

92-024

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT



INTRODUCTION

Within this folder is a discussion document produced as part of the process of putting together a national strategy for the arts and media. It does not form part of the strategy. Neither does it express any sort of 'official' view. It was written in order to focus discussion and stimulate ideas.

WHY?

The arts and media in Britain are in renaissance. Over the last decade, they have shown a confidence and diversity never seen before. In quality of work and audience demand, the arts and media have never looked healthier or more central to people's lives. More than ever before, the arts are a source of civic pride as well as personal enrichment.

The arts and media in Britain are in crisis. Scarcely a day goes by without press stories of theatres facing closure, grants being cut or audiences declining; of a lack of good innovative work in all art forms; of the absence of a sense of direction, purpose and adventure.

These views may not be incompatible, and each has some truth. What is beyond doubt is that ideas of what is art have expanded; that demand has rightly grown for access to the arts, film and broadcasting to be the right of all rather than the privilege of the few; and that resources, both public and private, have struggled to keep up. Growth in the variety of the arts contains its own problems. So how can the strategic injection of public money, and the growth of partnership with the private sector, encourage new developments? What should the priorities be? How do we make sure that the opportunity to enjoy the arts is spread ever more widely throughout society?

This is where the national arts and media strategy comes in. In 1990, the Minister for the Arts asked the arts and media funding bodies (the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Film Institute, the Crafts Council and the Regional Arts Associations/ Regional Arts Boards) to prepare a national strategy. One of its purposes is to provide the basic framework for their work. The Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils are conducting parallel exercises; and the local authorities and museums funding bodies are also associated with the strategy.

A further purpose is to consider whether the public money spent on the arts and media has been used to best effect, and how those responsible can do better in the future. It is important that all those with experience of and a passion for the arts and media provide support, assistance and advice to get the strategy right. Most important, it must be seen as a strategy for the arts and media, not for the bureaucrats.

HOW?

The paper in this folder is part of this process. It is one of a series of discussion documents; each is available free on request. Responses to them will be collated by the National Arts and Media Strategy Unit. Arising from this, a draft of the strategy will be prepared by Spring 1992. This too will be available for comment. The final version of the national arts and media strategy will be completed by Summer 1992. The hope is that the resulting document will be slim, challenging and readable - and that it will provide a mission statement for the arts and media over the next decade, as well as setting out clear goals and targets.

The national arts and media strategy will not write a single novel, put on a single play or make a single film. What it can help bring about, if the funding bodies receive the help of those who care about the arts and media, is the maximum opportunity for such creativity to flourish and for it to enrich the lives of ever more people. Your contribution to this process will be valuable and valued. Please send your views on this discussion document to the address below, to arrive by 30 November 1991.

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ARTS AND DISABILITY

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NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON ARTS AND DISABILITY

These three papers have been written in order to generate discussion and debate. They are not chapters of the national arts and media strategy or a definitive statements. The views expressed are those of the authors.

We should like to hear what **you** believe may be the key issues throughout the field of the arts and disability over the next few years. With the papers as background, we should welcome views on all or any of the following questions, as well as on any other areas of the subject on which you wish to comment.

The papers

1. Do the papers raise and deal adequately with the key issues? If not, where and how could they do better? What are your views on the recommendations contained within them?

Recent developments

2. What have been the most positive developments in disability arts or the arts and disability over the past five years, in Great Britain or elsewhere? What are likely worthwhile areas for development over the next five?

Public funding

3. Is the **current** public funding of disability arts (including funding by the local authorities) spent to best effect? If not, how could it be improved?
4. If there were a significant increase in public funding of the arts, what should be the priority areas for these additional resources so as to benefit disabled people? What effects might this have?

The broader context

5. Do the published and broadcast media act on the whole as a positive voice on arts and disability issues? How could they do better?
6. What are likely to be the key effects on arts and disability issues in this country of international developments within Europe and elsewhere?
7. What will be the main arts and disability issues over the next years in relation to amateur arts, cultural diversity and women?

8. How good is the relationship between disability arts and the education sector (including schools, further and higher education, and informal education)? How would you like to see it develop over the next ten years?

Management, training resources

9. What are the major needs in terms of physical infrastructure (such as buildings and equipment) if disability arts are to flourish, and if arts and disability problems are to be resolved? How are these needs likely to change over the next ten years?
10. What will be the major arts and disability issues in the areas of training and management over the next ten years?

**NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY UNIT
AUGUST 1991**

THE NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON ARTS AND DISABILITY

Foreword

The arts and disability discussion document is made up of three separate papers, each paper having been produced independently. In addition, there are, attached, a series of presentations made by individuals and organisations with in-depth experience in the field of arts and disability.

This means that readers will find that in some cases the same ground is covered and the same conclusions reached; in other places there are both differences of emphasis and differences in terms of recommendations.

Readers may feel that this makes for repetitive reading; however, the discussion document has been produced so as to give space to a representative and wide range of voices. It is our belief that in creating a national arts and media strategy we should ensure not only that different voices are heard but also that the same subjects are viewed from a variety of perspectives. We hope you find that the arts and disability discussion document does just that.

Part one (pages 2-14) has been produced at the Arts Council, that is to say, it stems from discussions of the Arts Council's own Arts and Disability Monitoring Committee. It has therefore been produced from a group that encompasses both disabled and non-disabled people. (A list of members of the committee is attached at the end of Part 1.) The group has considerable experience of working within the existing funding structures.

Part two (pages 15-24) was commissioned from the National Disability Arts Forum. Written by an individual but based on consultation throughout the disability arts movement, it is a paper produced by disabled people and reflects the views of those involved in disability arts.

Part three (pages 25-46) results from a meeting of organisations working within the field of disability but not necessarily within the field of the arts. Again this group included both disabled and non-disabled people. A facilitator was commissioned to produce the paper. (A list of all organisations who took part is attached to the end of Part three as are the separate presentations.)

This final paper reflects the situation of organisations which work within disability but for whom the arts tend to be of peripheral importance. Therefore, in many ways it represents the needs of the very people who should be involved in a national arts and media strategy.

ARTS AND DISABILITY: PART ONE

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Definition of terms used

As in any area in which people have been disadvantaged, terminology is vitally important because it is through language that prejudice is expressed and sustained. Within the field of disability what is acceptable terminology is still being debated. This glossary defines the terminology as used in Part 1 of the paper - a terminology based on social rather than medical definitions.

1. **Disabled people:** people with physical, sensory, or intellectual impairments who are prevented from fully participating in every day life by barriers created by able-bodied society.

2. **Intellectual impairment:** our preferred term for people who have been otherwise spoken of as having learning difficulties or special needs. We find the term 'learning difficulties' to be inappropriate in that:
 - a) it is connected at base with the education system and its use therefore should be limited to that context;

 - b) people can have learning difficulties for a whole range of reasons unrelated to their intellectual capacities.

We feel that intellectual impairment fits in with other appropriate terminology such as sensory impairment.

Introduction

It would be possible to produce a discussion document on arts and disability which started by arguing for the value of the arts in people's lives and went on to argue that disabled people should have an equality of access to the arts. It could, in passing, detail the ways in which disabled people have been and are still excluded from participating in the arts.

However, that is not the focus of this paper. We start from the fact that the National Arts and Media Strategy is not being produced in a vacuum - the individuals and groups producing the discussion papers and the individuals and groups involved in the consultation process all have their own knowledge and experience of the arts funding bodies. It is important, if the proposals within the discussion papers are to be seriously discussed, that they are done so with due recognition of the experience and history of those who produced the papers.

The history of arts and disability in terms of the arts funding structure, and specifically in terms of the Arts Council, is one in which agreement to change does not necessarily produce change.

The Attenborough Report was published in 1983. In response to this the Arts Council produced its Code of Practice on Arts and Disability (1984). The Code was agreed by the Scottish Arts Council, the Welsh Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The Code of Practice was circulated to all clients (including Regional Arts Associations) in 1985. By 1988 it was possible to demonstrate that most clients had not implemented most aspects of the Code of Practice and at this stage only one RAA had an Action Plan on Disability. Since then the Arts Council has produced an Action Plan which placed a requirement upon its own revenue clients to follow specified guidelines. Monitoring of this Action Plan has just taken place - from this monitoring it is obvious that we are still dealing with many of the problems outlined in both the Attenborough Report in 1984 and 'After Attenborough', the Carnegie Council Review of 1988.

Therefore, this paper once again attempts to spell out exactly what is meant by 'equality of access' and to outline the strategies and mechanisms which need to be put into place to ensure that 'equality of access to the arts' is not simply a slogan but becomes a reality.

Access to the arts

The Arts Council's own Charter states that the Council has been incorporated and established "to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Great Britain".

