paid for their preparation time etc. The upshot of this can be that they end up working for less than minimum wage. The consensus was that funding should take these issues into account.
285. There was unanimous agreement at both stakeholder events that there should be greater co-operation across Executive Departments with respect to strategic planning and funding for arts and culture projects, programmes and engagement. At the Portstewart stakeholder event (Appendix 2) Louise Rossington (Big Telly) highlighted the scope for cross-departmental working between DCAL, DEL, DHSSPS and DSD. She highlighted her involvement in a programme with DEL under its youth employment scheme for 16 to 24 year olds where five creative arts trainees had been taken on. This group of trainees has formed a small shadow company and is being mentored by professional artists and staff from Big Telly. As she pointed out, the DEL scheme was already there and could easily be used for this purpose. Additionally, she highlighted work with older people through DHSSPS and work around making use of empty commercial premises through DSD. She suggested that with greater creativity across departments and, potentially, local councils, much more could be achieved with finite resources.
286. To a great extent these suggestions also put the onus on the arts and culture sector to see possibilities in funding and programmes that do not come with "arts and culture funding" on the tin. This will increasingly be the case from 2016 following the reconfiguration of the Executive Departments.

287. Also at part of the discussion at the Portstewart stakeholder event (Appendix 2) Malcolm Murchison of the Flowerfield Arts Centre reiterated Ms Rossington's point, highlighting that there are a number of excellent examples in the past of joined-up working in the arts between central and local government. He stressed the particular difficulties around seeking arts funding from local councils.
288. During its briefing from Belfast City Council (Appendix 2) the Committee heard a great deal around how the Council organises its funding for the arts etc. As part of the briefing Eimear Henry highlighted that the majority of funding is through partnership with other funders. She highlighted Creative Legacies and City Festivals as being particular examples of this. Both of these had Peace III funding. She went on to highlight Creative and Cultural Belfast as the Council's "flagship project" which receives matched funding from the Arts Council. She also went on to suggest that the new Creative Europe fund offers considerable funding opportunities and it is to be hoped that further possibilities might be forthcoming when the priorities under Peace IV are set out.
289. The Committee has already identified Creative Europe as an important fund for local groups and organisations. The is supportive of the appointment of a Creative Europe Desk Officer who sits within the Arts Council and is involved in a network of such Desk Officers across the UK. The briefing from Belfast City Council stressed how much benefit can be derived from plugging into EU funding and becoming involved in the wide range of network opportunities that the EU offers. It is likely that there are lessons for other councils to learn from Belfast's experience. Indeed, Derry City Council has already developed a European unit based on Belfast's model and it is to be hoped that the new councils follow this lead.
290. During the course of this inquiry witnesses have voiced concerns around their lack of capacity to seek funding from central or local government, or the EU. During the Belfast City Council briefing (Appendix 2) Brian Johnston dealt with this from a Council perspective. He acknowledged that funding has become very competitive and that thresholds for achieving funding have risen. However, he also pointed out that the Council has identified the areas of Belfast where there is a lack of capacity to apply for funding. Council officers go to those areas to work with groups to improve their chances of gaining funding and so widen out the pool of recipients of funding.
291. The Committee is aware that this kind of capacity building is also undertaken by the Arts Council; however, it is clear that it might be lacking in other council areas and it might be worthwhile developing central funding to facilitate more work of this kind.
292. Not only did the discussion around funding highlight difficulties around having the capacity to apply and the need for greater joined-up working and partnership; there was also a great deal said around the structure of the funding itself once it has been secured. The Committee heard from many witnesses that funding is too short-term and that once directed to one area it cannot return there for some time. Projects were characterised as being

“parachuted in”, as John Davison highlighted during the NITA briefing (Appendix 2):

*“As mentioned in previous evidence to the Committee, community engagement tends to be parachuted in for a time. As you all know, it takes a really long time to build trust and relationships with communities. That is what producing theatre companies are doing, not only because it is an Arts Council requirement but because that is what their theatre is about. The difficulty is what happens on the venue side. The funding is time limited, and, quite often, there is a requirement not to repeat a project in an area where it has already happened, so it moves on. At the same time, however, the venue is trying to keep hold of that audience or get it back. So there is a disconnect because of the way in which funding is structured for producing theatres that work in community engagement. Venues, then, have to work harder to get an audience that should be receptive to theatre because it has had some exposure to it, but that follow-up does not always happen”.*

293. With regard to joined-up working across Departments, during the NMNI briefing (Appendix 2) Jude Helliker highlighted:

*“...part of the social inclusion programme that we have not touched on is the Museums to Work programme, which is part of our overall employability programme. We recognise, as quite a large employer across the whole area, that we have a responsibility to try to develop skills and employability around people, particularly the long-term unemployed.*

*We had a programme as part of the social inclusion programme last year where we brought five people who had been long-term unemployed from areas of high deprivation, and they are just coming to the end of their six-month employability programme. They are gaining WorldHost qualifications and interview and CV skills, and are hoping then to go back out into the world of work. We have a second programme starting this year, but for fewer people because of the cost of running the scheme...the opportunities for collaborating with DEL, for example, are absolutely ripe, and we need to ensure that some of these ideas are being cross-fertilised amongst some of the other Departments”.*

294. The idea of joined-up working across the Executive Departments was also highlighted during the Audiences NI briefing (Appendix 2). Margaret Henry indicated that the organisation had recently embarked on road shows with the health trusts. They spoke to practitioners, community nurses, health centre managers and others to help them engage with the arts. Additionally, Audiences NI has engaged with Libraries NI to see how the two organisations can work more closely, such as publicising ‘Test Drive the Arts’. Ms Henry intends that Audiences NI will take this collaborative working further and the organisation has plans to engage with the new councils around arts strategies etc. She emphasised the benefits to councils, the Executive and the arts

sector in working closely together. The Committee is highly supportive of any efforts to engage in joined-up working and the development of strategic partnerships.

295. One of the key collaborations that the Committee has heard about during this inquiry is that between the arts and business. The Committee is extremely keen that business plays a much greater role in supporting the arts. During the Arts and Business NI briefing (Appendix 2), Mary Trainor-Nagele highlighted why businesses might want to support the arts:

*“...a lot of businesses partner with the arts because the arts are deeply rooted in communities, and those businesses feel that that association and partnership is a way for them to connect with communities. Another key point to highlight is that a lot of business investment is enabling and extending much of the outreach and accessibility work going on in the sector with working-class communities”.*

296. This motivation for business to engage with the arts is very interesting and is particularly relevant to this inquiry. If businesses are keen to enhance their profile by supporting arts engagement in marginalised communities then it is important this motivation is harnessed in any strategic approach to the arts. Dr Joanne Stuart reinforced the point during the briefing:

*“They [businesses] see the importance of supporting artistic excellence and, through that, supporting increased access for disadvantaged and minority groups. Businesses feel that they have an ideal and unique place in supporting the arts with regard to that”.*

297. Ms Trainor-Nagele continued:

*“In our engagement with the private sector, I have noticed two of the big trends that are coming forward in relation to arts sponsorship. One is about engaging with communities and that kind of corporate social responsibility. The second one is about motivating and retaining the employees of the businesses”.*

298. This would suggest that, not only are businesses providing funding as a means of engaging with the arts sector and wider communities, they are also offering ‘in kind’ support, in the form of employees time and skills. This is also seen as a positive benefit for the employees involved. In its written submission to this inquiry Arts and Business NI highlighted a wide range of collaborations and partnerships involving increased participation in the arts between businesses and the community and arts sectors.

299. The Committee received submissions from a number of Executive Departments (Appendix 3) on the work that they undertake which seeks to use the arts and culture to facilitate a variety of outcomes. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment highlighted its music business support programme. Generator NI is a three year programme which supports artists,

managers, record labels, and music publishers to develop skills, new markets, networks and competences. The programme prioritises:

- Seminars and events – a programme of events and seminars that aims to address the pertinent topics in the music industry promoting networking and industry development. Seminars and events are regional and city-based, using local facilities. An example is the Nerve Centre Cinema in L/Derry;
- Market Development - The programme will be supporting the showcasing of Northern Irish artists and businesses;
- Mentoring - Generator NI has developed a comprehensive multi-tier mentoring strand that will seek to work with all areas of the Northern Irish music industry. General and industry specific clinics will be hosted in Belfast and the programme will also visit regional towns delivering advice and know-how to local artists and businesses through Generator NI Output events; and,
- Talent Development - The Generator NI Talent Development Programme will support the development of an identified group of exceptional artists, bands, producers and performers each year.

300. The Oh Yeah Music Centre in Belfast is a resource for musicians and also a nurturing environment for music entrepreneurs. The building houses rehearsal rooms, a venue space, a songwriting room, a music exhibition and a café area. Oh Yeah runs a series of outreach projects and is has recently launched the third series of a mentoring programme called ‘Scratch My Progress’, sponsored by Invest NI (DETI) and the Arts Council.

301. Scratch My Progress is a pioneering talent development and mentoring scheme for musicians, guiding them through the essentials of PR, promotion, musical technique, vocal and stage skills, performance, event management, finances, legal issues and the value of IP. DETI believes that it has been successful on many levels with a positive buy-in from the music community and a high standard of submissions to join the programme. The support of Citybeat and Radio Ulster has helped to broaden the reach of the project to local communities and expanding the public’s understanding of the programme parameters. The local and international music industry has been highly supportive with artists such as Gary Lightbody offering advice and support.

302. Throughout the evidence gathering process for this inquiry, the Committee heard about the wider benefits that can be derived from engaging in the arts. The Committee is also aware that the communities that are the focus of this inquiry often suffer disproportionately from poor health. This has been highlighted as a barrier to participation. Bringing the arts into healthcare is nothing new; however, the Committee believes that this must be done on a more strategic basis as part of a better joined-up approach to the arts and culture by the Executive. The Arts Council’s ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ strategy has an ‘Arts and Health’ specialist area policy (Appendix 5) which:

*“Aims to promote health and well-being by improving quality of life and cultural access and can include participation in arts activities across all*

*art forms, presentation of arts productions and enhancement of the arts environment”.*

303. Arts Care is the main delivery agent for the policy within healthcare settings across Northern Ireland and was highlighted in the DHSSPS response to the Committee. The key funding objectives for the Arts Council's Arts and Health policy are:

- *Promote health and well-being through cultural access, including arts participation, arts production and presentation, and enhancement of the arts environment;*
- *Increase access and participation opportunities within healthcare settings, including service users, healthcare staff, carers and visitors;*
- *Support arts activities developed on a preventative health basis and delivered in a variety of settings, including schools, community centres and arts venues;*
- *Increase arts activities focusing on promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being and targeting vulnerable older people and young people at risk;*
- *Support activities which advocate for best practice with the Arts & Health sector and place Northern Ireland at the forefront of international Arts & Health practice;*
- *Support the development of research-based projects that examine the impact of Arts and Health practice; increase opportunities for artists and arts organisations to work in Art and Health practice;*
- *Support projects that promote and strengthen partnership working between the arts and health sectors and the development of shared understandings, resources and responsibilities; and*
- *Support best practice through training, support, advice and dissemination of information.*

304. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) the Big Lottery Fund highlighted some of the projects that it funds which provide support to those most at risk in our society using arts and culture elements to achieve their overall project aims. These provide examples of how creative collaboration can bring the arts and culture into a variety of settings to promote a range of positive outcomes.

305. One example is the Big Telly Theatre Company's 'Spring Chickens' project which brings theatre and the arts to older people in rural communities, many of whom have never been to the theatre before. The project is described as follows:

*“Big Telly are travelling throughout Northern Ireland, working primarily with isolated and lonely people who live in sheltered housing, residential and care homes. They also have a specific programme Targeting Older Men (TOM) which uses a touring portable theatre to tour all across Northern Ireland. The men are encouraged to take part by telling a joke or doing a short performance. Workshops to encourage older people to take part in plays are held. Family fun days are organised by the older people where they can get involved in*



*intergenerational activities and coach younger people in schools and workshops...This programme has funded projects to support older people who are at risk of isolation, depression, mental and physical ill health and low self-esteem”.*

306. A project such as this crosses the rural/urban divide and uses the arts and culture to re-engage older and isolated people with their communities and, at the same time, derive considerable personal benefits from the project. It also reflects the fact that “the arts” extends so much further than people often imagine.

