

92-027



# 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.

For further information on the national arts and media strategy, please contact:

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## YOUTH ARTS

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## **NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON YOUTH ARTS**

This paper has been written in order to generate discussion and debate. It is not a chapter of the national arts and media strategy or a definitive statement. The views it expresses are those of its author, Rachel Feldberg.

We should like to hear what **you** believe may be the key issues in the field of youth arts over the next few years. With the paper as background, we should welcome views on all or any of the following questions, as well as on any other matters connected with youth arts on which you wish to comment.

### **The paper**

1. Does the paper raise and deal adequately with the key issues? If not, where and how could it do better?

### **Principles and developments**

2. Are 'high art' and 'youth arts' distinct categories? If so, why? In relation to arts and young people, on what basis should resources be allocated between them?
3. What have been the most exciting developments in youth arts over the past five years, in Great Britain or elsewhere? What may be possible exciting areas for development over the next five?

### **Funding and support**

4. Is the current support (financial and otherwise) of youth arts by the arts funding system, local authorities and the voluntary sector adequate? Adequate or not, is it used to best effect? If not, how could its use be improved?
5. If there were a significant increase in public funding of youth arts activities what should be the priority areas for these additional resources? What effects might this have?

### **Youth arts in society**

6. How far does current arts provision for young people reflect young people's cultural interests?

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7. Is there the right sort of relationship between youth arts and the published and broadcast media? For example, what contribution does youth programming on television make to the development of an interest in the arts among young people?
8. What are likely to be the key effects on youth arts in this country of current international developments within Europe and elsewhere?
9. Is enjoyment of, or participation in, the arts by young people related to levels of education and social class? If so, how might the effects of this be countered?
10. What will be the main issues over the next ten years in relation to youth arts and cultural diversity, youth arts and women, and youth arts and disability?
11. Is there an effective relationship between youth arts provision and the formal education sector (including schools, further and higher education, and informal education)? How would you like to see this relationship develop over the next ten years?

#### **Training and resources**

12. Are there any major needs in terms of physical infrastructure (such as buildings and equipment) if youth arts is to achieve its full potential?
13. What will be the major issues in the areas of arts training for young people, and training for people in the arts professions working with young people, over the next ten years?

**NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY  
AUGUST 1991**

# **NATIONAL ARTS AND MEDIA STRATEGY**

## **DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON YOUTH ARTS**

**RACHEL FELDBERG**

### **Summary**

This paper argues that young people have a right to art just as they have a right to health and education; that arts provision in this country has thus dismally failed young people who never see the work that eats up great chunks of public subsidy. Their absence is mis-translated as lack of interest, but young people are constantly involved in the arts. The real problem is lack of appropriate provision. The glaring gap created by this situation has been filled by an organic youth arts movement which grew up in spite of, rather than because of, arts policy, since, until recently, arts policy in Britain rested on the premises of 'leading the unenlightened to the particular kind of light the leaders find satisfactory for themselves' which Raymond Williams describes.

Youth arts grew up within three disciplines, theatre, community arts and the youth service, whose mutual concern was young people and the arts. Because of these distinct and different paths of development the current picture is piecemeal and ad hoc, and the term youth arts a wide umbrella. Dick Chamberlain's definition of youth arts is extended here to include Theatre in Youth Work, a very successful way of using arts work with young people. Within the last five years the field has been transformed by a small arts revolution in the youth service which has put the arts at the core of youth work and developed arts projects with youth work principles.

The battle for recognition has been won, the battle for funding is just beginning. The need for a major shift in resources is one of the key debates for the next ten years. There are exciting developments - the prospect of more Black arts projects, the recognition that the youth service does not reach all young people and the continued energy of the disability arts movement. Disability is bubbling up to become one of the major issues of the next decade.

In the face of this, some radical solutions are proposed: a massive shift in resources away from moribund community arts projects, arts centres and buildings to the youth arts workers, companies and projects who really reach young people: a re-think on the part of the youth service which would move from conventional youth clubs to flexible youth arts teams. As part of a long-term vision, a national arts strategy unit is proposed to oversee a national youth arts policy based on a

regional youth arts audit of need and provision. It is a dream which sees Theatre in Youth Work companies all over the country, some working through music and dance, others through visual arts; a network of youth arts houses run by young people on the European model; innovative youth arts projects developed strategically in areas of greatest need, new qualifying courses for youth arts workers and a Positive Action for Training in the Arts programme based on the P.A.T.H. initiative. In short it is a charter for change on a large scale - a demand that young people should have access to the arts as a right.

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

Convention of the Rights of The Child (to which Britain is a signatory), Article 31.2. Adopted by the General Assembly of the U.N. November 1989.