First, behind this statement lies an assumption that there is a consensus as to what is meant by 'the arts', and this has inevitably led to the corollary that within the arts there are agreed standards of excellence to which everyone should aspire. This is not the case (something we return to in greater detail later in this paper); however, the existence of these 'agreed standards' has been one of the major impediments to people gaining access to arts funding.

Second, access to the arts has, in practice, been generally interpreted to mean making the existing arts available to wider audiences. That is to say, in terms of disability, much of the effort of the Arts Council's clients (and indeed many of the requirements laid down in the Arts and Disability Action Plan) is aimed at ensuring that disabled people can attend art events. However, access to the arts means much more than making it possible for people to become part of the audience for existing arts provision.

We take 'access to the arts' to mean that everyone should have an equality of opportunity:-

- a) to be able to attend arts events

- b) to work within the arts at all levels (as artists, as administrators, as managers, as support workers - from film editors to box office - etc)
- c) to have control of resources (this means both having access to employment at decision making levels, and being able to be part of decision making committees)
- d) to attend art events which reflect their own experience of life
- e) to practise the arts in a variety of contexts.

This equality of opportunity should exist for everyone, whether disabled or not, whatever their class, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic or educational background.

And it should be noted that people do not necessarily belong to just one disenfranchised group. For instance disabled people belong also to a specific race, gender, class and so on. Therefore when considering the question of access it is also necessary to recognise that people may face more than one barrier to a full participation in the arts.

At present we are a long way from achieving full equality of access to the arts. In the rest of this paper we look at what achieving each of the above means in practical terms. Many of the recommendations reiterate those made by Attenborough - we hope within a National Arts and Media Strategy they will be implemented.

A) Access to arts events

For events to be accessible people have

- a) to know they are taking place
- b) to be able physically to get into them
- c) to be able to understand what is happening when they get there.

They should be able to do this without either being made to feel that they are a nuisance or having to bring a companion with them.

This means that the publicity material for all events needs to be available in appropriate forms (large print, tape, etc.), contain relevant access information and be targeted to disability networks. It means that all venues need wheel-chair

access, appropriate signs, and a sound enhancement system. It means that those promoting an event need to make provision for guide-dogs, offer appropriate seating arrangements and ticket pricing systems, provide signed and audio interpretations as appropriate, and ensure a welcoming environment.

The above cannot be fully achieved without the funding bodies, arts promoters, and the Government being prepared to make major changes in the present situation. Fire regulations, theatre staffing and the training of those staff, and legislation are all areas which need consideration.

Despite the work already done in this area, fire regulations are still used to prevent specific groups of people from attending events by themselves as they are believed to be a hazard in the case of fire. It is our experience that such regulations are used to discriminate against disabled people and that other groups who regularly attend art events and who arguably would be an equal hazard in the case of fire (such as children) are not so discriminated against. Furthermore the regulations are still applied differently in different areas of the country.

Since we believe that people have a right to attend art events by themselves we would suggest that there is a need to ensure that fire regulations for venues are standardised, reasonable and appropriate. A clear understanding of the regulations will set the levels of staffing required to ensure that people can attend events on their own and not be at risk in the case of fire. All staff should receive disability awareness training and this should be a condition of grant aid to the venue and/or event.

Finally we believe that within the new funding structure, and indeed in all areas where public money is given to support what are classified as public activities (that is to say we would wish the museum service, public libraries, etc to be included) physical accessibility of buildings should be made a condition of grant aid.

Alongside this we believe that the Arts Councils and other lead bodies in the arts should lobby for change in legislation to make the holding of any public event conditional on the venue being accessible. This would mean that the granting of performance and music licences would also become conditional upon buildings being accessible.

We make this statement with due consideration of the money needed to adapt many of our existing arts venues and indeed believe that the funding system should make it a priority to allocate money to such adaptations. We suggest that the Government could consider re-investing VAT raised from the arts into the adaptation of buildings.

However, looking at history we can see that a lack of money is not necessarily the real problem, but it is used to justify the failure to implement change - as in "we cannot employ women, we do not have the money to instal women's toilets". Once change becomes inevitable the money is somehow found. Present legislation and social attitudes mean that it is not now possible to put up signs saying 'no blacks' or 'no women', but every inaccessible building says, in effect, 'no disabled'.

For an event to be classified as 'public', all the public should be able to attend if they so wish. This includes disabled people.

B) Employment within the arts

Increasing employment of disabled people within the arts requires a number of different strategies.

First, as with attendance at art events, to work within an organisation people have to be able to get into the building or buildings which the organisation uses. Therefore when we ask that the accessibility of buildings be a criterion for grant aid we include within this office areas, performance areas, workshop areas and indeed any other part of the building into which people need to carry out work.

Second, it means looking at the ways people can work in the arts. This ranges from being an artist (from writing to being a performer), through administration and management, to being part of the support services (again a great range, from sound technicians to box office staff).

The first thing to recognise is that for many disabled people the accepted ways of becoming part of a profession or industry are simply not available. For instance many people working in film start by acting as a "gofer" - doing any job that comes up; this simply is not a physical possibility for many disabled people. Therefore we need a clear analysis of areas in which the usual ways of starting work are not possible, followed by discussion with lead bodies within the arts industries to devise alternative modes of on-job training.

Equal barriers can face disabled people in terms of access to professional training - whether it be through further education or through specialised arts training (drama schools, etc.). Some of these barriers are practical and some are attitudinal. The practical barriers range from inaccessible buildings to course material being provided in inappropriate forms. All of these are capable of solution.

Because they are seldom acknowledged, attitudinal barriers are more difficult to change. For instance, it is assumed that there is no need to provide dance training for anyone who is hearing impaired, or who has physical disabilities. This relates

to a view of dance as being an activity related to physical perfection; to a view of dance as being always performed to music; to the idea that hearing impaired people cannot hear music and therefore cannot dance; to the idea (usually unstated) that dance by many physically disabled people would be either embarrassing or grotesque, and so on. And these views are held even in the face of evidence to the contrary - for instance the fact that hearing impaired people both play and compose music; and that some deaf schools do provide dance training and so on. These attitudes mean that in many areas the arts are not even seen as a potential career by many disabled people.

There is a need for the arts funding structure, and specifically the Arts Council and other lead bodies in the arts (British Film Institute, Museums and Galleries Commission etc.) to both provide training within the existing arts structure and pressure existing training and education systems to make training accessible to disabled people.

There is also a need to look carefully at the training of the trainers. Too often disabled people attending a training course can find that trainers are unaccommodating to their needs, hostile to their presence or expect the disabled person to act as a trainer.

We recommend the establishment of a working party under governmental auspices to consider in detail disability and training across the art industries.

We believe that all bodies providing public funding for the arts should make increasing the employment of disabled people in the arts a major objective. This would include looking at existing recruitment and employment practices, and setting up systems for job analysis to clarify exactly what skills are needed for what jobs. It would also mean providing practical and appropriate support systems for disabled employees which might range from adapted machinery to recognising through appropriate funding that companies with disabled members might have extra travel costs, need longer rehearsal periods, etc.

The proposed Employment Initiative (scheduled to start in autumn 1991) should be seen as the first step in achieving this objective.

C) Control of resources

Control of resources is about having an equality of opportunity to work in the arts at a senior level (within arts organisations and within the arts funding bodies - as artists, as managers, and as administrators) and an equality of opportunity to sit on all decision-making bodies throughout the arts, including the arts funding system.

The first relates to issues raised in B) above but it also means taking positive action to change the profile of existing management.

Statistically across the arts, artistic directors and senior managers, particularly within large scale prestigious organisations, are predominantly white males who have higher education qualifications. The profile of the recent appointments of Regional Arts Board directors is typical. This means that our arts institutions and the arts funding structure are almost exclusively run by a non-representative section of society. This will only be dealt with by positive action at the level of senior appointments.

In terms of sitting on boards of management, advisory panels, committees etc., at the moment disabled artists and arts workers are too often invited to join a committee only because they are disabled, however, even when they are invited because of other areas of expertise they are still often the only disabled member of the committee. Although the former approach is tokenistic and the latter is not, in reality both can be isolating for the person concerned.

Secondly, there is at present only a small pool of disabled artists and arts workers and they are being asked to contribute their expertise, usually for free, often at the expense of their own work.