307. A further example is with Contact Northern Ireland’s ‘Aggression Related Trauma (ART) – Recovery for Youth’. The project’s purpose is described as follows:

*“...engage with children and young people, aged 8-20 years old who are at risk as a result of their trauma. This can include young people who are disengaged from education and/or leaving the care system, or are at risk of engaging in risk taking behaviours e.g. criminal activity, drug/alcohol misuse etc, as a direct consequence of their experience of aggression related trauma. The project will build their coping strategies and confidence and limit risky behaviour by offering individual and age appropriate treatments and supportive care including art, music and play therapy”.*

308. Again, a project such as this shows how the arts and culture can produce benefits far beyond what is often thought. It also provides further evidence of how the arts and culture can be used across Executive Departments.

309. During the Community Arts Partnership briefing (Appendix 2) to the Committee, Conor Shields discussed working across central and local government:

*“Our rural work will very much focus on conversations with DARD and DSD on the areas of development...We have also been approached by a range of councils to look at community planning through creative process in the shadow year of RPA and local government reform, and we are very keen to enable the local councils to look at various ways to plan and come up with creative solutions, while maintaining the good creative work that has gone on locally. With the research that we have just done on dementia, we will definitely be approaching a range of different agencies and, indeed, trusts and foundations to see if there are different ways, non-medical and non-therapeutic interventions, that can be made through community arts practice that give far greater opportunity for our older people, particularly the most vulnerable”.*

310. In its submission (Appendix 3) the Department for Social Development highlighted its Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. This long-term Strategy targets those communities throughout Northern Ireland suffering the highest

levels of deprivation. It is also a cross-government Strategy which aims to bring together the work of all Executive Departments in partnership with local people to tackle disadvantage and deprivation in all aspects of everyday life. The Strategy has supported a number of arts projects and illustrates how these can enhance community and neighbourhood cohesion and renewal. Examples of organisations which have been helped include:

- Andersonstown Traditional & Contemporary Music School
- USDT Arts Programme
- Arts for All
- OGRAS Youth Club
- Greater Shantallow Community
- North West Play Resource Centre
- Enterprise North West

311. With respect to collaboration, the Minister told the Committee (Appendix 2):

*“For a lot of people, particularly in rural areas, it involves transport costs, parking, the price of tickets, getting something to eat and getting home again. You could be looking at £100 even before you buy a programme...Smart thinking on collaboration enables greater participation, and I want to see what that looks like.*

*Through the extended schools programme in the Department of Education, some schools are in partnership with theatre companies, because there is value in that. When children are involved in the arts — particularly the performing arts but also with music or dance — it is about building self-esteem and confidence. When that happens, there is no question that it stands us all in good stead.*

*The Replay Theatre Company recently staged a production in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Health. The company works particularly with children with disabilities, severe physical disabilities and special needs. I had the privilege of going to a performance in Tor Bank to see Replay and what it does. It is absolutely exceptional. Although some of the children may have profound disabilities, you can see that there is engagement and stimulation through that engagement. That has helped and supported schools, parents and carers. Plays such as 'Pop Candy', which is about legal highs, plays that deal with bullying, 'Man in the Moon', which is about suicide prevention, and many others that we could mention individually all have a value. Children and young people, and not so young people at my age, are involved in telling stories that communities feel are relevant to them. They have personal experiences, which will touch a chord.*

*They are examples of where we can make connections and sustain them. From an economic point of view, it will provide work for performers and companies, and it has the added value of having an*

*impact on children's life skills and lifelong learning, which we need to invest in constantly. Well-rounded children will be well-rounded adults”.*

312. In his briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2), Malcolm Murchison of the Flowerfield Arts Centre highlighted some of the opportunities that the movement to eleven local councils may bring:

*“There is a real opportunity through the community planning programme of local government reform for joined-up government between central government and local government and slam a foot in the door and say, “This stuff is really important to give young people opportunities”. The local authorities, of course, are working with communities at the coalface. Quite often, however, there is a silo mentality in many organisations, not just local government. Hopefully, we will break down some of those barriers. This is an important time to raise these issues and maybe challenge some of the weaknesses of the past and move to better times”.*

313. During the NITA briefing to the Committee, John Davison also highlighted the opportunity presented by the creation of the eleven new councils:

*“As a sector, we see the new super-councils as a real opportunity for theatre, but it needs to come as a joined-up approach with what is happening in the Arts Council. It is no good if we are...trying to fit our projects into different criteria for funding, and, if we had some formal policy around community engagement and had a baseline target that was set by DCAL and looked at what the Arts Council is doing and what the 11 new councils are seeking to achieve, I absolutely think that it would be a massive opportunity”.*

314. From the contributions that the Committee received, it was very apparent that funding for arts and cultural activities is an issue, from the structure of the funding itself and the capacity of groups to apply for it, to joining-up funding programmes across government. As has already been stated, an Executive Arts and Culture Strategy would draw departmental strategies together and this might make scarce resources go further.

315. With the reduction in the number of Executive Departments and the creation of the 11 ‘super’ councils, more effective partnerships and more joined-up activity around funding are entirely possible. Those groups in disadvantaged communities who most need the funding are often the least able to access it; and even when funding is accessed its duration can mean that there is little project legacy in the communities. This can make people wary of engaging again in the future.

**Recommendation:**

316. **The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive’s Arts and Culture Strategy considers the issue of the short length of**

**cycles for funding and other criteria around the awarding of grants that makes the development of project legacy difficult. The Committee suggests that the Strategy examines the use of tiered funding periods which take account of the levels of deprivation in the target community and the need for legacy work. Additionally, the Strategy should build on work already being undertaken to build capacity in community-based groups applying for funding, particularly those groups based in disadvantaged communities.**

317. **The Committee recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy supports the development of funding and 'in-kind' relationships between business and arts and culture organisations, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. Consideration must be given as to how Invest NI might encourage participation in these relationships when providing Foreign Direct Investment and other grants to their clients. Consideration should also be given to the creation of a specific central and local government fund for the promotion of participation the arts and culture by disadvantaged communities. This fund would target groups in those communities using specific, relevant funding criteria and application paperwork should be limited to what is absolutely necessary.**

#### **Awareness / Information / Digital**

318. A number of contributors to this inquiry highlighted the need to create greater awareness of the arts activity that is taking place within working class communities already. There were also calls for better monitoring of that activity and its outcomes. One of the limitations highlighted by the Committee's initial research paper on the issue of inclusion in the arts of working class communities is the lack of information on the numbers of people involved in informal arts, i.e. unticketed events, or free events. This also extends to attempts to quantify the impact of community festivals. However, a number of witnesses indicated that, as part of their funding agreement, they are required to submit a range of returns on their activity. For many there appeared to be no action that they could discern based on these returns. At the Belfast stakeholder event (Appendix 2) Margaret Henry from Audiences NI stated:

*"...people submit monitoring information and it is never seen again. So, there might be a question about the value and usefulness of the information supplied and where it is being held and correlated. In that way, when we come to tell our story, we will have already supplied the data individually and by sector. However, nowhere is all that data pulled together to bring out key insights, key areas for development or key ways of telling our story. It is about being cleverer and maybe asking for less information, but information that we know will, ultimately, have a use, so that it is not just time spent filling out forms. Some work could be done there".*

319. This ties in with the discussion above round the need for central and local government and those involved in the arts to work in a more joined-up way and to see partnership as beneficial rather than a threat. If information is shared regarding what is being learned within the sector around what works and what doesn't, then it is likely that funding can become smarter, more responsive and much more effective. In this way it can be seen that gathering information is vital; however, it is equally vital to disseminate information about what is on offer within communities and this needs to be done in such a way that it is more likely to reach the communities that are the subject of this inquiry. At the Belfast stakeholder event Una Nic Eoin suggested that there needs to something along the lines of a "web dating service" between the arts and community sectors:

*"The aim would not be to double up on any of the important resources that we have now, but there are community resources and there are arts resources, and there is a lack of knowledge between the two sectors about where to go. I am not talking about giving news on funding or anything like that. Rather, it would be almost a mini social network, in which each person could have a place. It would incorporate venues; arts organisations; arts facilitators; the artists themselves, community organisations; community workers who want to work in the arts on an independent basis; and even a volunteer section. In that way, the next time that we decided to seek funding for a project, we would not have to make a load of cold calls asking people whether they were right for our project. We could look up that resource and say, "These are the subjects we are thinking about. These are the things that are useful and relevant to these guys here. Now, now let's have a conversation". It would give us a little information before making the first phone call".*

320. This idea was heavily supported at the Belfast stakeholder event (Appendix 2).
321. In its submission to this inquiry (appendix 3) Paddy Glasgow of Glasgowsbury highlighted that information as a barrier to participation is particularly acute in rural areas. Glasgowsbury goes on to point out, however, that securing the resources to proactively engage in promotion and community outreach is challenging.
322. During the Comhaltas briefing (Appendix 2) the issue was also raised from the perspective of an organisation that has a wide geographical spread, is both urban and rural and relies on volunteers. Breandan Mac Giolla Uir highlighted:

*"We are continually working hard to increase awareness of the work that Comhaltas does through social networks, websites and traditional media, including newspapers, radio etc. Our network, and other organisations that we work with and other links that we have made in the community, also help us to do that. One of the main awareness-raising tools is that our events are community-based events. They are organised by community volunteers assisted by the structure of*

*Comhaltas...Our volunteers also have links to other community organisations, be that churches, schools, the GAA and many others...Our job is to make sure that the information is there, but it is for people looking to engage to seek that information. That is a vitally important point to make”.*

323. This draws together the important themes of partnership and joined-up working and creating awareness and providing information. However, another important point was made of which the Committee is ever mindful – people have to want to engage. This inquiry focuses on what is being done to engage people in disadvantaged, deprived and marginalised communities and include them in the arts; however, there has to be a willingness to be engaged. That ties in with other issues that have been identified such as educational barriers and community, cultural and psychological barriers.

324. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), the Arts Council highlighted that there is a:

*“...technological revolution taking place in which the emergence of digital and social media profoundly affects how we relate to each other and the wider world. This is especially true for children and young people. Technology offers huge opportunities for creative self-expression and the ability to overcome barriers to access and participation that have endured for generations”.*

325. This relates to the issues already raised above around the need to get information from the people who need it and gathering information to better inform how to target marginalised communities and engage them in the arts. It also relates to comments made during the Audiences NI briefing to the Committee. Margaret Henry highlighted an event that it had held called ‘Driving Digital’. This involved 50 arts organisations plus speakers from across the UK and looked at what the digital sector can offer current and potential audiences. Ms Henry pointed out that digital already allows arts organisations to create content and distribute it, to market and engage and to seek evaluation of their work. She went on to suggest that great use of digital in this way goes towards ameliorating two of the barriers to inclusion in the arts that have been identified: cost and being intimidated by the venues and art forms. She also highlighted how this is being done already by showing live theatre and opera through cinemas. Cinema is an art form which already has considerable reach within marginalised communities and cinemas, especially those already embedded in communities, are much less intimidating to visit than dedicated arts venues. They are also much less costly. These performances are also available online. Ms Henry also stressed the need for data on audiences:

*“The arts need to be able to access audience data for individual organisations, but also collectively across the range of activity available. Having this information, we will be able to segment and target our audiences more effectively to make sure that we are reaching as many people as we can with increasingly limited resource. It is impossible for all but the biggest organisations to do this effectively, so*

*Audiences NI aims to develop its own current data capture analysis over the next year and beyond to make this data available and usable. Box-office systems help, of course, but we need to find a way to know about people who are attending free events and events such as community festivals, which are often their main access to the arts, to make sure that we can identify and meet their needs across the sector”.*

326. The Northern Ireland Theatre Association membership contributed to a survey of theatre attendance in 2010-11 (Appendix 2). This captured considerable information. It also highlighted certain priorities for data collection which were echoed by other contributors to this inquiry:

- **Enhancing the available picture with improved data collection:** Filling existing gaps in data collection, ideally by processing as much information through computerised ticketing systems as possible.
- **Building a picture of audience behaviour over time:** Expanding the scope of any future research beyond a single year would enable the use of re-attendance year on year at theatre as an additional measure, allowing the issue of genre and venue loyalty to be explored in more detail.
- **Further exploring geographic reach in the context of customer behaviour:** Additional understanding of the extent to which audiences remain loyal to local venues, or are attracted to other venues, is required.
- **Improving frequency of attendance rates:** More frequent attendees at the arts generally in the short term are more likely to become re-attendees in the long term, suggesting that the starting point for building an audience in the longer term is increasing frequency of attendance in the short term.
- **Measuring and articulating value and impact:** If success and value are only measured in terms of tickets and revenue, then much of the valuable work carried out by theatre producers and programmers in Northern Ireland remains unseen. Further investigation into how value and impact can be measured and articulated consistently across the sector in a language which suits the needs of both the sector and its funders, is recommended.