**"Can we say that we have an arts policy worth its name ... when over 95% of young people never participate in the activities that are promoted and supported?"**

Paul Willis 'Moving Culture' Gulbenkian Foundation  
1990.

### **1. Young people and the arts - rights not charity?**

Youth arts work rests on a fundamental premise - that young people have a right not only to food and shelter, health and dignity, but to education, development and self-expression: the values embodied in the UN declaration to which Britain is a signatory. That young people's lives should be enriched by the arts in the broadest possible sense, that they should be encouraged to use the arts to express themselves, to explore and change the world in which they find themselves seems hardly contentious.

What is hotly argued is how this should most effectively be delivered and who should pick up the tab. For, as anyone in the field knows, by and large the bureaucratic structures of 'arts provision' in this country have dismally failed young people. Of the nearly 11 million young people aged between 13 and 25 in Great Britain today only a tiny proportion ever see the arts which absorb large chunks of public subsidy. In fact it sometimes seems that arts subsidy is in inverse proportion to the percentage of young people in the audience. A 1987 survey showed that over the previous month, only 7% of the sampled 16-19 year olds had been to the theatre, 1% to see dance, 0% to the opera and despite popular conceptions, only 3% to a live jazz or soul concert (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys). These kinds of statistics are all too easily mis-translated as young people's lack of interest in 'the arts'. But far from deciding against 'the arts', young people have simply recognised that they are out of place in cultural institutions which have little to offer them.



The real problem isn't that young people aren't interested in the arts - many patently are, with a knowledge and commitment which puts adults to shame. Young people are always getting involved in music, dance, video, photography, graffiti, rap poetry - its just that traditional arts provision has failed to engage their input, enthusiasm and creativity. The result is a tragedy, not just for young people but for the arts. The arts lose their creative energy, they lose the chance to try something new: the arts ignore the cutting edge of developing work, they never get the chance to decide what they feel about a whole range of art forms. Ultimately we lose a whole generation of arts practitioners who never get to take their enthusiasm further.

## **2. Filling the gap - some definitions**

Anyone who works with young people, as youth worker or arts practitioner, will recognise this appalling gap between resources and provision - interest and talent. Over the last fifteen years workers from both sides of the fence have taken matters into their own hands. The result - often the only way many young people try music, theatre, dance, photography for themselves - is youth arts. It is a wide umbrella, the result of practice born of experience. As a movement whose roots are in community arts and touring theatre on one side and contemporary youth work practice on the other it is unique, bringing into contact practitioners who would not otherwise necessarily work together. As a result there are numerous approaches, aims, contradictions, funding packages and definitions. At the moment almost anything which concerns young people of 13-25 engaging with the arts outside formal education - from a youth theatre festival, to a one-off drama session in a youth club, to a professional company teaching African dance, to a long-term girls video project at a youth arts base, to a visit by Red Ladder, is broadly described as youth arts.

Dick Chamberlain in his long overdue study Intention to Reality, which explores the need for a youth arts policy, attempts to offer a 'straightforward definition': 'The term "youth arts" refers to the opportunities for young people to make art and so experience the processes involved ... it proclaims the key concept that youth arts practice is participatory'(1). While not wanting to deny the importance of participation, (particularly in view of what a hot funding issue it is, of which more later), as a practitioner long involved with touring theatre to young people in youth work settings, I would argue (as would many others) that the possibility for young people to engage with work made for them by others is an equally strong and vital aspect of youth arts. Work made for young people is part of a participatory process which offers them the space to think through their ideas and concerns, and to make work informed by those contradictions.

I would distinguish this from the quite separate but associated question of how to ensure that young people retain their right to see art that interests them and make critical decisions about it. Youth arts shouldn't, and I believe doesn't, let mainstream cultural institutions off the hook. Young people's alienation is just the tip of an iceberg; there are telling parallels with other groups excluded from the dominant culture, Black people and working class audiences for example. The needs of young people, like the needs of Black artists and audiences, are rightly affecting mainstream arts provision. Strategies like open foyer policies, wider, more thoughtful and relevant programming, a re-think on marketing, pricing and 'outreach', the kind of ideas adopted by for example the South Bank, the Albany Empire, Nottingham Playhouse and Bolton Octagon reflect an understanding that the nature of arts provision has to change radically to take on its responsibilities to all its potential users. The danger for the future is that these ideas are picked up half heartedly and put into practice in name only because working with young people has become desirable, without a real change in staff or shift in emphasis.