We would wish future strategies to include:-

- a) A stipulation (as a condition of grant aid) that art organisations prove that they have set up consultation systems with organisations of disabled people including the opportunity for representatives from such organisations to attend committee/board meetings. This consultation to cover all aspects of the organisation's work, not simply physical access.
- b) The institutionalization of payments to people for their advice - this is of course an issue which extends beyond disability - including costs for carers, child care, etc.
- c) The examination of realistic ways to involve intellectually impaired people in the consultation processes. This means recognising that not all people are capable of sitting on committees but that this does not mean that they should be excluded from the decision making processes. Intellectually impaired people could be offered training in committee skills. Those who are less articulate could use advocates - preferably articulate and committee literate intellectually impaired people.

The active involvement of disabled artists and arts workers at decision making level also means, as with the accessibility of events, ensuring that papers are provided on

tape or in braille, that meetings are held in accessible buildings, that signed interpretation is provided, etc.

And above all we expect that the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Boards will set an example. We therefore ask that disabled people be appointed to the Council/Boards.

D) Representation of disabled people and disability culture with the arts

Within this section we touch upon a number of diverse but related issues:

- i) The need to recognise and then support work stemming from a disability culture.
 - ii) The need to recognise the right of disabled people to work in whatever context they themselves select.
 - iii) The criteria by which the work of disabled people should be judged.
 - iv) The need to look at present works of art in terms of the abuse they offer either implicitly or explicitly to disabled people.
- i) We do not here discuss disability arts in detail since they will be comprehensively covered in Part 2 of this paper. However we believe that it is necessary for funding organisations to recognise that there is a disability culture (that is a culture created by disabled people and springing from the experience of being disabled) and, further, to understand that the disability arts movement is a young movement and its work needs to be both supported and protected (by which we mean guaranteed resources whilst it establishes itself). This also means that the new funding structure needs to designate appropriate budgets under which issue led work can be funded.

In addition we would expect promoting organisations from arts centres to galleries to apply equal opportunities to programming - in this case this means ensuring that works stemming from a disability culture and works by disabled artists are presented on a regular basis.

- ii) We do not believe that the new funding structure should limit its funding of work by disabled people to those who choose to work within a disability culture. If disabled people wish to work in an integrated

setting the choice should be available to them. This means ensuring that companies are funded so that they employ disabled artists (including disabled performers) - that is, funding needs to be at a level that will allow for any necessarily incurred costs (for example, longer rehearsal time, extra travel costs, employment of carers, etc.).

- iii) Present criteria for assessment of work or appraisal of clients are not god-given: the decisions as to what comprises 'good art' or is 'excellent work' are arrived at by consensus among those people for whom the work was created in the first place. They have been literally man-made and are not necessarily applicable to works created out of a disability culture. Until time has allowed us to arrive at a consensus as to criteria, we recommend that the present system of peer assessment is literally followed and that work from a disability culture is judged by people from that culture. The funding structures should then be prepared to act upon that advice.

In terms of disabled artists working in an integrated system, assessment should be by people from the audiences for which the work is intended - this may or may not be an audience of disabled people.

In both cases it is unlikely that the audience for the work is intended to be either arts officers within the funding structures or people who are an established part of the world of the subsidised arts. We need to find new assessors and new ways of assessing.

- iv) We need to take a critical look at the works presented across the spectrum of the arts in terms of the image of disability portrayed within them.

It is not only that works of art historically and still today generally ignore the experience of disabled people, but that the image of disabled people which is present in many works is at best distorted and at worst bigoted.

Whilst it is inappropriate for arts funders to be prescriptive in terms of the content of works, it is possible to make a choice to fund works which present a positive image of disability and to fund disabled people to analyse the misrepresentation in works from the past. The latter exercise has been basic to both the women's movement and black liberation, and it is necessarily part of the disability movement and as such should be supported.

E) Disabled people and the practice of the arts in non-therapeutic settings

Here we are not considering the arts as a professional occupation but simply people's ability to take part in creative activity within their daily life.

For disabled people involvement in arts activity too often takes place in situations where they are given no choice as to what is provided, and where taking part in arts activity is seen primarily as having a therapeutic value. The truth is that much arts activity, in the sense that it can be life enhancing, has a therapeutic value wherever it is taking place and whoever is involved in it. However, the linking of arts activity with therapy within a disability context should be avoided as it can confuse the arts activity with arts therapy (where arts are used as part of a healing process) and hence be a step towards medicalising disabled people; and it is often a way of downgrading the activity.

Disabled people should have an equality of opportunity to take part in arts activities of their own choice.

For some groups within society such an opportunity is provided through amateur arts organisations. But these tend to exclude whole groups within society - working class people, black people, and disabled people.

For disabled people this exclusion can be based on practical difficulties - transport, accessibility of meeting place etc, or it can be because they are not only disabled but also belong to one of the other excluded communities. Therefore strategies to solve these problems need to include both support to overcome the practical difficulties and alternative provision.

Community arts started as a way of making the arts accessible to working class communities. A large part of community arts work has been and still is based in setting up situations in which people participate in arts activities. Over the years other groups have developed ways of working aimed at making art accessible to other disenfranchised groups. In terms of disability this has included the growth of the Shape organisations, and more recently of the Disability Arts Fora.

The Arts Council, despite the fact that its Charter states that it is established "to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts" has had at best an ambivalent attitude to any form of amateur activity and been a less than enthusiastic supporter for areas such as community arts and arts centres. Although over the years there has been, specifically within the work of the RAAs, a recognition that participation within the arts has an important role to play, this is still in absolute terms a poor relation both in terms of prestige and resourcing.

A National Arts and Media Strategy should recognise that this area of work is of basic cultural importance and ensure that it is resourced at both regional and national level.

Conclusion

As we said at the start of this paper many of the recommendations within it have already been made by the Attenborough Report, by the Code of Practice, and by the Arts & Disability Action Plan and have still not been implemented. If progress is to be made it would seem crucial for all arts organisations and all bodies within the arts funding structure to have disability arts officers. In large organisations this would be a full-time post, in smaller organisations it would be the specific responsibility of a particular staff member. It is our belief that the best way to ensure that disability is constantly kept on the agenda is to employ people who have a definite responsibility for this area of work.

For similar reasons we would expect the Arts Council and the new unitary funding structure to set up committees of disabled people as part of that structure.

It should also be obvious that achieving many of the above changes will only be possible if the Arts Council operates as a strategic and lead body. This means that it needs to co-ordinate strategies which will involve not simply other parts of the arts funding structure but also government departments and major charities, and specifically to work towards anti-discrimination legislation.

Basic change will become a reality when disabled people have the same legal rights as other groups in society. There is a need for legislation which will provide legal redress against unjustifiable discrimination, provide a mechanism for monitoring the way in which society meets the needs of disabled people, and send a positive message to society. It is important that such legislation covers all areas, including employment, education, housing, transport; as such it will have major implications for the arts.

Finally we would welcome a situation in which the inclusion of disabled people within the arts at all levels and the presentation of works from a disability culture are viewed as positive, because that is what they are. Any situation which involves people with a variety of experience is likely to be richer and more interesting, and any culture which can incorporate works which present a variety of experience is likely to be a richer and healthier culture.

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ARTS AND DISABILITY: PART TWO

'The emergence of a disability culture is difficult, but tremendously liberating. Such a culture enables us to recognise the pressure to pretend to be normal for the oppressive and impossible-to-achieve hurdle which it is. Most importantly, this culture challenges our prejudices about ourselves, as well as those of the non-disabled culture.'

**Jenny Morris, 'Pride against Prejudice: a personal politics of disability'
(Women's Press, 1991)**

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Introduction

The involvement of disabled people in the arts is one of the most rapidly developing areas of artistic activity in this country at the moment. The past ten years have seen a quite unparalleled surge of activity both in the creation and appreciation of art by disabled people.

This movement has produced performing groups such as Graeae Theatre and Heart 'n Soul, cabaret artists such as Johnny Creshcendo, Ian Stanton and Kate Portal, writers such as Marie Oshodi and Allan Sutherland, comedians Wanda Barbara and Jag Plah, photographers David Hevey and Sameena Rama and visual artists such as Trevor Landell, Adam Reynolds and Gill Gehardi.

This extraordinary growth of artistic activity has been supported by the setting up of organisational structures to support those activities. In particular, the invention of the 'disability arts forum' as a platform for disabled people within the arts has provided both a powerful means for disabled people to organise their own artistic activities and a representative voice.

What is starting to emerge is a two-tier structure of regional DAFs and a single national Forum. This potentially provides a way of recognising regional difference while also enabling disabled people in the arts to have a single unified voice. The fact that the regional forums are based on the geographical areas of the Regional Arts Boards potentially simplifies considerably the possibility of incorporating them in a national strategy, provided that the process is adequately funded.

These developments pose an important challenge for funding bodies. They are not on the whole geared up to cater for this sort of explosive development of an individual, previously unrecognised sector. Nor, on the whole, are they used to dealing with representative organisations. The artistic traditions in this country tend to be individualistic rather than democratic.