327. The report highlights that computerised ticketing is the key to sector wide in-depth analysis of the audience for theatre in Northern Ireland. It enables the sort of analysis which just would not be feasible or accurate if conducted using manual data collection or primary research methodologies. The report goes on to state that, since 2004, the number of festivals and venues using a computerised ticketing system has increased drastically, with more than 30 organisations using computerised ticketing in 2012. Audiences NI have been working to create an interconnected infrastructure of audience data for arts events in Northern Ireland, pooling together the data from the majority of these systems to enable analysis of attendances across the sector, and for particular art forms. The goal is to quantify attendances and help understand customer behaviour collectively, not just individually in isolation.

328. The gaps in data collection have been chiefly identified as follows:

- Events in professional venues which currently have no computerised box-office systems. These are commonly venues run by local councils outside of Belfast or Derry/Londonderry or smaller sized festivals;
- Events in professional venues which currently have a computerised box-office system but refuse access to the data for this kind of analysis. There are a limited number of these organisations currently, located in Londonderry, Belfast and Coleraine;
- Events in amateur venues or venues not traditionally used for theatre events, which lack the infrastructure to collect data in a computerised format;
- Non-ticketed events where it is not practical to or desirable to require advance booking, hindering data collection;
- Participation in workshops and other theatre activity where attendance and/or participation is paid for other than by the standard process of purchasing a ticket;
- Work carried out in school environments by companies such as Replay Productions or Cahoots NI;
- Theatre sold in non-traditional formats by companies such as Kabosh or Big Telly Theatre Company; and
- Instances of cultural tourism where attendances are either not recorded because the event they are attending is non-ticketed, purchased on the door without data capture or where a booking is allocated to the tourist's temporary address during their stay in the United Kingdom (e.g. their hotel).

329. Should the gaps in data collection be filled it would improve the ability of the sector to programme, plan and advocate effectively. Data collection would be facilitated if ticket sales for theatre events were processed and recorded electronically. Advances in technology are making it easier for organisations of any size or resources to use the internet to sell tickets online themselves, while there are an increasing number of organisations offering to sell tickets on behalf of others. Where processing sales electronically is not possible, the core measures of number of performances, number of tickets sold and value of seats sold should be recorded not just by the venue/festival selling the tickets, but also by the touring company producing the performance (if appropriate).

330. The Arts Council's written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) linked the possibilities around digital with issues faced by rural working class communities. It highlighted how these communities often find it more difficult to access the arts because of social isolation, poor transport infrastructure and general service dispersal. The Verbal Arts Centre History digital arts programme is targeted at those living in working class rural communities and aims to tackle digital exclusion amongst older people by helping them articulate their stories, thoughts and experiences. Through Lottery funding the Arts Council supports community-based arts projects in Castlederg, Coalisland, Omagh, Donaghcloney, Rosslea and Donaghmore, etc.

331. There is a real need for better data collection regarding participation in arts and culture events. Such data would allow better targeting of information



about the sector to communities that are not currently engaged, particularly disadvantaged communities. Work also needs to be done around the use of digital media platforms to improve the dissemination of information about what is going on in the arts. This approach also allows the sector to target new, harder-to-reach, and non-traditional audiences. Additionally, the digital revolution can be better harnessed by our arts and culture establishment and infrastructure to better ‘broadcast’ their collections, performances, events, and general activities.

#### **Recommendation:**

332. **The Committee recommends that the Executive’s Arts and Culture Strategy seeks to develop better data gathering around participation in arts and cultural activities so that information about these can be better targeted at new audiences, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. Consideration must be given to undertaking this in partnership with local councils.**
333. **The Committee recommends that the Executive’s Arts and Culture Strategy seeks to support the development of an online arts and culture forum where funding partners can find each other. To be effective and have a full reach across Northern Ireland this platform must be developed in conjunction with local councils.**
334. **The Committee recommends that the Executive’s Arts and Culture Strategy establishes a digital platform that promotes participation in the arts and cultural activities and events across central and local government and the private sector. Such a platform requires considerable promotion and should be cognizant of lessons provided by similar platforms. This platform would provide the added benefit of being a one-stop-shop for tourists seeking such activities and events. The ability to access arts and cultural activities, performances, and events in this way is more likely to encourage participation by disadvantaged, hard-to-reach, and other less traditional arts audiences.**

#### **Community, Cultural and Psychological**

335. While gathering evidence for this inquiry it has become clear to the Committee that the barriers to working class communities engaging in and being included in the arts are complex and inter-woven. Perhaps the most complex of these barriers is the one that comes from within these deprived communities. This is the barrier created by these communities’ collective understanding of, attitude to, and experience (or lack thereof) the arts. It is apparent that the phrase “the arts” itself conjures about specific perceptions and prejudices that mitigate against engagement. It is also apparent that there is already a great deal of engagement in the arts in these communities; however, participants often see it as engagement in their own traditional culture and do not view this activity as being within “the arts”. The Committee also heard evidence around how disadvantaged communities are much less likely to venture beyond familiar boundaries to experience the arts. Indeed,

many from these marginalised communities are intimidated by arts venues and their lack of experience of the art forms that take place within them makes for further feelings of alienation. Members heard how many who live in these disadvantaged communities believe that the arts “aren’t for the likes of me”. The Minister confirmed this in her own briefing to the Committee (Appendix 2):

*“I am from a working-class area, and I still live in a working-class area. One of the barriers would have been finance....The realistic position for many families, particularly from deprived areas, is that a lot of the barriers to the arts are financial. Some of them are also still psychological”.*

336. The Committee was very fortunate to receive firsthand briefing from some other members of the communities that are the focus of this inquiry. During the New Lodge Arts briefing (Appendix 2) two young people from disadvantaged communities shared their experiences. Caoimhlín O'Neill, a participant in a number of New Lodge Arts' programmes, told the Committee what the arts has done for her:

*“New Lodge Arts has supported me to develop my talents. Last year, I took part in the Grand Opera House annual youth summer production of 'Annie'. Without my experience in New Lodge Arts, I would not have had the confidence to get involved in something like that outside my local area. I have always felt intimidated by bigger arts venues and organisations, but New Lodge Arts brought me to see several shows and I realised that I could be part of them...I would not have had the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds had I not been involved with the company..I am a more confident young person...”*

337. Ryan McMahon highlighted his view of the arts before becoming involved in New Lodge Arts, as a participant and, latterly, working for the organisation:

*“I got involved in New Lodge Arts six years ago through its dance and drama projects. I was attracted to their classes because they were free and were right on my doorstep. I would not have had the opportunity to go outside my area to access classes, because my mummy would not have been able to pay for the transport and it would have been too expensive to splash out on. I would not have had the confidence to sign up to other drama projects in arts venues, because I would have felt out of place. I had the perception of being judged by others who came from more well-off areas, and I would have felt that they were all looking at me”.*

338. Ryan also highlights some of the other barriers related to non-participation in the arts for deprived communities, such as cost and transport. However, he highlights a popular view amongst people from these communities that “I would have felt out of place”. This is a perception that appears to be common. It is based on a number of factors, not least the absence of formal participation in activities at arts venues at a younger age

when these kinds of perceptions are formed. It is also based on views passed on within families and the wider community.

339. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), NITA highlighted that faced with communities which have limited or no experience of the arts, its members indicated that there is a pre-conception that theatre or the performing arts is “not relevant” to them. They suggest that it is also difficult for them to compete with other activities and interests, particularly with regard to young people.

340. William Mitchell, Etcetera Theatre Company, echoed this in his own evidence to the Committee (Appendix 2), characterising it as a “class” issue:

*“I think that there is most certainly a class distinction and barrier. I speak from my own experience. I had never engaged with the theatre at all because, given the type of background that I come from, it was somewhere you did not go to. People thought that going to a play was for schoolteachers and the like. There is a distinct barrier”.*

341. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) the Lyric Theatre highlighted some specific issues regarding psychological barriers to inclusion in the arts:

*“Often the barriers to theatre are perceived rather than real. For people who have never been to a theatre there may be perceptions of elitism or a fear of the unknown. Simple questions like “What do I wear?” or “Where do I sit?” won’t enter the minds of a regular theatre-goer but for those who are new can create a barrier that might prevent them from attending”.*

342. This focuses on the lack of experience of theatre performances – perhaps inter-generational in a family or widespread in a community – allowing the activity to develop a fear factor in the minds of people from disadvantaged communities. It is understandable that they would not wish to subject themselves to ridicule if they get something ‘wrong’ at a performance. Again, this kind of fear is best dispelled at an early age and feeds back into the need for everyone of have exposure to the arts from an early age to allow the experience to become familiar.

343. In their written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) Belvoir Players highlighted the perceived “class” issue with regard to attending the theatre. The submission also raised the issue that many in working class communities do not like to venture outside their own area. The submission suggests that this could relate to Northern Ireland’s recent conflict when it was not necessarily considered safe to venture beyond your own community boundary.

344. This issue of those from deprived communities not wishing to go outside their own area was picked up by other contributors. Roger Courtney from the East Belfast Partnership highlighted (Appendix 2):

*“There is a sense of anxiety about going outside the area. We are not talking about everybody in east Belfast; we are talking about people in disadvantaged areas, in particular those closest to the bridge, who find it most difficult to contemplate going to anything over the bridge...There is a sense that people are comfortable in an area that they feel is their own. It is a very Northern Ireland thing that people, therefore, feel uncomfortable and potentially under threat being in an area that is not their own”.*

345. In its written submission (Appendix 3) NMNI suggests:

*“...Northern Ireland is a fragmented society and although proximity to venues is rarely a major issue, leaving one’s own immediate neighbourhood is. For many people living in areas of multiple deprivation this is a very real problem and one that can only be addressed by reassuring them that transport will be provided to and from the venue. In this way reluctance to leave their area and travel to a museum can be overcome”.*

346. To get round this NMNI have often provided transport to bring people out of their communities.

347. As part of the NITA written submission (Appendix 3) Big Telly highlighted:

*“In their own area Big Telly has noted that post-conflict funding has enabled each community to build its own purpose-built space. The greater the deprivation, the better the facilities, and the more reluctant the groups are to leave their own area”.*

This is an interesting view and might be worth further research.

348. One of the key psychological barriers that was highlighted in evidence was a lack of confidence. During the Audiences NI briefing (Appendix 2), Margaret Henry indicated that through the Test Drive the Arts initiative they had discovered that people from deprived communities are more confident about engaging with the arts performances when they can do so as part of a group. As a result of this Audiences NI wants to extend the initiative to allow groups to attend performances. Further she suggested that events focused on families are a good way to involve people from disadvantaged communities in the arts, particularly if these are free.

349. During the Lyric Theatre’s briefing (Appendix 2) to the Committee, Ciaran McAuley set out some of the ways in which the Lyric introduces groups to the theatre and what happens there:

*“In the last few years, we have embarked on a series of orientation workshops to address the perception of some that theatre is not welcoming and something that they are not naturally inclined to participate in. We recently worked with 15 pupils from Rosstulla special*

*school in Jordanstown and residents of a hostel in the lower Ormeau area. We hosted a tailored visit to the theatre for them. The visit included meeting some of our employees, receiving a tour of the theatre and some basic information about what happens during a performance. These programmes allow the participants to become familiar and comfortable in the theatre and demonstrate that they are valued as visitors to the venue and have as much right to be here as anyone else”.*

350. Mr McAuley also highlighted how the Lyric works with Community venues and how it is important to dispel negative perceptions about the arts at an early age:

*“Just last year, we collaborated with other partners to help deliver a project entitled 'Crimea Square'. The project, led by the Shankill Spectrum Centre, involved participants recalling and celebrating the last 100 years of life on the Shankill Road. As part of the project, we provided professional voice and acting tutors to help the participants to prepare for their performances. The best way to tackle this perceived barrier is to prevent it from ever being created or established. That is where our work with young people is critical. Our work with the primary and secondary school sector allows us to introduce children and young people to the idea of participating and attending theatre at a very early age”.*

351. In its written submission (Appendix 3), New Lodge Arts also highlighted the need for arts venues to provide programming that will appeal to disadvantaged communities. Additionally, it was suggested that another effective way to get people from deprived communities into arts venues is to programme performances by community-based groups. The submission highlighted that in June 2013 New Lodge Arts held its end of year Arts Academy showcase in the Baby Grand and several parents commented that it was their first visit to the Opera House. The submission stressed that it is important that arts venues’ outreach into marginalised communities must be more than free ticketing and other “tick box” initiatives. Engagement and relationship building are essential for these venues to develop audiences within these communities.