Yet it is undeniable that disabled people have been so thoroughly excluded from the arts - not merely by funding bodies, but by a whole set of discriminatory structures ranging from segregated education to inaccessible transport - that thorough consultation is needed before arts organisations learn how to cater adequately for their needs. Representative organisations can greatly simplify this process of consultation.

We suggest, therefore, that regional disability arts forums and the National Disability Arts Forum be given a significant consultative role within the National Arts and Media Strategy. They must be supported in their development, and funded at a level that allows them to perform this role in a fully professional manner.

Disabled people's involvement in the arts covers two main issues:

- involvement of disabled people in mainstream arts provision
- disability arts.

It is essential that these two areas be kept entirely distinct, and resourced from separate budgets. Mainstream arts organisations should neither take resources from disability arts nor offload responsibility for putting their own house in order.

Mainstream arts

The exclusion of disabled people from mainstream arts is a national scandal. Disabled taxpayers can legitimately complain that they are subsidising activities from which they are barred - whether by lack of wheelchair spaces, failure to provide sign language interpreters, or any of the numerous other forms of access discrimination.

In some countries, this kind of discrimination is illegal, just as discrimination on the grounds of race or sex are illegal in this country. It is certainly not acceptable, and the National Arts and Media Strategy should contain measures aimed at eliminating such discrimination.

Funding organisations should draw up guidelines on disability to which all clients would be expected to adhere as a basic condition of funding. These guidelines should be drawn up after detailed consultation with a broad range of organisations controlled by disabled people.

All arts organisations must address the issues of access. This covers physical access, access to information (including the braille and taping of all publicity, programmes etc), linguistic access (signing and loop systems for deaf and hard of hearing people). Pricing policies should take account of the financial situation of many disabled people and should allow facilitators free entrance. Detailed information on access should be easily available to all disabled people.

These measures should not be limited to the general public. It must be stressed that access measures should take account of disabled people as employees (or potential employees).

Access is a serious matter: action on access should be based on detailed access audits carried out by professional access consultants. These should be disabled people.

Adequate resources must be made available for these measures to be carried out. These will not be solely financial: funding bodies must, for example, be able to provide their clients with appropriate backup information on how to find disabled people who can act as access consultants, equality trainers etc.

A named member of staff should be appointed as key worker in charge of access.

All organisations receiving funding should implement an equal opportunities policy towards disability in their employment procedures. Because disabled people tend to be denied opportunities to acquire skills, they should organise appropriate in-house training.

All funded arts organisations should recruit disabled people on to their Management Committees. These should be people who have appropriate experience to be able to represent other disabled people.

Arts organisations must encourage the participation of disabled people in all aspects of their work. This should include outreach work, targeting publicity, establishing projects designed to draw disabled people in and recruiting disabled people as employees and management.

All these measures must be backed by appropriate monitoring procedures. All funded organisations should be required to draw up an access statement, which should be regularly updated. Progress on access and involvement of disabled people should be monitored by regular spot checks.

Most important of all, funding bodies must be prepared to make access a condition of funding. Arts organisations must come to understand that, if they exclude disabled people, they lose their grants.

Disability arts

Disability arts may be defined as 'art made by disabled people which in some way reflects the experience of being a disabled person'.

This definition has been carefully phrased. We are not simply talking of the involvement of disabled people as a minority element in mainstream arts. Nor are we talking of artists who happen to have disabilities, but do not address disability issues. The modern equivalents of Homer, Beethoven, Alexander Pope or Vincent Van Gogh might well deserve funding, but that funding should not come out of a disability arts budget.

We are, however, talking of an extraordinarily exciting development in the artistic life of this country: the growth of a new sector of artistic activity, which represents

a tenth of the population who have hitherto been left out of the arts. It potentially stretches across all existing art-forms, and is developing new forms - such as signed song, a form which fuses dance and linguistic expression into a single, potent mode of communication.

We recommend that the National Arts and Media Strategy should recognise this explosive growth, and create patterns of funding that will consolidate and encourage it.

This is entirely in line with the first of the strategy's current guiding principles: 'to enable as many people as possible to enjoy the arts'. One person in ten has a disability; and one family in three contains a disabled person (OPCS, 1988).

As we have said, this work should be funded via an entirely separate budget from access to mainstream arts. It should be recognised, however, that disability arts feeds into mainstream arts. The access measures currently being tried by some larger building-based organisations, exploration of the issues around representation of disabled people or ways of writing for disabled performers have been developed by disabled people. This is not surprising. Disability artists are closer to disability audiences and their needs. As one disability performer put it, succinctly, 'It's not the RSC who go out and perform in the grotty day centres'.

It must however be recognised that traditional criteria are not necessarily adequate for judging disability arts. This is partly because disability performers are developing new forms, hitherto unused means of expression. It is inadequate, for example, to judge signed song simply as dance, without considering the linguistic element.

Similarly, it must be recognised that disability arts is in its developmental stages. For example, a dance troupe consisting of severely disabled people could not be expected to have the physical condition of a Nureyev. Their work would need to develop a new aesthetic. But such an aesthetic could not be expected to stand immediate comparison with classical ballet, whose components have been developed over hundreds of years.

It must also be recognised that disability arts draws upon a relatively small pool of skills. Disabled people are limited by, among other things, segregated education and discrimination by training facilities such as art colleges and drama schools. It must, therefore be recognised that all disability groups will, to a greater or lesser extent, be training grounds for their performers. They may need nurturing accordingly.

The sort of additional criteria that should be employed with disability arts include:

- Is this group or individual developing a new aesthetic?
- Are skills being developed? Does this work provide training?
- Who is the work reaching? Are they normally excluded from conventional artistic work?

The assessment of disability arts should always involve disabled people with appropriate experience.

Training

Disabled artists have a particular need for training. As a result of the poor quality of segregated ('special') education, they start further back, and are then discriminated against by existing training institutions.

We recommend that the major arts funding bodies of this country should put the strongest possible pressure on training institutions to end discrimination against disabled people.

We also recommend that the National Arts and Media Strategy recognise the need of disabled artists for training, and establish separate budgets to cater for it. In particular, we would like to see training in arts skills for young disabled people made a priority area.

Recommendations

Regional disability arts forums and the National Disability Arts Forum should be supported in their development and adequately funded to permit them to act as consultative bodies.

Distinct budgets should be created for disability arts and for the involvement of disabled people in mainstream arts provision.

Funding organisations should, in consultation with disabled people and their representatives, draw up guidelines on disability to which all clients should be made to adhere as a basic condition of funding.

Arts organisations should be made to end access discrimination, and should lose their funding if they fail to do so.

Resources should be provided for access improvements.

All funded organisations should implement an equal opportunities policy towards disability in their employment procedures. This should include appropriate in-house training.

All funded organisation should recruit suitably experienced disabled people on to their Management Committees/Boards of Trustees.

Arts organisations must encourage the participation of disabled people in all aspects of their work.

All these measures must be backed by effective monitoring, including access statements and regular spot checks.

Access must be made an essential condition of funding. Organisations that discriminate against disabled people should lose their grants.

Patterns of funding should be created that will consolidate and encourage the growth of disability arts.

New and appropriate criteria must be developed for judging disability arts. Disabled people with appropriate experience should always be involved in the assessment of disability arts.

Funding bodies should put pressure on training institutions to end discrimination against disabled people.

Budgets must be established for training disabled people.

Training in arts skills for young disabled people should be made a priority area.

Funding implications

The above recommendations have the following implications for funding strategies:

Funding must be provided to support the development of regional disability arts forums and the National Disability Arts Forum.

Patterns of funding must be created that will consolidate disability arts and encourage their further development.

Separate funding must be provided for making mainstream arts accessible to disabled people. This should almost certainly include separate budgets covering one-off grants for physical alterations to buildings.

Budgets should be created to cover for training disabled people. These should include (probably as a separate budget) funds for training young people in arts skills.

In conclusion

To end the exclusion of disabled people from the artistic life of this country is a straightforward matter. But it takes commitment. It can not be over-emphasised that funding bodies must be prepared to get tough. They must be prepared to cut the grants of organisations that discriminate against disabled people.

Note one: Art therapy

It is common for disabled artists and performers to find that their work is treated as therapy, and effectively dismissed, rather than having aesthetic criteria applied to it.

Indeed, it has in the past been assumed by some funding bodies that any work that is overtly labelled as being by disabled people is automatically outside their area of concern. We see a danger that, as funding bodies become more conscious of the need to take account of disability, they may come under pressure to fund groups whose work is therapy, rather than art.

For us the issue is a simple one. Arts funding should concern itself with the arts. Work that is primarily judged by the therapeutic or diagnostic benefit it brings belongs within the NHS, and should receive NHS funding. Work which receives arts funding should be intended to be judged primarily by aesthetic criteria.

This should not become an excuse for applying inappropriate criteria to disabled people's work, particularly where disabled performers are receiving training that is otherwise denied to them. (The questions of appropriate criteria and of training are discussed at greater in the main text of this document.)

There may well be a place within therapy for the arts. Perhaps in the course of time art therapy will draw upon the advances made in Disability Arts. Perhaps we shall even see the day when disabled art therapists routinely work with disabled people. But none of this concerns us here. All these applications belong within health service or social services provision. The only way in which a National Arts and Media Strategy has any relevance to this process is that it may support and encourage the developments in disability arts that may later be used by therapists for their own purposes.

Note two: 'Integrated' performance

The National Arts and Media Strategy should fund disability arts, and it should also be pressing for equal opportunities employment policies by mainstream arts organisations, creating substantial new opportunities for disabled performers to be employed on their merits.

This does, however, create a danger of tokenism. Funding bodies should beware of groups that respond to new grant conditions by using disabled performers without genuinely instituting equal opportunities, or profess to discuss disability without genuinely using the experience of disabled people.

There is also a possibility of elements of disability culture being adopted without full understanding, and without thought to the needs of a disability audience. For example, there have been a number of cases of plays where hearing actors use British Sign Language (to them, a foreign language) in a way that impressed hearing audiences but was incomprehensible to native users of BSL. Deaf people are extremely angry at what they see as productions that use them as an excuse to gain funding and then exclude them.

We suggest that it is informative to apply the following questions to all self-consciously 'integrated' productions:

- Who gets the credit for this production?
- Who is being paid?
- Whose ideas are being represented?
- Does this production serve disabled audiences - or does it only appear to do so?

A company that describes itself as 'integrated' is almost certainly trying to have it both ways. It is trying to argue that it is a special case, to be judged by separate criteria from mainstream companies. (Let us not forget that mainstream companies are allowed to employ disabled performers, and NDAF would certainly not object to that in principle.) And yet it is avoiding being part of the disability arts movement, and of being answerable to disabled people.

Two provisos need to be made here. The first is that disabled performers may need to use able-bodied facilitators. This is normal. In problem cases, the four criteria listed above should be applied.

Where a number of facilitators are employed, and they are all able-bodied, questions need to be asked about equal opportunities. Having one disability is not necessarily a bar to facilitating someone with a completely different disability. Thus, Heart and Soul, the successful music/theatre group of people with learning disabilities, are regularly supported by a group of four musicians, none of whom have learning disabilities, but two of whom are themselves disabled.

The second proviso is that 'integrated' performance should be sharply separated from equal opportunities in employment and casting by mainstream groups. Such attention to equal opportunities is of course to be welcomed. Indeed, it should be a basic condition of funding.

ARTS AND DISABILITY - PART THREE

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Main issues for concern

This is the third of three papers constructed with representatives of the national disability charities and other interested organisations for the National Arts and Media Strategy on the theme of the arts and disability. A meeting was held on the 27 March, 1991 at the Arts Council of Great Britain. The reasoning behind having such a meeting was an awareness that the national charities provide many services for disabled people. It seemed important therefore to gauge how relevant the arts are to that service provision.

Many disabled people are unhappy at the dominance the charities seem to have in terms of control of resources, the type of services provided and the fact that decisions are made by non-disabled people on behalf of disabled people. Many issues arise in this ongoing debate as regards separate provision, integrated services etc. It is not within the remit of this paper to go into these issues at length but inevitably they will be touched on.

It is also recognised that there are enormous numbers of people who are dependant upon definitions of disability for the quality of life experience that can be expected. It is therefore necessary to recognise that the kind of disability is not necessarily one that disables a person but the reactions and expectations people may hold of that person. Many disabled people are extremely healthy and articulate. Others may have problems with illness and the overlap with health issues can also be of significance. Some are born with a disability and as such it is a part of everyday 'normal' experience and history. Some acquire a disability through an accident, illness or simply ageing. Disabled people are not some homogeneous group that can be lumped together for every stereotypical view and fear held about 'disability' within our society. Self-definition is of crucial significance.

Issues relating to other disenfranchised groups, the lack of available resources, quality of life experience, the place of pain and isolation that remains 'invisible', all play a part. The place of the arts in allowing expression of these areas of 'invisibility' has been proven and should not be seen in the context of therapy or therapeutic institutions. Consequently, the contribution made to the National Arts and Media Strategy in this paper will inevitably overlap and reaffirm other papers produced on the theme of access to the arts.

Four presentations were given at the meeting in order to set the parameters for the discussion. This was done in a complementary fashion and they are therefore reproduced as appendices to this paper. The following emerged as falling within the remit of a National Arts and Media Strategy as issues of concern; access, consultation, education and training, funding, information, representation and transport.

1. Access

It was felt that there lies a wealth of talent within the disabled population which has not been realised because of lack of access. This access is seen to be not only to the arts as audience but to the arts professions as well. It is a basic human rights issue that everyone should be able to participate in the artistic and cultural life of a community. What the National Arts and Media Strategy requires is an over-riding strategy of access to the arts and for specific mention to be made as to which section of the community is being referred to.

2. Consultation

A realistic process of consultation is to be welcomed although concern was expressed about the possible devolvement of responsibility. The National Arts and Media Strategy must register control by disabled people as a basic long term aim. The notion of integrated arts too often can be interpreted as a euphemism for arts control by non-disabled people for disabled people. Consultation can mean many things depending on where you lie within any given structure or organisation. On the whole disabled people have not even found an entry to the arts funding system. People who have traditionally not had a voice, or a means of expressing their life experience need to be empowered to participate.

3. Education and training

There was concern expressed about the lack of attention paid to appropriate education and training within organisations providing arts services, both from the point-of-view of the work done necessary to further stated aims and objectives and in day-to-day provision. It was felt that there was a need for greater emphasis on all disabled people having opportunities for expression across the board in the arts. In order to gain employment in the arts disabled people should have the opportunity for access to appropriate education and training to increase their involvement.

4. Funding

It hardly needs to be said that there is never enough funding. Direct revenue for any arts access initiative is negligible. It was felt that not nearly enough had been done by the arts funding system to right the balance. It was not a case of providing for people who are seen as being 'disadvantaged' but providing realistic funds in terms of what disabled people have to offer to the arts and culture of our society.

5. Information

Several participants endorsed the need for a central resource of information with details of practising artists, administrators, schemes, access to venues, interpreting services etc. Also documentation, evaluation and dissemination of relevant projects and schemes would be useful. Responsibility for providing this information should not lie with the charities but should be developed in conjunction with local authorities, arts funders and government departments.

6. Representation

Access to the arts is essential in terms of cultural identity and social recognition. It was appreciated that there are bureaucratic and structural problems as to how any disenfranchised group gains access to adequate representation within any organisation. The negative images portrayed of disabled people do much in continuing a history of fear and prejudice that relegates many disabled people to the bottom of the pile. Adequate representation within mainstream arts provision would provide positive role models that could go some way to changing negative stereotypes of disabled people. It was time for change and the majority of participants welcomed the opportunity to participate in this change.

7. Transport

On a practical level it was considered an essential part of access to the arts to provide for the cost of transport. For many physically disabled people use of public transport is an impossibility. As with access to public buildings major change will only be achieved once there is a legislative framework that compels people to make all public provision accessible. This can be on a physical, sensory or attitudinal basis.

In conclusion the main issues highlighted above reaffirm the knowledge already held that the main government bodies have to take on responsibility for the funding of arts and disability initiatives. This can only be done in partnership with disabled people and the relevant service providers. Inter-departmental co-operation is essential to achieve this aim.

There also remains a need to prioritise areas of strategy that will contain elements of continuity and of permanence. A need to think imaginatively about potential change for the future is also apparent. A clear statement was made that as national disability charities rarely meet to discuss the place of arts provision in their work a forum should be formed for continued dialogue, action and lobbying to place disabled people firmly on the agenda within the arts funding system.