352. During the Spectrum Centre’s briefing (Appendix 2) to the Committee, Mervyn Bell further supported the theme of venues working together to encourage deprived communities to produce and perform their own art and the benefits that this will bring:

*“There is a danger in looking just at participation; we need to think about arts involving members of our community as creators as well. The fact that members of the community are attending creative writing classes, writing plays and poems and getting some of the accolades that their work richly deserves is fantastic. It is not just about engaging and being a participant; it is turning that on its head so that people are beginning to create. For 'Crimea Square', some young people acted as interns in stage management, and they are now going on to bigger and*

*better things. That is the community development aspect. We are not just there as a venue; we are there as something that can build skills and confidence and an attitude in members of the community”.*

353. However, developing community creativity is not necessarily easy. During the Community Arts Partnership’s briefing (Appendix 2), Conor Shields highlighted:

*“There is also a barrier that we try to overcome in community arts practice when people say, baldly, "I can't draw", "I can't paint", "I can't sing" or, "I am not artistic. Nobody I know is, and our family is not." In fact, they all are. We can all draw from our imagination. Picasso said that he wanted to paint like a child and that he wanted to unlearn everything that he had learnt”.*

354. Many of the submissions to this inquiry reflect on the need to develop long-term relationships between arts venues and marginalised communities to support inclusion and engagement. They indicate that this can be a difficult and resource intensive process. There is a need to develop trust and provide continuity. This feeds back into the issues raised above about the structure of funding generally being more short-term and projects being “parachuted” into areas and then not returning to sustain any kind of legacy. During the Crescent Arts Centre’s briefing (Appendix 2) to the Committee, Ann Feely said of community engagement:

*“We need somebody who is face-to-face constantly....It takes time — six to twelve months minimum — to gain the trust of some communities. Some are more independent than others, and some just need a little help in gaining a wee bit of self-confidence so that they can take part. There are different barriers such as social barriers, health issues, low educational performance, high unemployment and all the mainstream barriers to deal with. However, the biggest one that I find is getting people to have a wee bit of confidence in themselves to get over that first hurdle and to come”.*

355. Paddy Gilmore confirmed this need for time and resources to engage with working class communities during the NMNI briefing (Appendix 2):

*“We think that community partnerships are really important and should be funded because they are a way of reaching people on the ground...Dedicated resources are required for this. Specific skills are required to undertake social inclusion programmes. The work is often resource intensive and provides limited financial return, so the money needs to be there to make sure that it is done in the proper way. We also need to make sure that it is additional to the current levels of investment, because we have to maintain our existing audiences; and the money that provides the flexibility is that which provides the creativity, and allows us to respond in ways which are more creative”.*

356. In the NITA submission (Appendix 3), the Playhouse (L/Derry) reinforces the community benefits flowing from engagement in the arts:

*“The arts are unique and powerful tools to unlock the interest, motivation and capacity of many different types of people to engage constructively in social, progressive, creative activities. They can be like a “door opening” for many youth at risk, prisoners, disabled, unemployed, lone parents, those living in areas of significant economic, social deprivation and community relations tension. Many people from these areas and groups are likely to come from working class communities. The arts are fun, accessible and stimulating”.*

357. However, the Playhouse goes on to make the point that there can be difficulties in engaging communities in the arts:

*“The largest barrier we have faced to reaching people from “hard to reach” communities has been from “community gatekeepers” who restrict access to local people from “outside groups” for whatever reason”.*

358. These “community gatekeepers” can, in some cases, act to ensure that they are not competing with any rivals for ‘control’ of their communities. Without welcome access to working class communities the task of engagement is much more difficult.

359. As was touched upon at the outset of the consideration of psychological barriers to engagement with the arts the phrase “the arts” itself can prove to be a significant barrier. During the Crescent Arts Centre briefing (Appendix 2), Dr Keith Acheson confirmed:

*“One very simple barrier is even the term “arts”. That can be a barrier in itself and can be deemed elitist”.*

360. Often people in deprived communities simply do not consider that they are involved in the arts. At the Portstewart stakeholder event (Appendix 2), Desima Connolly from the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre said:

*“I worked as an outreach officer for many years and, often, when I went out to community groups and asked, “How many of you do arts?”, most of them said, “I do not participate in any arts”. Then, when I asked whether they had read a book, enjoyed music, or did craft, hands would go up. So, it is about ways of bridging that and breaking down those perceptions”.*

361. Breandan Mac Giolla Uir supported this view during the Comhaltas briefing:

*“It is brilliant to have that infrastructure there, but, because they are classed as arts centres, they can also often be an intimidating environment for people who are not used to engaging with the arts.*

*They may be doing several things that meet the dictionary definition of "arts", yet they view them as culture or something completely different".*

362. It is clear from what is being said that marginalised communities not only feel alienated from and intimidated by the arts venues and many activities; they also have no affinity with the term "the arts". As reflected above, it conjures up images of the 'high' arts, such as opera and ballet, which are often very far beyond their experience and perceived as being beyond their pocket – even if they were interested in attending them. However, while they may feel that they have no interest or involvement in the arts they may be engaging regularly in activities as part of their "culture". Often these activities are very much a part of the wider arts.

363. As outlined in its submission (Appendix 3), Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich is an arts and cultural centre which is dedicated to the promotion of Irish language arts. At the same time Cultúrlann is situated in an area that suffers from high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The area is characterised by high levels of inter-generational long-term unemployment. The area has also suffered from low levels of investment and the impact of the conflict here. Despite this difficult background and a context which should make engagement with the arts a low priority for the local population, Cultúrlann has prospered. The submission suggests that part of this has been success in making local people feel that they have ownership of the centre and its activities. These have been promoted as part of people's culture rather than "the arts" per se.

364. The submission also highlights that the centre's programme targets specific groups to ensure maximum participation. Ticket prices are fixed to make access to the arts affordable. Free tickets are also made available to local groups and residents which the centre engages with. The centre also provides employment and training opportunities for local young people in a variety of areas, such as hospitality, sound and lighting, and performing arts. The centre's bookshop, cafe, and use as a community hub and, increasingly as a destination for tourists, makes it an everyday part of local people's lives. This is similar to the way in which the Spectrum Centre has developed itself as the Committee heard. Both centres serve as a venue for a range of arts and cultural activities which are of interest to local people.

365. Cultúrlann and the Shankill Women's centre have collaborated for a number of years to put on the Townsend Street Festival, involving Brown Sq. residents, Finn Square residents, Edenderry primary, Malvern primary, St. Mary's primary at Divis, St. Clare's primary, Bombay street, Townsend Presbyterian Church, Careers 'n kids, Women United, St. Mary's Community Group, West Belfast Senior Citizen's forum and others. The festival is a celebration of International Peace Day and takes place at the first interface gate between the Falls and Shankill roads. As the submission describes:

*"The street is transformed into a colourful scene from 'Old Belfast' by two artist and the schools and groups mentioned above. The street is full of performers, musicians and activities and is very well attended by local people, many of whom volunteer on the day".*



366. A further cross-community project was 'Walk the walk', an initiative facilitated by Cultúrlann involving participants from the Falls Women's Centre and the Shankill Women's Centre. The women took part in walking tours of the Falls and Shankill Roads and shared their stories and memories from the areas:

*"They took photographs of places that held some significance to them and partnered with another woman produce a shared experience in photographs. Images of the maternity hospital, sweet shops and dance halls prevailed and shared experiences emerged from either side of the interface. The exhibition went on display in Cultúrlann and in the Shankill Library, with both holding receptions on opening night at which the women and their families were present".*

367. The Committee had already heard from the Spectrum Centre that it is increasingly looking at cultural tourism and during the Cultúrlann briefing (Appendix 2) Eimear Ní Mhathúna discussed the centre's approach to tourism:

*"We have been focusing on cruise ships for a few years and getting more of those groups in. We do a Gaeltacht experience for them. Normally, it is in the evening, but it can be lunchtime as well. People come for a meal; there may be an exhibition of Irish dancing, live music and it ends with a céilí, which they are all expected to get up and take part in. So, yes, we have been bringing in more groups to do that. We also have links with certain universities in northern Europe, and conflict resolution people come. We have a number of small and larger groups that come annually from America to do workshops, such as bodhrán workshops, and various other things. So, we focus on that. We work closely with the Belfast Welcome Centre and Fáilte Feirste Thiar..."*

368. Another cultural organisation to brief the Committee was Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. This is a community-based volunteer cultural movement, making it more accessible and approachable for those engaging for the first time with the arts. The organisation focuses on getting people to engage. In common with other arts and culture organisations, Comhaltas highlighted the benefits of involvement in the arts and related activities, such as: increased confidence and capacity through participation in events and classes; development of effective event-leadership skills and community confidence.

369. During the briefing there was discussion about how mass participation cultural events such as the 2013 All-Ireland Fleadh in Derry/Londonderry during its year as UK City of Culture has brought in vast crowds from a range of communities and backgrounds and facilitated their engagement with the arts. This, again, is reflective of how communities are often more likely to engage with something that is perceived as "culture" rather than if it is seen as "the arts". The event also produced considerable revenue for the area and brought in significant tourism. There were also efforts made to introduce elements of cross-community activity to broaden out the cultural appeal of the event.

370. A big issue that Comhaltas identified which was common to other cultural organisations was their reliance on volunteers and a lack of funding to develop a more permanent and higher capacity structure. This was supported by the Confederation of Ulster Bands in their briefing to the Committee. The Confederation is a voluntary body which represents the 17 marching bands fora.

371. The Confederation's briefing focused on the number of people involved in marching bands on a regular basis – approximately 30,000. A number of these bands have proved to be extremely successful in competitions, including at national and international level. While the confederation highlighted that bands have often played in a number of the arts venues, there was a clear view that bands' potential is not being fully utilised and recognised by the arts establishment. Like other contributors, the Confederation highlighted a number of positive benefits to their members of participating, such as health and wellbeing, reducing loneliness and improving community cohesion. Additionally, membership of a band is something that generations of a family can do together. With respect to young people, they can learn an instrument and the mental discipline and determination that go with that, as well as the wider confidence and employability skills. The Ulster-Scots Community Network (USCN) has established an Open College Network (OCN) level-2 qualification in b-flat flute. Currently the Confederation is developing the idea of tutors from the marching bands going into schools and teaching students to play a b-flat flute, which has greater potential than, say, a recorder. Bands also seek to deal with social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse.