Appendix I: Participants in the meeting

ACCESS COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND	Margaret Mannion
AGE CONCERN	Katrina Webster
ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN	Bushy Kelly
BRITISH COUNCIL OF ORGANISATIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE	Barbara Lisicki Natalie Markham
BRITISH EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION	Jackie Taylor
DISABILITY SCOTLAND	Robert Pickles
DRAKE RESEARCH PROJECT	Adele Drake
GATEWAY CLUBS (MENCAP)	Marion O'Mara
MIND-IN-CROYDON	Nora Croft
MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES COMMISSION	Carolyn Keen
NATIONAL SCHIZOPHRENIA FELLOWSHIP	Michelle Frost
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	Sam Gallop
PHAB	Alan Aubin
RADAR	Mary Holland
ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND	Marcus Weisen
ROYAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF	Frankie Blagden
SHAPE NETWORK	Francois Metarasso
SPASTIC SOCIETY (ARTISTS FIRST)	Jayne Earnscliffe

Appendix II: Presentation by Jayne Earnscliff, the Spastic Society, Artists First Arts Initiative

In order to illustrate various issues regarding arts and disability, for the purpose of debate, I would like to give you a description of the service Artist First provides. Simultaneously I will be showing slides of work from our first project in Cardiff, which I will detail later, and then slides of work by artists with disabilities on our slide index.

Artists First seeks to create meaningful job opportunities for artists with any form of disability to become involved in high-profile commissions of public art, ie. art for public places.

These may take the form of sculptures, mosaics, murals, photographic displays, paintings, textiles, ceramics or stained glass. Artists are paid at market rates, and may employ helpers, such as artist-technicians, to assist with the construction of artwork, after design stage.

Payments to artists can be tricky with regard to disability benefits and allowances. One artist I know of, after successfully selling a number of her paintings, lost her car allowance. So she then couldn't transport her paintings!

Initially commissions will take place at The Spastics Society's new regional offices in Cardiff, Huntingdon, Wakefield, Redditch, Bristol and Crawley. Thereafter, commissioning opportunities will be sought elsewhere.

Artists First was borne out of a growing awareness that there exists a wealth of talent among the disabled population and that it often does not find an outlet. Traditionally any formal training in the arts, for instance in art colleges, has largely been denied them through lack of access to both courses and the buildings that house them.

In taking public art, in which artists work often on a large scale and in the public eye, we can effectively change the public's attitude towards disability by producing concrete evidence of the artists' talents and the valuable contribution they can make to the community, through enhancement of the environment.

Artists First also believe that art is at the heart of society and that in addition to providing an important channel for communication and self-expression, it can enrich and inform every area of the lives of those engaged in its practice.

Disabled people have a great deal to offer the able-bodied in terms of their experience of disability, isolation and prejudice, in positive ways as well as negative ones.

Artists First goes some way to meeting The Spastics Society's objectives in respect to the community care programme, considering art as a productive means of filling leisure time, and enhancing quality of life. But it goes much further, providing the means to participate in mainstream, professional art practice.

We should be shifting the emphasis away from art as a therapeutic occupation, whilst recognising the role and value of art therapy, towards participating in mainstream arts activity.

This means artists being given recognition of their talents, striving towards high attainment and high artistic standards, meeting the same criteria by which all artists are judged. We must not be content to accept that "anything goes", that all art by disabled people is "good" art. Art needs to be challenging, engaging and provocative.

We must also remember that artists with disability don't come from this direction only, but are complex and whole people, affected by other experiences which will inform their art, cultural and social factors. They may also be black or gay or both in addition to having a disability, for instance.

We also have to accept that we will never engage the interest or support of many of the disabled community - because many do not like to be labelled or categorised.

More still do not identify with charities, particularly with the rising tide of political activity within the disability arts movement and the disability movement as a whole.

There even exists an anti-charity lobby. It is my hope that with increased consultation between charities and the people for whom they exist, and with more disabled people taking control of organisations, emphasis being on "of" rather than "for", there will be less evocation of public sympathy and more understanding of the real issues involved.

I know this is a highly contentious issue and I am not here today to discuss this. But it is important that we recognise it and address it.

Artists First have already created many opportunities for artists with disabilities. Our logo was designed by a young student from National Star Centre, Cheltenham, a college which provides vocational training for young people with disabilities, and was the result of a competition we held last year within their Art & Design Unit.

Our first commission in Cardiff involved working in collaboration with Pioneers Art Group who have experience both in working in the public arts and with special needs groups.

This has become a huge community project, with over 50 individuals from special needs schools, skills centres and hospitals being engaged in painting and drawing designs both for a mosaic pavement for a central courtyard area and for mural boards for an internal stairwell.

Experience has proved that mosaic is particularly suited to groupwork as the process is straight forward yet challenging. There is room for individual statement within a coherent framework, and scope for every level of skill, and the end product is attractive and visually exciting.

This commission has not been typical since it did not take the practising artist as the starting point. We went in to situations where there was little or no art activity, to encourage just that. The benefits have been enormous, from individuals growing in self-confidence from their first tentative marks, progressing to large scale designs, often working, unprompted, in teams drawing on each other's skills.

At Ely Hospital for adults with learning difficulties, staff have been amazed at the positive changes in the residents and the impressive artwork, have re-opened a workshop that has been redundant for years, and are budgeting for two Pioneers artists to continue workshop sessions on a regular basis.

One patient has been supplied with crayons at his request, to enable him to continue drawing outside of workshop hours.

Artists First has an Advisory Panel comprising ten members, six of whom have a disability, who have expertise in areas of public art, personnel, advertising, art practice, disability arts, information technology and marketing. Their function is to decide policy. Thus, the power and control lies with disabled people, in line with our objectives.

The Spastic Society has provided setting up costs and has underwritten the costs of the Cardiff commission. We have recently been awarded an Arts Council grant, and we now need to fund raise to cover running costs, and fund local projects.

We are currently building up a databank of artists with disability, together with a slide index of their work, which will aid in the selection of artists for future commissions and also help to promote their work to other interested parties. We invite submissions from any practising artist with a disability, but have yet to advertise widely and in a systemised way.

This brings me to two important issues. Firstly, the need for a central information resource and networking system, to enable groups and projects to raise their profile, to allow them to be contacted, and to be able to share ideas and experience; and for a central databank of practising artists with disabilities. I believe Artsline

intend compiling a national register of this kind. We must ensure it becomes widely accessible and is comprehensive.

Secondly, the need for documentation and dissemination. I see this as crucial if any evaluation and improvement is to take place. It has been my experience that many excellent projects have been lost, particularly one-offs, never to be shared, because nothing was ever recorded, let alone disseminated.

With Artist First's Cardiff commission we are producing a case study which will give practical guidelines, discuss methods employed, who was involved, as well as problems encountered and how they were resolved. It is important for all of us to share our expertise and consult one another. After all, we are providing a service for the same people.

We do need to think of ways of encouraging people to participate, actively not just passively, in the arts generally. It is, after all, our RIGHT to participate in the arts as in other areas of community life. We need to see art degree courses being made accessible to everyone. We need to see more people with disabilities in seats of power, as decision makers, programmers, arts administrators and arts managers.

The bottom line in this is training. Therefore we should be demanding more training opportunities, such as those provided by the Arts Council specifically for people with disabilities, like the Arts Management course I myself did at the Whitechapel Art Gallery two years ago, of which there are still too few.

Until we create a demand for service provision, we will not see much improvement or change. Funding bodies and arts administrators are still waiting to hear from us to tell them what we need/ what we want/ what we expect.

As charitable bodies we need to identify and prioritise our needs or rather the needs of our clients, and agree on a unified approach and argument. We must be thinking also in terms of the European Community - the implications and opportunities that 1992 will afford. We should take advantage of European funds available and start planning now.

Importantly and finally - we must ensure continued dialogue with the arts funding bodies and with the decision or policy makers. And we must ensure that there continue to be forums for debate such as today's.

Thank you.

Appendix III: Presentation by Marcus Weisen, Arts Officer, RNIB

1

The brief of the National Arts and Media Strategy includes words such as innovation, vision and challenge. This can only be welcomed, as it is the nature of art to raise questions and challenge. Opportunities for doing this are not taken enough. We support the idea of a slim document, but our fear is that it could once again cut corners and neglect issues fundamental to access to the arts for people with disabilities such as:

- employment
- training
- education
- accessed information

Two perspectives are wanted:

- (a) What the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards should do.
- (b) What the role of the national disability charities should be.

I cannot speak in the name of all disability charities, and my examples will specifically relate to cultural rights of visually impaired people, but I hope to raise issues of general value.

The RNIB's Policy Statement and Charter is one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the UK has subscribed, and of which Article 27(i) says:

"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the artistic and cultural life of the Community".

If there is such a right, it brings the corresponding obligation of the community, and in this case of arts organisations, to remove areas of non-accessibility which prevent disabled people from enjoying the arts.

This means that as a matter of strategy the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Boards simply have to devise imaginative and practical strategies to implement these rights.

The RNIB's assessment is that in the past the Arts Council and regional arts organisations have not done nearly enough to implement these rights, and this should be the starting point for our discussion and for outlining a vision of the future.