372. During the briefing (Appendix 2) William Bradshaw highlighted that while the marching bands can be found all over Northern Ireland, the "arts establishment" is not so geographically dispersed:

*"...there are large swathes of the rural, agricultural, working-class and commuter area, where people go from the rural areas to work wherever their employment takes them, that do not have that engagement, nor is there the same outreach from, or connection with, staff members in both the statutory and voluntary and community arts bodies, as they do not come out to meet any recognised band and discuss issues and barriers".*

373. Valerie Quinn added:

*"There has to be some positive engagement by the arts community to say that it considers it [marching bands] to be an art form and that they are performing music, which is a skill and which provides a valuable contribution to society and to them...The bulk of our membership is working-class and, particularly in the case of the very strong bands, is from areas of social deprivation. Their opportunities to attend events...are few and far between".*

374. During the Belfast City Council Briefing (Appendix 2), Brian Johnston considered this issue of "culture" versus "the arts" and highlighted that it is not just people from disadvantaged whose perceptions the arts need to be

challenged and overcome, it is often the council's own elected members who have to be convinced of the importance and relevance of the arts:

*“Part of our challenge is to sell to members that culture and arts is not just what we term the highbrow events; it is the broad spectrum. There is a genuine effort on our side... There is a perception issue. A lot of the events and festivals are a good way of engaging with the community...because we are looking at ticketed systems, a lot of the figures that we have do not reflect how the general public engages with the arts at all sorts of different levels”.*

375. This reflects the need for direct engagement with disadvantaged, deprived and marginalised communities at a grassroots level, some that the cultural organisations highlighted above and the range of community-based venues already engage in.
376. This has clearly been recognised by a number of the contributors to this inquiry. During the Audiences NI briefing (Appendix 2) to the inquiry Margaret Henry expanded on how the Hitch Hikers Guide to the Arts initiative works. It involved a pilot being undertaken in 2014 over three to four months. A group of 26 people were taken to a range of arts venues and events; including the homeless, those for whom English is not their first language, and those who live in sheltered accommodation. They were welcomed at each venue and made to feel comfortable. They were also given information about what would be happening before each event. Their experiences were documented and evaluated. Many in the group expressed a lack of confidence in going to these venues and events at the beginning. They also worried about going alone and about cost and transport. However, the experience has taken away much of the ‘fear’ of the venues and what goes on there and they have also bonded with other participants and some continue to meet and engage with the arts. Other positive outcomes were a positive difference in the cognitive function of some of the older participants, and participants also visited parts of Belfast that they were not previously familiar with. Audiences NI is hoping to engage with additional groups to widen out the initiative and to move it beyond Belfast.
377. It would seem that this supported introduction approach to the arts is particularly helpful to those from marginalised communities can be very successful. However, it is worth bearing in mind the other evidence that the Committee collected which indicates that such initiatives should not be tokenistic, should engage over the longer term to allow trust and relationships to develop, and should be properly embedded in the community, being most effective if they are supported and facilitated by established community groups.
378. During the NMNI briefing (Appendix 2), Paddy Gilmore talked about how the Ulster Museum used its closure for refurbishment to examine and redesign how it undertook its outreach and engagement work. He highlighted that a specific focus was to engage better with disadvantaged communities. Prior to the initiative 22% of the Ulster Museum’s visitors were from the C2, D and E demographic, while following three years of the initiative, at the Museum’s reopening, this had risen to 44%. Mr Gilmore indicated that a key

part of the initiative was to develop new audiences and, in so doing, tackle social exclusion. It was clear from the briefing that he too recognised the important role of creating community partnerships. On a basic level the Museum also considered how different people engage and learn in different ways, Mr Gilmore indicated:

*“We did a programme about the First World War with a group of kids from the New Lodge who, traditionally, are not visitors to the Ulster Museum and, traditionally, have not engaged with that history. That programme has been hugely successful and has shown them the benefits of working with the museum and the impact of the First World War on their local community. It ends up with an exhibition that is now part of a programme in the National Portrait Gallery. That is hugely successful and very affirming for those kids”.*

379. There was also a reflection on similar issues when the MAC briefed (Appendix 2) the Committee. Anne McReynolds talked about how the MAC had built partnerships with different organisations to bring non-traditional audiences to the venue. They worked with the NOW Project which provides training, employment and volunteer support services for young people in deprived areas. Its youth service members have used the MAC as the venue for morning meetings, showing it to be a safe and welcoming place to come and providing opportunities for participants to access its services and activities in a supported way.

380. The Committee also heard how the MAC provides “relaxed performances” which are designed to be welcoming for people with learning disabilities, Down’s syndrome, conditions on the autism spectrum, or sensory or communicative disorders. These provide a “stress-free” attitude towards audience noise and movement and changes are made to light and sound effects which might disturb participants. The venue has also developed an “Access Charter”.

381. In addition, the MAC has hosted exhibitions and works by the communities which this inquiry focuses on to attempt to give them a sense of ownership of the venue and to support and validate their own creative efforts – the importance of which was stressed by a number of other contributors. The Committee also heard a great deal about the MAC’s engagement with young people, including a number of schools based within disadvantaged communities.

382. The need to make the dedicated arts venues accessible and welcoming is clearly a priority in developing audiences within working class communities, as is reflecting their interests and culture in programming and exhibitions. Engagement and outreach must also be accompanied by activities which give people from marginalised communities a sense of ownership. This can be supported and facilitated by creating partnerships with community organisations which themselves need to be supported in helping people take the first important steps in engaging with arts and culture. Breandan from Comhaltas made the point (Appendix 2):

*“...arts events are quite often held in urban areas. They are in formal arts buildings, which can be a barrier to someone going. They can feel intimidated; it can be hard to get the first foot across the threshold...Comhaltas's events are organised by the community in the community, or they are in a community-based building that is normally familiar to people. It can often include a family member. That allows for that first-time engagement with arts and culture, and people can build from that base”.*

383. In this way community-based groups can bridge the gap between marginalised communities and the arts; and through partnerships with arts venues and central and local government, they can develop arts audiences in these communities and support them to take their place in the audiences and programming schedules of the arts venues. This point was made by Mervyn Bell during the Spectrum Centre briefing:

*“We offer arts, culture, heritage and, increasingly, tourist activities and events, through a wide, varied and ever-expanding programme, but we also focus greatly on community engagement and community development. Fundamentally, we do that by ensuring that our physical location is supplemented by relationships with the community and by relationships and networks with other organisations and groups within greater Shankill and, increasingly, with organisations and groups beyond the greater Shankill area as well”.*

384. During the Cultúrlann briefing (Appendix 2) Aisling Ní Labhraí commented on the issue of people from marginalised communities being less likely to leave their own area:

*“It is not even that it is a cross-community issue. There are lots of people around us who do not leave their areas, who get everything that they need in their own area and would not feel comfortable going to the MAC, the Opera House or wherever else...I suppose that not leaving your own area might be a legacy of the Troubles, but there is also a feeling that it may not be for them or that they may not feel welcome. Something that the Cultúrlann does very well is its design. Our gallery is visible from the outside and you know what you are walking into. Sometimes, it can be a wee bit intimidating to go into some buildings that are absolutely fabulous but you do not know what is inside and how people will react to you”.*

385. She went on to highlight how this feeds back into the issue of transport and how the provision of transport can often overcome the issue, but this also returned to the issue of cost. Both Ms Ní Mhathúna and Ms Ní Labhraí highlighted the cross-community work they do with the Spectrum Centre.

386. Mr Bell from the Spectrum Centre agreed that part of the lack of engagement and inclusion in the arts of working class communities is their feeling uncomfortable leaving the ‘safety’ of their own community. This has a socio-economic basis, but it also reflects the decades of conflict that Northern

Ireland experienced. Part of the work of the Spectrum Centre is about reaching outside the local community and across the 'divide'. Mr Bell commented (Appendix 2):

*"Partnership work remains another developing area. We are working currently with an Cultúrlann on the Falls Road to deliver the flagship project of the Creative and Cultural Belfast fund. It is a project looking at the River Farset. We have an emerging partnership with New Lodge Arts...looking at developing a cross-community intergenerational project bringing young people and older people together, and we have a strengthening partnership with Conway Mill, working with a women's group in particular. These partnerships are crucial to the work that we do. There is a shared cross-community element and a shared affinity of location and approach, and we find those relationships crucial to what we do".*

387. In this way the arts and culture can be used to bring communities from different religious and political backgrounds together to develop greater understanding of each other's perspectives etc. Mr Bell highlights the possible issues involved:

*"There is, perhaps, an inherent danger in the politicisation of culture. Again, there is a need for us to convey and relay culture in its widest sense. There is a real challenge and pressure in being prepared to graft and put hard work in. For us, there is a need to get face to face with the community to engage, enthuse and involve. We do an awful lot of work to build up relationships to bring people into the activity that we offer...I guess that there is something around the articulation of the value of arts and giving individuals the opportunity to experience this first-hand. We are absolutely delighted now that young people who have been involved in our young people's group, the Art Den, talk confidently and matter-of-factly about the MAC or Culture Night because they have experienced and have been involved in it. We see the transformational power of the arts on a community".*

388. During the Spectrum Centre briefing (Appendix 2), Bobby Foster brought up an issue which was also considered by some other contributors. This was the different approach taken to the arts by the nationalist/republican and unionist/loyalist communities here:

*"The community that I come from was a very industrial community, and we were seen as such. Therefore, art really was not for us. It was a BT9 thing, if you pardon my expression. It was highbrow. Quite a few younger people from unionist, industrial communities broke those shackles off during the 1960s...The nationalist communities embraced the arts a lot more than the unionist communities, because of the definitive tie of the latter to industrialisation. It was as simple as that. Unionist communities saw their lives as spending the day in the factory and the night at home or in the local pub. Going to an opera or a play would not have crossed their mind for a minute. In many ways, peer pressure did not allow people to break out of that. That is changing.*

*Quite a few people go to the Grand Opera House and think nothing of it. However, I grew up on the Shankill in the 1960s and 1970s, and would I have gone to the Grand Opera House? Not this side of Christmas”.*

389. This view was also reflected on by William Mitchell during the Etcetera Theatre Company briefing (Appendix 2):

*“People thought that going to a play was for schoolteachers and the like. There is a distinct barrier. That gets played out because there may be a perception that the theatre is harboured or owned by another section of the community, and the feeling is that it is in some way subversive and about portraying a particular story that undermines the fact that there is also a different story...in my experience, young people collectively...do not aspire to go to the theatre, for those reasons”.*

390. Mr Mitchell went on to discuss how Etcetera took its play ‘Tartan’ to the Skainos Centre, the Spectrum Centre and to Cultúrlann on the Falls Road. The play is set in the 1970s and reflects on the experiences of young loyalists in East Belfast becoming involved in ‘the Troubles’. The play closed its run in the MAC as Mr Mitchell wanted *“...to take the story that we were portraying to regular theatregoers”*. However Mr Mitchell also highlighted one of Etcetera’s key objectives:

*“Our rationale was that, irrespective of the story we are telling, if we cannot bring people from that section of the community to the theatre, why not take the theatre to them?...We are trying to build something that we can bring to those working-class communities that will engage them in the theatre. It is not just about drama productions but may also be, as we presented to the Department when we originally got funding for ‘Tartan’, about using the medium of characterisation or storytelling to engage people in other things that go beyond theatre, like peace-building and community development”.*

391. Again, the arts can provide a way of facilitating people to tell their story, express their views, and represent their culture in a non-violent and non-disruptive way. These views were also expressed by Martin Lynch in his briefing (Appendix 2) to the Committee. He indicated his belief that it is important for marginalised communities to be supported as creators of art for this reason. During the Belfast stakeholder event (Appendix 2), Jeanette McMillan from the Annadale and Haywood Residents’ Association articulated the view from the communities themselves on how complex the issues and needs are:

*“Before we can even get into the arts, we have multiple barriers to overcome in Annadale, as well as multiple issues on the ground. Key for any arts company or venue before it can deliver is the need for local knowledge of each individual area. The needs are complex, and they are creating barriers. I think that the only way in which we can do this is to address those needs first and then tailor the specific*

*programmes... There are lots of things to do before we can get delivery, but it is all to do with research and about knowing to where it is you are delivering on the ground and what all the barriers are before we talk about communication. It is about existing issues, tensions and divisions — our history”.*

392. The Glasgowbury submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) highlighted these themes around the need to heal divisions and how arts and culture can achieve this:

*“Our programmes provide a forum for cross-community and inter-denominational engagement which strengthens relations within and between communities. An appreciation of difference through music, arts and creativity indirectly promotes tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity. Developing audiences and building participant’s knowledge of alternative cultures and music traditions in a wider global context can enrich and deepen understanding of others’ cultures, beliefs and traditions. Developing contact in a new context on the basis of a shared interest outside of the traditional political, religious and ethnic identities normalises relations reducing real and perceived religious, social and cultural barriers to active community engagement.”*

393. The Department’s ‘Impact of poverty on engagement in the arts in Northern Ireland’ research paper from October 2013 (Appendix 5) highlighted the most popular arts activities that those people living in the 20% most deprived areas. Some of the most popular activities can be seen below:

- Painting, drawing, printmaking or sculpture (24%)
- Played a musical instrument for own pleasure (22%)
- Textile crafts such as embroidery, crocheting or knitting (21%)
- Used a computer to create an original artwork (16%)
- Photography as an artistic activity (14%)
- Other dance (14%)
- Sang to an audience or rehearsed for a performance (12%)
- Played a musical instrument to an audience (7%)

394. The research paper also examined the most popular arts events attended by adults in the 20% most deprived areas. Some of the most popular events can be seen below:

- Film at cinema or other venue (74%)
- A museum (23%)
- Play or drama (23%)
- Rock or pop performance (23%)
- A community festival (21%)
- Other live music event (15%)
- Circus (14%)
- Other theatre performance (13%)
- Exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture (8%)
- Folk, or traditional or world music performance (8%)



395. It is clear that people in disadvantaged, deprived, or marginalised communities enjoy and participate in the arts. However, it is a case of developing and consolidating this engagement to include wider experiences, including visiting arts venues and overcoming perceptions of what the arts are and how these communities relate to them. There is also a need to better understand how the arts and culture can facilitate the expression of these communities' views and how they can be used as a way of relieving tensions and displacing more socially disruptive forms of expression.

396. In its submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), the Arts Council highlighted the 'Re-imaging Communities' initiative. The purpose of this Northern Ireland wide programme is to support the building of peace through the arts and follows on from some of the discussion above. The programme targets local communities' access to public art and brings local artists together with the communities in which they live in order to imagine a different future for themselves as a result of the 'peace process'. New artworks are developed to address the visible and non-visible signs of sectarianism and racism. The programme is focused on rural as well as urban communities and has helped to combat peripherality and rural isolation. A number of contributors at the Portstewart stakeholder event highlighted the positive impact that the programme has had in their communities. Again, it facilitates working class community creativity and provides non-conflict based forms of expression.

397. Perhaps one of the best examples of community engagement with the arts and culture was the Derry/Londonderry UK City of Culture in 2013. The Arts Council reflected on this in its submission as an:

*"...example of a whole city approach, concentrating on ensuring that those who live in the most marginalized communities were at the centre of the arts and cultural programme throughout the year, thus fostering greater social cohesion in the process". Major events like the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann draw participation across class and background. Also the Lumiere Light Festival and BBC Radio 1 Big Weekend. Common theme: attendance was free of charge and all communities were drawn by a high quality artistic production. Experiences like this must be capitalized on and leave a legacy of continued engagement in high quality arts".*

398. This once again draws in the vexed question of ensuring that engagement has a legacy and can be sustained over the longer-term. The City of Culture year turned a lot of disadvantaged communities on to the arts and culture; however, a strategic approach and resources are required to continue to foster and develop that engagement.

399. In its submission (Appendix 2), Big Lottery Fund highlighted how its 'Culture for All' programme was developed to give communities across Northern Ireland the opportunity to be involved in the UK City of Culture year. The programme sought to help organisations run arts and culture projects that linked to the City of Culture year in a way that benefitted their own

communities; and which encouraged talent, increased skills and strengthened community activity.

400. The programme was funded and delivered by Big Lottery Fund and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in partnership with Culture Company 2013. It launched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012 with a budget of £1.35 million, which included £100,000 from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. There was a great response to the programme which received 463 applications and made 204 awards. The programme extended well beyond the City of Culture itself, with more than two thirds of the awards made were outside the city and around half outside the county.

401. A further strand to the Arts Council's 'Ambitions for the Arts' strategy (Appendix 5) is Community Arts. The Council describes these as providing an opportunity for:

*"...communities and their participants to continue to find ways to develop their own skills as artists and for artists to explore ways of transferring those skills. Through this process, community arts aims to maximise the access, participation, authorship and ownership in collective arts practice".*

402. The Arts Council describes Community Arts as "inclusive and democratic". This very much fits in with the argument that many contributors made that marginalised communities will only truly engage with the arts when they see themselves as creators and owners of those arts. In its submission to this inquiry Arts for All stresses the value of community arts in encouraging appreciation of and participation in the arts. Arts for All also questioned the value that the Arts Council puts on community arts as reflected by the main recipients of its funding.

403. The Community Arts Partnership sums up the one of the most valuable aspects of Community Arts:

*"...community art practice develops original creative thinking, activity and outcomes to affect positive change".*

404. The majority of the Crescent Arts Centre's activities are also community-based and these are generally free at the point of delivery. These include book clubs, choirs, youth theatre, dance for older people, youth urban dance, contributions to other festivals and the Centre's own City Dance Festival. Festivals were highlighted as an excellent way to engage working class communities.

405. With respect to the Community Festivals Fund, the Minister indicated to the Committee during her briefing:

*"...maybe we need to think a bit smarter about what money is there, what else we need to do and how we can get other sponsors and other investment in. People are very proud and very staunch about the Community Festivals Fund, and they all want more of it. What that more*

*of it looks like has yet to be seen, and I am keen to see what those plans may be. We have great cultural programmers across the entire North who have been willing, and are willing, to engage further with communities and partnerships to try to develop further cultural activities”.*

406. Overcoming psychological barriers to participating in the arts, as has already been suggested, is best started at an early age in schools away from nay negativity around the arts from family, friends, or the wider community. However, dismantling the psychological barriers more widely in disadvantaged communities would go some way to ameliorating the issue. This can be achieved through taking more time to develop relationships between the arts sector and disadvantaged communities and by ensuring that projects have lasting legacy. Additionally, it is about establishing relationships between local arts venues and community groups. This moves towards the ‘Theatre Mile’ suggestion from NITA where theatres, or other arts venues, make specific efforts to engage with communities and community groups within a ‘mile’ radius of their location. This could also be written into social clauses for publicly funded arts and culture venues, but it is likely to require additional resources.
407. Thought must also be given as to how to support disadvantaged communities in making their own arts and culture – how to turn them into artists and creators, and to facilitate their understanding of the involvement they already have in the arts through their own cultural pursuits.

#### **Recommendation:**

408. **The Committee recommends that the Executive’s Arts and Cultural Strategy seeks to support and resource theatres and arts centres to develop outreach and access projects within their local communities. This should be undertaken in conjunction with local councils with the aim of encompassing all publicly funded arts and cultural venues. The development of relationships between these arts and culture hubs and their local communities to create familiarity and overcome barriers which inhibit participation. A second element of this must be support to facilitate performances and exhibitions from local communities in the venues. This would have the effect of giving local people a feeling of ‘ownership’ of the venues, so minimizing the intimidation factor. A further element of this should be the consideration of the possible location and delivery of venues for community culture and arts usage.**

## VOLUNTEERS

409. During the Cultúrlann McAdam ÓFiaich briefing (Appendix 2), Eimear Ní Mhathúna highlighted that community arts are heavily dependent on people:

*“Our biggest recommendation is that you need people. Getting into communities is about relationship-building and making friends. It is so important that you have somebody who can be dedicated to that...”*

410. That need for people raises the issue of volunteers. The Committee heard a great deal about the importance of volunteers and volunteering during this inquiry. Much of the arts and culture activity that takes place in working class communities is organised and supported by volunteers. However, volunteering itself can be an important way of empowering people in these communities. Volunteers can often become peer educators within the community and can help to build confidence and capacity in the community. However, as mentioned above in the section on ‘Funding’, reliance on volunteers to keep arts and cultural activities going means that wages for creative professionals are put under further pressure. This could mean that individuals from disadvantaged communities will not be able to afford to take work in the arts and culture sectors and these will become more of a field for those with other sources of income.

411. In its written submission (Appendix 3) the Spectrum Centre a number of creative projects that it undertakes and how these produced a number of peer educators who were keen to volunteer and continue these roles. These volunteers in turn became a key element of the Centre’s bids to the Arts Council and Belfast Strategic Partnership for work with older people. These bids have proved successful and have resulted in a year-long programme of arts, culture and heritage activities and events. The volunteers build their own confidence and capacity through this process and it is in turn fed back into the community.

412. The Arts Council already has a Voluntary Arts strand to its ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ strategy (Appendix 5). The document comments:

*“Voluntary arts activity plays a vital role in promoting health, well-being and community cohesion, contributing an estimated £50m to the UK arts economy each year. More than half the UK’s adult population is engaged in some form of voluntary arts or crafts...”*

413. The Arts Council’s funding objectives for Voluntary Arts make clear the benefits of volunteering for communities:

- Help to meet sectoral training needs;
- Create sectoral networking and encourage skills transfer opportunities within the sector;
- Increase or develop audience and participation levels for voluntary arts activity;

- Strengthen governance amongst voluntary arts organisations;
- Increase inclusivity and legislative compliance amongst voluntary arts organisations;
- Enhance the 'good relations' contribution of volunteer-led groups;
- Strengthen the quality of marketing of voluntary arts organisations to employ professional artists; and
- Give evidence of the social and/or well-being benefits of involvement in voluntary arts activities.

414. In its written submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3), the Department for Social Development outlined its Volunteering Strategy:

*“One of the priorities within this strategy is to “Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to volunteer and that volunteering is representative of the diversity of the community.”*

415. Funding is specifically directed at supporting volunteering in areas of deprivation, it promotes inclusivity for volunteers and offers access to arts based project opportunities through a number of pathways, including: The Volunteering Innovation Fund; The Volunteering Small Grants Programme; and The Volunteering Infrastructure Fund. The submission goes on to say;

*“Volunteering in the arts has been evidenced through a number of DSD supported projects, with a primary example being the Londonderry/Derry UK City of Culture 2013. This was a major event which celebrated the arts across all mediums from performing to visual and media arts. The year-long event had some 633 active volunteers taking part”.*

416. The Museum of London's submission to this inquiry (Appendix 3) also stressed the importance placed on volunteering. The submission identifies a number of ways in which volunteering can benefit the individuals and communities involved:

*“Another central tenet of our new strategic approach is volunteering. We want to help people from diverse backgrounds develop new skills through volunteering, improving their own career prospects and making connections with people across the city. We deliver this work in partnership with the Mayor of London and other funders, especially Arts Council England (ACE). As part of this new strategic direction, we now work to embed our community work -including the need to attract working class communities to our museum - across all of our activities. We feel this is a more effective way to reach out to all visitors, regardless of creed, colour, class, religion, marital status or sexual orientation. It's more in keeping with our times and it celebrates the diverse and confident modern capital that we call home”.*

417. It would seem clear from the evidence that the Committee has received that volunteering in arts projects can give individuals a wide range of benefits. These benefits can then be transmitted to the wider community. Volunteering

can build skills and confidence for individuals and groups in disadvantaged communities. It can also empower those individuals and communities to express themselves and engage more fully with a wider range of arts and cultural activities.

**Recommendation:**

418. **The Committee recommends that there is a volunteering strand for disadvantaged communities in the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy. This will allow the development of capacity and employability skills in disadvantaged communities and also have the added benefit of increasing disadvantaged communities' exposure to arts and cultural activities in their own communities.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

419. Many contributors to this inquiry highlighted the role that local government can play in promoting engagement with and access to the arts. Some contributors also suggested that local councils vary dramatically in their approach to the arts. The Committee heard from some councils in response to the call for evidence for this inquiry; however, during the inquiry Members decided that it might be useful to write to the existing councils to ask how they promote the arts through their tourist or visitor information centres.
420. **Coleraine Borough Council's** response (Appendix 3) highlighted that the Borough's Tourist Information Centres (TICs) provide a wide range of information on arts activity. Arts programmes for the Borough's local theatre venues are displayed in the TICs, as well as for regional theatre venues. Theatre programmes are also included on council run destination websites and there is a printed 'What's On/Events' programme for the area. This is extensive and covers a range of local community and arts activities, with specific local theatre and arts details that are available at the time of printing. The response highlights how useful TICs can be to signpost arts activities to visitors and local people alike.
421. **Ballymoney Borough Council's** response (Appendix 3) indicated that the TIC is located in Ballymoney Town Hall which also houses the museum and is the main venue for the Borough's arts programme. The Cultural Services Manager (CSM) is also based there, managing both the TIC and museum staff as well as being responsible for the arts programme. The CSM ensures that the TIC staff are fully informed regarding the programme. Additionally, the box office for ticket sales is in the TIC and it is the point of contact on all of the Borough's publicity material, including the council and other relevant websites. Brochures and other printed publicity material are also available in the TIC.
422. **Craigavon Borough Council** (Appendix 3) has a dedicated arts development team of three full-time officers who are involved in the delivery of community arts projects and events across the Borough, particularly in areas

of disadvantage. Arts projects and events are designed in conjunction with the community many are embedded in communities where residents are less likely to travel outside their own area for arts activities. The Borough's arts projects involve rural and urban communities and are often funded by the council in conjunction with other funders. The response highlights that these projects are seen as vitally important in providing local communities with a voice and offering them a range of development opportunities, including skills acquisition, social networking, and building capacity for community action.