We also feel that the Arts Council and Regional Arts Associations have hitherto failed to take into account demographic trends, which will make the ageing population of today a population of old age tomorrow, in which nearly one in five people will have a disability and over one half of the population will have friends or relatives with a disability.

We further believe that the gap of opportunities which has always existed between able bodied and disabled people has not narrowed, but has actually widened: opportunities for taking part in the arts have grown especially for young, dynamic, able bodied people in the past few years, not so for visually impaired and disabled people, where growth of opportunities has been rather more linear. There is no reason for society and arts organisations to take pride in recent improvements.

If the arts are to be made accessible, it is of the utmost importance that the National Arts and Media Strategy and its 44 papers are led by an over-riding and unequivocal statement of commitment to the arts for all groups of the population. If, for example, we look at the C Group of Papers, "The Audience, who they are and how to reach them", we find no mention of disabled people, who are such a tangible group of the population.

It is also important that the word disability and the word access feature in each of the individual papers and are not pushed aside.

If this does not happen, the National Arts and Media Strategy will be flawed right from the start.

2

The RNIB is one of the very few National Disability Charities to have appointed an Arts Officer. This happened in 1987.

What I propose to do is briefly outline our experience, achievements and primary difficulties in bringing about access to the arts, and from this to extract a few policy lines which would form an intrinsic part of any sane national arts strategy.

By comparison with the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Boards, the means of national disability charities are desperately limited: at RNIB this means one Arts Officer, with an annual arts development budget of approximately £7,000 to promote access to and enjoyment of all art forms by and for visually impaired people.

Our means of action are:

two outstanding exhibitions of work by visually impaired artists;

seminars;

a few publications;

an information and advisory service for both visually impaired arts audiences and arts providers.

Against us:

Lack of resources, lack of political power, and the tragic prejudice that arts is only for able-bodied, young, dynamic and well educated people; and also a range of other prejudices that visually impaired people can only enjoy music, literature and sculpture and not painting, photography, architecture, dance, movement and drama.

Also: A genuine unwillingness to acknowledge that visually impaired people can be not only consumers of art but be practitioners of art, and of art which is actually aesthetically challenging; and that what prevents visually impaired people from taking part in the arts is highly restricted access to information and to the arts professions.

Over the past years, greater access to museums has been achieved. Greater acceptance of visually impaired people as artists, and to some extent the information ghetto has been broken: The Artists' News Letter, Arts Review, Museums Journal and The Stage address issues of visually impaired people in the arts. This is all in all a result which was achieved proportionately within the limited means which were available. Far more needs to happen.

I would like to give two examples which highlight our acute resource limitations as a national disability charity and indicate that arts organisations must take far greater responsibility:

Museums and Arts Galleries Directory

In 1988 the RNIB undertook a survey about access facilities for visually impaired people in 2,400 museums. Over 1,400 responses were received. Of these, about 600 museums offered some form of facility for visually impaired people:

1% have braille guides
4% have cassette guides or large-print guides
9% have large print labels
about 500 have handling facilities.

But in most cases, those museums with handling facilities will not have accessible information, and those guide books will most often be a straight translation of general visitor's information, bearing little or no relation at all to those items which can be touched or seen by partially sighted people.

From these entries, 500 were selected to form the bulk of a new Museums and Art Galleries Directory, the first of its kind in Europe. Nearly six months' volunteer work has gone into this and the Directory is available on word processor disks. £15,000 is needed to publish the Directory in large print and braille.

We are about to get this money, unfortunately at a time when a few of the findings will already be out of date.

We have no means for updating such a crucial instrument of cultural access. Additionally, we have to acknowledge that the Directory is not perfect in its present form. This is only a start and it was a painful one for a very promising new venture. There can only be one answer: the updating of such a directory needs to be catered for by arts organisations. It is up to them to provide money and to generate the expertise from which a directory can be regularly updated. It is a community responsibility.

To illustrate the complexity of this issue we have to acknowledge that it is not enough to produce this museums directory; basic access information has to go as a matter of course into all mainstream arts and museums guides.

Audio description

Today six theatres in the country provide audio descriptive services for visually impaired audiences. This is a live commentary of stage, facial expression, costume, action and scenery, fed to visually impaired audiences, who can sit anywhere in the auditorium. The commentary is relayed by headphones through silent intervals in the play.

Audio description is a service which revolutionises access to the theatre by visually impaired people. To date, regrettably, no single training programme for describers is available. This is crucial for the development of quality audio descriptive services. We have only, among many other commitments, a few hours a week to push this audio description, and no means to invest into it. Who else but arts organisations can take and have the responsibility for the development of such

services and their excellence? Resources are overstretched; also, audio description of television is about to become a very real possibility.

These two examples perhaps reflect general trends among national disability charities involved with making arts accessible. The Arts Council and arts organisations will have a far greater role to play than ever before. It is not enough to have an Access Unit and to endow it with £30,000 a year for disability arts and arts and disability projects.

3

Strategies

In order to create the conditions in which access can unfold naturally, a fundamental rethink of the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards is needed in a range of areas.

The Arts Council has great difficulty in accepting that the amateur plays a vital role in the artistic life of the country; as a national disability charity the majority of people with whom we work are amateurs. We feel that it would be wrong to concentrate our efforts on only the gifted young visually impaired art student. If the National Arts and Media Strategy recognises the high profile of amateur arts in practice and through funding policies then this will beneficially affect access for visually impaired and disabled people.

By emphasising professional qualifications, the Arts Council fails to support young gifted disabled people who because of their background and prevailing attitudes have been prevented from gaining those very qualifications which would make them recipients of grants. A vicious circle has to be broken.

The Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards need to put themselves in a position in which they can support arts developments not only passively or reactively by allocating grants but pro-actively, in particular in areas of innovation and social justice.

Examples like museums directory and audio description belong to social justice but also certainly to innovation because they hardly exist at present. This presupposes a restructuring of funding policies and the allocation of budgets for pro-actively supporting innovation and access. Through such a strategy one could foster change fast and effectively.

Medium term financial support structures are indispensable.

Many of these ideas go against the grain of current Arts Council thinking. It is in the nature of thinking not to be static and to be purpose oriented and forward looking. Changes in thinking are required and the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards should take responsibility for promoting access to information in the arts in usable forms and promoting access to transport. These are pre-requisites to access to art and culture.

For some of these areas understandably the Arts Council cannot take full active responsibility, but it should take responsibility for promoting the idea of a global access package for all the organisations concerned.

Practical proposals

The Arts Council and each Regional Arts Board should have among their Council of Management at least one person with a disability and among employees at least one person with experience or knowledge of disability. All employees of Regional Arts Boards should have disability awareness training. All Regional Arts Boards should be made fully accessible to disabled people. Basic information on Regional Arts Boards and their programmes and funding structures should be made available in accessible form.

Each Regional Arts Board should have to develop a coherent comprehensive access policy to be supported with financial back-up structures. All grant categories should be open to disability arts and arts and disability projects and information on these should be publicised. Each of the Regional Arts Boards should become an equal opportunities employer. Their policies should be subject to review and assessment. National disability charities have an active role to play in arts development whilst the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards have to take responsibility by means such as those described above. Regional and national disability charities should be supported in their work, and should be accepted as clients of the Arts Council if they are involved in arts projects although they are not arts organisations per se.

This would assist disability charities expanding the range of their projects, possibly also by contracting them to outside organisations (RNIB and no doubt a range of other disability charities present here are ready for such a partnership and would view it favourably).

These recommendations are not meant to be comprehensive but to give a clear indication of the trends which we are pursuing.

Attached to this paper is a resolution made by all delegates of a European Blind Union Conference in Glasgow in 1990 called "Art Horizons, 1990" attended by 120 delegates from 17 countries. The resolution is addressed to Ministries of Arts and Culture and organisations with responsibility for the arts, and unequivocally states

the lack of access to the arts and the range of recommendations by which arts organisations can improve their role in providing access.

This should not remain a hazy vision for the end of the next century but become a reality for tomorrow. This is the challenge the National Arts and Media Strategy has to meet.

Appendix IV: Presentation by Robert Pickles, Disability Scotland

I intend to give a broad description of what I do with Disability Scotland, which I hope will reveal the picture in Scotland, which may form a contrast to what is going on in England. I will then move on to the National Arts and Media Strategy and what my colleagues and I are thinking about in Scotland, which again may be different. We are still identifying what we want to see from the strategy, so in many respects this meeting and the paper which will come out of it will no doubt help us.