423. The Borough has arts venues in Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown. These provide a varied programme of visual arts, music, drama, and community arts projects. These are fully accessible and widely promoted. Participants are drawn from a wide diversity of socio-economic backgrounds. Community-focused arts projects that are open to the wider public are promoted at Tourist Information Points in the local area and further afield. Special efforts are made to ensure that more vulnerable participants are encouraged and supported to access the arts venues and to make return visits. The council also uses vacant retail units and public spaces etc. as a means of integrating the arts into the public's everyday lives. The response highlighted the important role of the Local Authority Arts service in supporting working-class access to the arts outside Belfast; however, it is difficult for councils to access centralised arts funding as they are not prioritised, or are excluded from applying.
424. The response from **Limavady Borough Council** (Appendix 3) indicated that the Borough's Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is based within the Roe valley Arts and Cultural Centre (the Centre also made a submission to this inquiry) in Limavady. The council's Visitor Services Officers have an additional role in promoting tourism, as well as their role in providing reception and administration services at the Arts Centre.
425. The council's tourism staff employ a range of methods to promote local arts events. These include the use of social media, a range of websites, including destination websites, and printed media. Updates are applied on a regular basis by the council staff and the Limavady Borough Council website also allows local groups to upload their own events. Additionally, details of upcoming events are displayed and marketed at the VIC and the Arts Centre. Events guides for the arts are also promoted at selected tourism shows and other mass gatherings, such as the Balmoral Show. This kind of promotion is also undertaken at regional shopping centres, often in conjunction with neighbouring councils.
426. Local, regional and other printed media outlets are also used to promote the Borough's arts activities. There have also been TV marketing campaigns utilising central government funding. The VIC provides updates to anyone making contact and arts events information is regularly shared with the Borough's tourism network, which includes accommodation and activity providers, local attractions and events organisers. The VIC is also affiliated to Tourism NI (formerly the NITB) and it operates according to its guidelines. The VIC also sells events – e.g. ticketing for the Stendahl Festival, Jazz and Blues

Festival, or the Eddie Butcher Festival. Additionally, local arts events are updated on the 'Limavady app' on a seasonal basis.

427. The response highlights the priority set on cultural tourism in the Borough and the resulting focus that visit services place on arts and culture events. There are clear benefits for local businesses and individual creative practitioners. The Borough also sees possibilities around cultural tourism for urban and rural regeneration in the area. The response also stresses the need for centralised arts and tourism agencies to engage with the new councils to develop clear strategies. With so many natural tourism and arts opportunities in the new Causeway Coast and Glens council area these must be developed to their full potential in partnership with central agencies.
428. The response from **Omagh District Council** (Appendix 3) highlights that its VIC is situated in the Strule Arts Centre and that it operates as a box office for the Centre and its arts service. Further, it promotes arts activities organised by the council and other organisations in the District. The Tourism Manager and the Arts Manager work closely together to ensure that the Districts arts and cultural activities are supported by the VIC staff. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of such activities.
429. Organisations are encouraged to contribute to the weekly 'What's On' email that is circulated to all tourism-related businesses and further afield. Visitor services staff actively check the local media and listings to ensure that information is as up-to-date as possible. All information is posted at a number of listings sites across the area. Certain activities, such as summer festivals and other events, are supported through specific advertising. Destination marketing of the Sperrin region is also undertaken.
430. Arts service information for the **Lisburn City Council** (Appendix 3) area is displayed at the Lisburn and Hillsborough VICs. This includes the Island Arts Centre's programmes, arts festivals and other related events. Selected information is then displayed at council events in the area by way of a VIC presence – a dedicated trade stand or the Tourism Exhibition Trailer. Arts events are also included free of charge in any council-produced tourism advertising and are displayed in both the council's VICs. The information displayed in the VICs is regularly updated and all relevant events at the Island Arts Centre are included in the VICs' weekly and monthly 'What's On' e-newsletter. This information is also produced in printed form for the annual and quarterly newsletters. Regularly updated information is also featured on the VIC website. The council is also part of Visit Belfast (BVCB), which is the Regional Tourism Partnership for the Greater Belfast Metropolitan area. The VICs deal with over 120,000 enquiries annually.
431. In its response **Cookstown District Council** (Appendix 3) highlighted that it was one of the first local councils to merge its tourism and arts and culture products when the TIC moved into the new Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre in 1999. The benefits of this include greater staff knowledge and understanding if the complementary nature of the tourism and arts/culture products, and they are better placed to meet the growing demand from visitors for an integrated view of tourism, heritage and arts/culture. This joined-up approach also means that overheads have been reduced and there is greater



access to the product offered by these sectors as there is a one-stop-shop for locals and visitors to seek more information. A number of other councils have subsequently adopted this model and have seen the benefits of merging these services.

432. **Derry City Council** (Appendix 3) operates a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Visit Derry to deliver visitor servicing and destination marketing for the Council area. Visit Derry is also responsible for the operation of the VIC. Furthermore, it produces marketing and promotional material for visitors and locals, including visitor maps and events and attractions guides. Visit Derry plays a “fundamental role” in signposting visitors and locals to daily arts events and activities. It also encourages local event organisers to supply the VIC with details of events and activities. Additionally, a new annual call for local community craft providers has now been established. The VIC is also relocating to a more central location in the city in partnership with Tourism NI (formerly the NITB). This move will provide the opportunity to develop and deliver a new “creative” VIC space which will increase engagement and will be innovative in its delivery for visitors and locals alike.
433. In its response **Castlereagh Borough Council** (Appendix 3) highlighted that, although it does not have any TICs, council-run events are publicised through promotional literature and various tourist outlets in the Borough, such as the Civic Administration Centre and the Dundonald Ice Bowl. Furthermore, the council promotes arts activities specifically to working-class communities through council-run outlets, such as community and leisure centres across disadvantaged areas of the Borough. Additionally, events and activities are promoted through libraries, schools, healthcare facilities, retail businesses, hotels, bars, and cafés in the Borough. The Borough’s Arts Strategy aims to make the arts more accessible to a wide range of people by bringing the arts to communities at “grass roots” level and by increasing the number of people who participate in the arts. 70% of the programme is linked to developmental arts activity within the community, with 30% “arts for arts’ sake” programming.
434. **Ballymena Borough Council’s** (Appendix 3) VIC and The Braid, which is also the location of the Town Hall and Museum and Arts Centre. The VIC staff are responsible for the visitor information area there and The Braid’s reception. They work closely with the arts and museum staff to ensure co-ordinated promotion of all the events and activities going on within The Braid and the Borough more generally. The VIC provides information for locals and visitors alike; it also provides a box office function for arts events and activities and the museum. Additionally, the VIC also offers signposting as the staff are more aware of events cutting across the arts, culture and tourism through their weekly/monthly briefings. Events are also promoted on the VIC’s website and there is a joint arts and tourism ‘What’s On’ quarterly guide. There are also information and leaflet stands at regional tourism events and visitor attractions, and there is distribution of leaflets and flyers to local B&Bs and guesthouses, including facilities used by Social Services which cater for disadvantaged individuals and communities.
435. **Antrim Borough Council’s** (Appendix 3) TIC is in the Old Courthouse. It provides a biannual ‘What’s On’ guide which is distributed to all households

in the Borough. The TIC is an arts and cultural venue, providing performance space, including an auditorium. It is serviced by a team of customer service advisers employed by the council, who provide information on arts/cultural events and activities organised by the council and community-based groups. The TIC also operates a box office booking system for productions and events. The council provides an annual free programme of summer band concerts at Lough shore Park which are open to anyone. The TIC is in Antrim's Market Square and can be utilised in conjunction with outdoor events and performances etc. It is also near Clotworthy House, which includes an art gallery, community music facilities, arts workshop spaces and outdoor performance areas.

436. The council also supports a Local Information Office (LIO) in line with Tourism NI guidelines in Randalstown through a retail business used by locals and visitors. An LIO also operates from the Junction One retail complex. The council uses concessionary pricing to promote access to the arts and has a Service Level Agreement with a community music organisation. The TIC is managed by the council's Cultural Services unit who work closely with TIC staff who are assigned as Customer Service Advisors and Assistants to disseminate information. They also provide a box office function for the Cultural Services unit. The footfall for the Old Courthouse in which the TIC is located is approximately 100,000 people per annum. It is also located near Clothworthy House which is in Antrim Castle Gardens and has a footfall of approximately 200,000 people per annum.
437. The **Newtownabbey Borough Council** (Appendix 3) TIC is at Mossley Mill and carries considerable information on arts events locally and regionally. Much of this relates to the Council's two theatres. The Council has a range of other arts facilities. It's Leisure and Culture Section develops and manages arts and heritage activity in all of these facilities, as well as delivering a comprehensive programme of arts, exhibitions and special events.
438. The council operates a pricing differential between the Courtyard Theatre and The Theatre at the Mill – the former charges lower prices as it is designated as the home of community arts in the Borough. Programming across all the council's arts venues is designed to target audiences from all sections of the community. Concessions are also available to promote access to the young, the old, the disadvantaged and the disabled. Events and specific shows are included in programmes which will appeal to working class communities.
439. Community-focused events and workshops are also programmed. In addition, the council provides an annual programme of free summer band concerts. Wider promotion of the arts is undertaken at retail locations such as the Abbey Centre. The council also makes use of social media to promote its programmes. In addition, local charities, community groups and schools are supported in their fundraising by council donations of tickets for its productions and events as prizes to increase awareness of, and access to, the arts. Community groups are also invited to attend specific shows and performances and exhibitions are developed through community-based activity – work is exhibited at the Museum at the Mill. The council also provides subsidised

pricing to promote particular participatory events, such as summer arts and crafts schemes.

440. **Down District Council** (Appendix 3) has two VICs, one in Downpatrick and one in Newcastle. Both of these work in conjunction with the Down District Arts Centre to promote local events. The Newcastle VIC acts as a ticket office for all arts events in the Newcastle Centre, and the Downpatrick VIC assists with selling tickets as and when required. The Newcastle VIC also works closely with the Newcastle Arts Festival. Both VICs display and promote event guides, with a weekly 'What's On' guide being emailed to a range of tourism-related businesses, including accommodation providers, activity providers, attractions and local people who have expressed an interest. Both the VICs also display information from other areas. VIC staff upload information for the Discover NI, Visit Mourne Mountains and Strangford Lough websites.
441. The **Newry and Mourne District Council** (Appendix 3) TIC is located in the same building as the museum in Newry and these share staff with the council's Arts and Culture Department. A biannual 'What's On' guide is produced, and events in the arts centre and town hall are promoted via the TIC and the council's Facebook page and other social media by the TIC network.
442. In its response **Moyle District Council** (Appendix 3) highlighted that its Ballycastle and Bushmills TICs promote and signpost arts events in the District. They produce a weekly 'What's On' e-zine during the summer season which is produced monthly during the rest of the year. This is distributed to all tourism providers in the District and to the local Chamber of Commerce and trade associations. Posters promoting arts events are displayed in the TICs, as are leaflets. The TICs' Tourist Advisers are familiar with the District's arts offering and can highlight this to locals and visitors.
443. **Fermanagh District Council's** (Appendix 3) VIC is in Enniskillen and is a member of the Tourism NI's Visitor Information Centre Network. Tourism NI provides guidelines regarding the provision of information, service standards and operational standards. The VIC's staff disseminate information via phone, email, letter and at the counter in the VIC. 'What's On' information is displayed inside the TIC and in the window. Flyers and leaflets are available for events in Fermanagh and regionally and the VIC supplies the local bus station, library, leisure centre and town hall with event information.
444. The VIC produces a quarterly 'What's On' guide, which is available in the VIC and is distributed to local trade members and other VICs throughout Northern Ireland. It is also delivered to retailers and waiting areas throughout Enniskillen. A weekly 'What's On' bulletin is issued to 1,000 recipients, including traders and the press etc. In addition, the council website promotes events etc. The VIC acts as a central point to events, such as the Beckett Festival. The VIC will compile information packs for performers and give advice on, and book, accommodation for them and visitors to the Festival. It will also provide a mail out service for event organisers, as well as selling tickets for them. The VIC also extends its hours during busy periods. In addition, the VIC provides changing and storage facilities for street performers.

445. It is clear from the submissions above that the local councils are very much aware of the importance of arts and cultural activities and events for bringing in tourists. It is also quite clear from the parallels in strategies and approaches that Tourism NI's guidance is being used. Although the councils' approach to the arts may vary and funding is a higher priority for some, it is apparent that many understand the need to find imaginative ways to engage working-class communities in the arts and make these more accessible. This is work that can and should be built upon.
446. A number of the responses indicated a desire to work more closely with DCAL and central agencies for the arts and tourism. This is something that the Committee strongly supports and it has become more of a priority following the Review of Public Administration, with the consequent reduction in the number of councils and the devolution of new areas of policy and funding, including tourism. Closer partnership and co-ordination between central and local government with respect to widening access to the arts and culture is essential. It will be important to ensure that this is achieved through a clear strategic approach that describes roles and provides clear targets. The strategy must also be clear on what is expected from councils and, of course, resourcing a strategy is an issue that will have to be resolved. It may be useful to consider the successes and failures of the Community Festival Fund to inform a model for funding.
447. The Committee is also mindful of the upcoming reorganisation of the Executive Department and the need to ensure that any strategy for arts and culture which involves councils is endorsed and driven forward by the Executive in the absence of an arts and culture department.

## COUNCIL STRATEGIES

448. **Belfast City Council** made a submission (Appendix 3) with respect to the terms of reference of this inquiry and then also briefed the Committee. The council is often cited as a good example of how local government can undertake a strategic approach to the arts and culture and widen access to disadvantaged communities in a targeted way. A Cultural Framework for Belfast report in October 2012 established a way forward for the city's approach to arts and culture. The Cultural Framework makes clear that the council funds the arts because they improve quality of life and have an economic dividend, making Belfast a better, more prosperous and successful city to live in, work in, and visit. However, there is also an acknowledgement that policy should not be detrimental to artistic quality.
449. Actions in the Cultural Framework are arranged under four themes:
- ***Distinctly Belfast*** – creating/supporting high quality arts that Belfast Belfast's "unique character"; are "culturally relevant and resonates with our residents";
  - ***Inspiring Communities*** – people of Belfast at the heart of the framework. Acknowledges some communities are harder to reach and

engage and the Framework will seek to remove barriers and provide opportunities;

- **Attracting Audience** – increase local and visiting audiences; and
- **Strengthening the Sector** – the market alone can't support the arts sector. Working with the sector to diversify income streams.

Key Framework outcomes include:

- Participants will have an increased sense of community and civic pride;
- Participants will have an increased understanding of other cultures and communities;
- Belfast will be a more engaged and active city;
- Everyone in Belfast will be aware of Belfast's diverse culture, arts and heritage offer; and
- We will have a strong, multifaceted arts and heritage infrastructure across the city.

450. The Council is currently developing an action plan to further deliver on the Cultural Framework's Inspiring Communities theme, which aims to remove barriers to participation, develop shared cultural space, celebrate and promote local cultures and communities, and target areas and communities with low levels of engagement. This is the kind of activity that the Committee's believes is required to ensure that the arts and culture are shared and enjoyed equally by all communities.

451. The action plan will include areas such as support for better communication by, networking for, and training of, community arts organizations. This will be achieved in conjunction with the Community Arts Partnership. The action plan will also support the provision of free tickets through the Test Drive the Arts scheme.

452. The three main funding streams for the Framework are:

- Core, multi-annual funding for 52 Belfast-based organisations – three year core funding for programmes;
- Project funding of up to £10,000 per organisation per year for one-off Belfast-based activities; and
- Community Festivals Funding (match-funded by DCAL) – provides up to £10,000 per festival for community-based festivals.

However, the council acknowledges that all funding streams are oversubscribed.

453. In terms of the barriers to participation that this inquiry has identified the council has highlighted some solutions. Some Belfast arts organisations provide free community buses to bring people to their events, while others employ targeted marketing, e.g. through local community centres, leisure centres, libraries and local businesses etc. There is also a drive to give local people ownership of events as this is another likely way to increase participation. Additionally, the council's Parks and Leisure department

facilitates a wide range of events across its venues. It also works with local community arts groups to create murals and other pieces of public art. Similarly, the council's Good Relations Unit supports arts activity, e.g. street festivals within working class neighbourhoods to promote positive expression of cultural heritage. The council's City Events Unit delivers an annual programme of civic events, including St. Patrick's Day, the Lord Mayor's Day and an Easter Festival. Also one-off events like the Tall Ships, WPFG and the Giro d'Italia. Most of these events are accompanied by artistic programming which is designed to be attractive and accessible to all.

454. In its submission the council also highlights that it makes use of feedback and evaluation of programmes. An independent evaluation of two PEACE III-funded programmes, Creative Legacies and City of Festivals, in 2013 provided useful insights. Both these programmes were targeted at beneficiaries in areas where relationships have been significantly affected by sectarianism, racism, or division and conflict. These are also areas of physical dereliction and decline due to lack of inward investment. The evaluation found evidence of a causal link between cultural engagement and greater social inclusion:

*"As a result of the Programme delivery, outreach projects have affected attitudinal change in participants including an increased awareness of and a willingness to engage with culture and arts activities, a willingness to go outside of their own area and in cross-community working, an increase in respect and understanding between generations and cultures, increased knowledge of the history of their communities and a willingness to share their experiences".*

455. This is very much in line with other evidence provided to this inquiry regarding the positive impact that arts and culture programmes can have on deprived communities; particularly with respect to developing the confidence to engage in self-expression and a willingness to listen to others' self-expression.

456. In 2013 the council launched the Creative and Cultural Belfast Fund in conjunction with the Arts Council. The Fund's purpose is to challenge social exclusion by providing everyone in Belfast with the opportunity to experience high-quality culture, arts and heritage. Applications must demonstrate how projects will support the Cultural Framework's Distinctly Belfast and Inspiring Communities themes. Projects must be:

- **Cross-community** – i.e. they must bring people together from different cultural and religious backgrounds;
- **Cross-city** – i.e. bring people together from different parts of the city;
- **Delivered in partnership** between cultural and community organisations; and
- **Benefit hard-to-reach areas and communities** – i.e. people who are less likely to participate in culture and arts due to social, economic or other barriers.

457. A range of other contributors to this inquiry have highlighted that periods of funding for projects must allow for the development of relationships and the establishment of legacy. As the council states in its submission, one year funding isn't enough for these kinds of projects, so projects can run for between a maximum of 18 months and three years. Again, in common with the evidence the Committee has received, the council acknowledges that this kind of engagement work is expensive, so maximum level of funding available was £300,000 – 12 times the value of the largest project grant previously offered by the Council. As might be expected, the Fund was massively oversubscribed.
458. In its submission the council makes a number of very specific recommendations. These include a desire to see interventions that are based on best practice and should be additional to current investment. Better research also needs to be undertaken to better understand the social and economic impact of the arts. Additionally, the council see the benefits of more strategic, joined-up marketing of the arts and more funding for supporting outreach and audience development initiatives. Like many contributors to this inquiry, the council also believes that the development and evaluation of projects must take place over longer periods. To avoid “tokenistic” interventions project funding needs to be applied over periods of longer than a year. Genuine, sustainable relationships and project legacy cannot be developed within such a short timescale.
459. In its submission to this inquiry **Lisburn City Council** (Appendix 3) also reflected on how a more inclusive and cohesive approach to the provision of the arts could be achieved within councils, across councils and between councils and central government. The submission makes the essential point that a more cohesive approach must be based on taking a co-ordinated approach to the arts. The council suggests that this is best served by better policy co-ordination at a national level. This supports the Committee's belief in the need for an Executive arts and culture strategy that includes local government as a partner. Additionally, the council advocates better policy co-ordination between the councils themselves and their respective arts groups. It suggests that this is likely to be assisted by the reduction in the number of councils. Beyond this co-ordination, local arts organizations also need to co-ordinate policy better. This again echoes one of the themes that has emerged from this inquiry of the benefits of partnership and collaboration. On the micro level, community arts officers need to be able to tie-in to a clear policy direction. This way all the levels involved in the provision of arts and culture will be linked by a higher degree of policy co-ordination that is likely to be more effective at producing outcomes, such as greater access to and inclusion in the arts for working-class communities.
460. The council's submission also deals with another of the key themes of this inquiry – the structure of funding. Like a number of other contributors the council believes that funding must be multi-annual to give projects certainty and make community arts work and its benefits more sustainable. Additionally, the council believes that local government must provide consistent resourcing for dedicated community arts officers to develop the overall infrastructure for community arts and to improve access to the arts for deprived communities. Mechanisms for mainstreaming successful community arts pilots across all

councils would also be beneficial. This could avoid the duplication of pilots, and resources, and would fit would a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to the arts across the councils. It would also provide for more targeted

461. Another key theme on which the council's submission reflects is the need to provide arts investment that supports children and young people as the audiences of the future. This could include the provision of artist-in-residence programmes for schools, with specific funding for those in disadvantaged areas. Additionally, there need to be better links between schools and artists through arts venue-led education programmes. With respect to targeting specific groups, the submission suggests public awareness campaigns to promote community arts outreach programmes and their benefits. It also suggests specific funding for initiatives like the Test Drive the Arts scheme. Like other contributors, the council also advocates support for the better capture of data on who is and is not participating in the arts and accurate measurement of the social impact of community arts. Furthermore, it advocates the implementation of mechanisms guided by a national strategy committee to review means-tested discounts for disadvantaged communities.
462. The council's submission also strongly welcomes further strategic engagement with the Department.
463. It is clear that the vast majority of councils are active in publicising the arts and cultural activities that go on within their areas. It is also clear that a wide range of activities take place. It can be seen from the submissions from Belfast City Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council that some councils have very developed strategies and strong ideas about what needs to be done to better engage disadvantaged and hard-to-reach communities in the arts. There is also an appetite to engage more with the Executive around this issue. A number of the Committee's recommendations feature local councils.

#### **Recommendation:**

464. **The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive's Arts and Culture Strategy should be underpinned by a strategic partnership with local councils. This will facilitate a more joined-up approach, activities and resourcing with respect to the arts. Consideration should be given to the Executive entering into Memoranda of Understanding with each of the local councils, which would include targets and responsibilities, to ensure tangible delivery on these strategic partnerships and will feed into the councils' community planning.**
465. **The Committee recommends that the Executive re-examines the processes for recruiting and appointing members to the boards of public bodies. The Committee believes that the current processes limit the likelihood of representation from disadvantaged communities on these boards; and, as a consequence, the voices of these communities are often not heard in the development of public policy.**



466. **The Committee recommends that the Department/Executive undertakes research into the development of Service Level Agreements between government and local arts providers to integrate arts into service provision for marginalised people, particularly the young. This would place the arts on the same footing as health, education, and social statutory providers.**

## Links to Appendices

Printable version of Report can be accessed [\*here\*](#)

Minutes of Proceedings can be viewed [\*here\*](#)

Minutes of Evidence can be viewed [\*here\*](#)

Written submissions can be viewed [\*here\*](#)

Research Papers can be viewed [\*here\*](#)

Annex of additional written submissions can be found [\*here\*](#)

Additional information considered by the Committee can be found [\*here\*](#)

Amendments to the Report (and not agreed) can be found [\*here\*](#)

## Amendments to the Report

The Committee considered the following amendment to the Inquiry report brought forward by Ms Rosie McCorley

*“As part of the inquiry, the Confederation of Ulster Bands gave evidence to the committee. During their presentation, they raised the issue that the media tended to present them in a negative way. Some members wished to explore this issue with them to see if perhaps they agreed that there were perceptions of them which arose as a result of the actions of some of their bands. A total of three committee members were prevented by the chairperson from pursuing this line of questioning and, as a result, we feel we have missed out on some very valuable information which would have added to the report. We would have appreciated hearing the Confederation’s opinions on the behaviour of some specific bands over recent years, which leads many people, not just the media, to take a negative view of them. This may have a bearing on the feelings of some bands that they are excluded from the Arts”.*

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Committee of Culture, Arts and Leisure  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Room 344  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 90 521799

Email: *[committee.cal@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.cal@niassembly.gov.uk)*

Twitter: @NIACALCommittee

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