Disability Scotland was formerly known as the Scottish Council on Disability and is an umbrella organisation, similar in many ways to the Disabled Living Foundation and RADAR. There is an extensive information service and also a development side, which is where I am based. There has been an arts component here for many years - since 1979 when the Scottish Committee on Arts and Disability was set up. In 1982, when this project ended, the function was taken over by the Scottish Council on Disability. One of the many functions this organisation has taken on has been the development of a network of arts and disability organisations plus two local authority officers. We do intend to produce some figures and statistics for the National Arts and Media Strategy even though this is a difficult field to chart. Certainly increased activity is visible, if, at present, unquantifiable.

So we are all working on a number of agendas. Perhaps the best demonstration of my own work is to summarise the two year project undertaken for Glasgow District Council as part of its European Cultural Capital activity.

It was Glasgow's intention to involve the entire community and Disability Scotland was consulted from the early days of the Festivals Office in 1987. The project formulated involved me on a two day per week secondment. It worked on three main areas:-

1. encouraging voluntary organisations concerned with disability to get involved either by running their own projects or getting involved in existing projects;
2. extending access to existing provision by developing services:
 - a) sign language in theatres
 - b) audio description in theatres
 - c) escort service for people who are housebound
 - d) information provision - about access facilities and in alternative formats; and

3. encouraging venues and projects to actively involve people with a disability.

It was a dynamic project for a dynamic local authority and relatively small amounts of money enabled those things to happen. Organisations had access to a "fast track" grant scheme with a maximum award of £500. And about £30,000 was spent on grants to the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters, the East End Escort Scheme had producing a special access leaflet, and information in braille.

What I am leading up to saying is that in Scotland a key role has been taken by local authorities in developing local activity. Disability Scotland itself is backed by the Scottish Office, but the percentage of overall support is reducing each year.

So what of the Scottish Arts Council and what my colleagues and I are seeking from this review process. First of all, the opportunity to be consulted and share our thoughts. There was a point when we felt that this was going to be the only opportunity but I have just learned that in Scotland there will be plenty of opportunity to get involved, and indeed to set the agenda for how the consultation will take place. This would include the possibility of using Disability Scotland's membership as a sounding board.

We would like the Scottish Arts Council to reconsider how it relates to disability issues. The Scottish Arts Council adopted the Code of Practice at the same time as the Arts Council of Great Britain but has not moved on since - it has not issued an equivalent to the Action Plan. At present, responsibility is split across the various art form departments. The direct revenue funding to the independent organisations is so small at about £7,000 to Artlink Edinburgh and about £5,000 to Project Ability (89-90 figures) that it is not visible as a percentage of the combined arts budget of £1.16 million. Organisations are keen to reconsider their roles - at present they are forced to work on a project basis to ensure their survival. They would prefer to be able to turn to advice and consultancy because they know it will achieve more. It is with some envy that colleagues consider the example of Northern Shape, which has become a consultancy because it has the luxury of the funding to do this. We would like the Scottish Arts Council to consider the effectiveness of this way of working.

However, there is a large danger in devolving responsibility - occasionally I have felt that the Artlinks in Scotland have been the victims of their own success "Oh we don't bother with disability, that's Artlink's job" is almost what I heard on one occasion. The issue of shouldering responsibility needs to be tackled and the relationship we would seek to influence here is the one between the Scottish Arts Council and its clients, and, indeed, the one between local authorities and their clients.

In conclusion, then, we would seek access to opportunity. Opportunity of funds, of training, of awareness of the needs of people with a disability, of the fact that their culture is valid.

The National Arts and Media Strategy review comes at a time of change and we welcome this.

Appendix V: Presentation by Francois Matarasso, Shape Network

It may seem absurd to begin a presentation at the Arts Council with a justification of the arts, but it is important because those engaged in attempting to change social situations may underestimate or even reject the role played by cultural institutions in that process.

Art may be defined as a method of articulating our understanding of ourselves, the world in which we exist, and the relationship between the two, with the aim of communication and sharing. Art allows us to process experience and communicate with others through a discipline which unites intellectual, emotional and spiritual qualities; it is a key means of exchange between human beings, simultaneously a mirror and a megaphone.

A world without art -without theatre, music and dance, without paintings, films and books, to say nothing of television, newspapers, and architecture - would be a sterile world incapable of understanding itself or its future, and beyond moral growth. That is why totalitarian regimes always attempt to control the arts. And yet that is the world in which millions of British citizens live.

Disabled people have been excluded from real participation in British culture ever since there was such a thing. I refer not only to inaccessible buildings, unsigned performances, exhibits behind plate glass and officious staff, although those are the mechanisms through which the exclusion is enforced. I mean that the cultural product on offer - the art - has been entirely unable to recognise the existence of people with different experiences, let alone the validity of their perspective. Until recent years disability has figured in art only from the perspective of the non-disabled, who have promoted disempowering stereotypes as absurd as that of, in another cultural context, the noble savage.

The inability of disabled people to get access to and control of their own means of cultural expression is both a symptom and a result of their marginalisation by the rest of society. So long as they fail to appear on television, in paintings and sculpture, in performance art except as convenient symbols for the concerns of the non-disabled world, that world will continue to exclude them from full social participation. If disabled people are to take their place as equal citizens in a free society, access to the arts is essential, since cultural identity is the midwife to social recognition, which in turn facilitates the acquisition of political and economic power.

How does this bear on the Shape Network? Simply that in their most effective work, the organisations which form the Shape Network are trying to further this process of empowerment. Shape work goes back to the roots and questions the preconditions both of social status and of the nature of art. Shape projects enable

people who have been excluded from active participation in the creative arts to learn to use them for their own ends: by right. That principle is itself a challenge to the social and aesthetic attitudes of British society today, and forms the radical bedrock which gives meaning to Shape work.

At their best, Shape projects are building blocks to a different society because they extend control of the language of art to people who have not been heard in any language at all.

And what about the National Arts and Media Strategy? Like all such exercises it offers both an opportunity and a challenge. Good intentions will not, on their own, ensure that it properly addresses the needs and aspirations of disabled and other disadvantaged people. There have been good intentions before. If the National Arts and Media Strategy is to make anything of its good intentions, it must register the following ideas:

- 1) It must recognise that the access of disabled people to participation in the arts has been largely denied until now, and prioritise the commitment of energy and resources to changing the situation.
- 2) It must recognise that control by disabled people of their own cultural identities is a basic long-term aim.
- 3) It must recognise that the arts work of disabled people, and of organisations working with or controlled by disabled people, is artwork, equal in purpose, value and status to any other cultural product.
- 4) It must recognise that, since inexperience is the fundamental barrier to greater participation by disabled people in the arts, access to training in all arts forms and in arts administration is a central objective.
- 5) It must recognise the need to promote understanding of the cultural identities of disabled people both within and beyond the arts establishment.
- 6) It must, as a condition of public funding, require cultural institutions and arts organisations to reserve a minimum number of places on Boards of Management to disabled people.

If it does these things, it may begin to have a real impact at an individual and a social level. If it neglects to address the cultural perspectives of disabled and other disadvantaged people, or worse, upholds the view of its 'social and educational' value enshrined in the Wilding Report, it will follow that report and its predecessors into history's dustbin. And people will do what they want to do anyway.

Appendix VI: The Shape network

The Shape Network is a national federation of professional arts organisations working in the field of art and disability. The Shape services have been working for a decade and a half to extend access to high quality arts work to those many people who are unable to make use of the existing provision.

Member services work with disabled people, the elderly, people with learning difficulties, those suffering or recovering from mental illness, prisoners, those in care, the long-term and terminally ill and other similarly disadvantaged people. They arrange placements and performances by professional artists and companies in settings where people live or spend much time: day centres, hospitals, special schools, prisons. They ensure that the work is not only physically accessible - for instance by using sign language interpreters -but artistically accessible in relation, for instance, to an audience of people with learning difficulties. Indeed Shape services have worked hard over the years to assist and encourage the training and employment of artists with disabilities and so a broadening of the range of cultural expression.

This work is not, of course, art therapy: it is not based on a clinical model, it is simply the creation of new opportunities, new audiences and new artwork. Although individual Shape services have slightly different policies and ways of working, all are fundamentally concerned with the development of new ideas and good practice in the field and often work with other agencies to this end.

Since they exist to further the empowerment of those with whom they work, the services seek to ensure that control of the agenda of their work is effectively shared with their users. They work closely with Disability Arts Forums and campaigners, both at a local practical level and in lobbying for change in all sectors of society and government.

Funded through Regional Arts Associations (to whose geographical areas they mostly relate), local and health authorities, government departments, charitable trusts and the business sector, the Shape services grow in range, quality and strength year by year. Although, because of the variability of local authority involvement, provision can be uneven, the whole country is served to some extent by a Shape organisation, with affiliates in Wales and Scotland.

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