Nevertheless, we are finally beginning to see a shift in the traditional model of British arts policy which has hampered the work for so long. Raymond Williams identified a 'Fabian tone in culture' 'leading the unenlightened to the particular kind of light the leaders find satisfactory for themselves .. 'confident' that the product will not need to be changed .. that the whole operation can be carried out without radically changing the general situation'.(2) In this model, those who find the arts irrelevant are considered at fault. This was the thinking which led the Arts Council soon after its foundation to decide as a matter of policy not to fund theatre for children, since children should learn to appreciate real art. The result was to block the development of any kind of policy on young people and the arts for forty years. Thus it is that most of the arts work available to young people has been developed by practitioners in spite of, rather than because of, any national strategy. The first major national policy statement relating to theatre for young people was only issued in 1986. It has been a sad and damaging omission, but things are changing as signalled by the inclusion of this paper as part of a national arts and media strategy discussion. I am hopeful that there will be a national policy on youth arts, meaning arts across the board not just theatre, within five years.

The task that faces us is to make up for lost time, to acknowledge the excellent practice under way against impossible odds and to develop a coherent vision for the future.

### **3. Understanding the current position**

The current position is largely a result of the unique development of three strands within youth arts: Theatre in Youth Work, professional arts workers working with young people, and the arts within the youth service.

### **3.1 Theatre in youth work**

To begin with my own experience. In the late seventies and early eighties as part of the whole political and community theatre movement, a number of touring theatre companies fell into work in youth clubs almost by chance in their attempts to reach young people. Youth clubs were an obvious move on from schools and community centres. What these companies found was an experience of young people that challenged their pre-conceptions and forced them to re-think their practice. This practice honed by experience has become the basis for 'Theatre in Youth Work'. (The emphasis on youth work rather than youth clubs underlines the importance of including young people the youth service finds it hard to reach.)

It was as evident in the beginning as it is today, that young people treated with respect and encouraged to feel part of what's happening respond with enormous concentration, focus and energy, no matter how emotionally and artistically demanding the work or how complex the questions it poses. It was also clear that this work could not avoid the questions of race, gender, sexuality, disability, class to which young people were constantly referring. Much of what those companies learnt was a way of working with young people which engages those concerns and encourages them to question and explore ideas through artistically exciting theatre. They also developed a way of 'framing' the work which is infinitely transferable to other art forms. Following these same basic principles I believe it would be possible to bring any of the visual or performing arts into a youth work setting successfully.

The performance work is frequently linked to follow up discussions or workshops with young people and over the last five years companies have used previews, training, follow-up packs and evaluation sessions to encourage workers to make the best use of it. It has never been easy for theatre companies to explain their needs to the youth service, very often it has been a case of having to adapt and work within constraints. Since 1988, The ArtsCore Project, conceived by the companies and Yorkshire Arts and funded first by an ACGB (Arts Council of Great Britain) education grant and now by the Gulbenkian Foundation, has done a great deal to highlight and initiate models of good practice, involving arts workers in preparation and follow up, and encouraging information exchange between companies and youth workers.

#### **3.1.1. The impact of the work**

Over the last ten years the impact of this experience (coupled with that of Theatre in Education) has been extremely important in British theatre. The old 'give them a sketch and a song, loud and fast' routine of the early days has long been superseded by work which is regularly adapted for television, radio and main house

productions. Creating work for this audience has encouraged some of the best new writing, and has provided a constant forum for new work from writers like Noel Greig and Winsome Pinnock. Equally, it has provided the major dynamic for devised work and for work which takes on the experience of Black people, disabled people and explores a range of cultural references and forms. The current interest in signed theatre and sign language interpretation has emerged largely as a result of work in this field. Similarly, so-called 'integrated casting', the essential practice of casting Black and disabled actors as Black, disabled and other characters began in TIE and Theatre for Young People, where developments are still streets ahead of most major producing houses. As a direct result, many of today's well respected Black and disabled actors began work in this type of company.

This is particularly important since these actors often have few training opportunities and, in the case of disabled actors, are actively denied training by most drama schools (see Appendix 1). Overall, there is no appropriate training for actors working in Theatre in Youth Work beyond some polytechnic creative arts courses which touch on youth work as part of a community element. Inevitably many actors are learning about youth work on the job, facing the same difficulties as other arts professionals. One of the important shifts over the last five years has been the increase in experienced actors familiar with the area of work available both as performers and freelance arts workers.

### **3.1.2. The funding base**

The artistic importance of and evident need for this work has never been matched by resources. Many of the companies involved are ludicrously underfunded. Those that receive grant aid at all, do so in small amounts from their local RAA/B (Regional Arts Association/Board) and local authority or from ACGB project grants. Only Major Road and Red Ladder are ACGB revenue clients. In consequence, much of the potential for getting work to young people and for development is lost, and good organisational and administrative practice is hard to sustain. While there has never been any question that these companies are arts based and should be funded by RAAs and the ACGB, there has been considerable debate around who should pay to buy in touring work. The picture has always been confused, depending to a large extent on the personality and commitment of individual youth service and RAA officers; but recently some RAAs have sought a formal funding 'partnership' with the youth service to bring companies into the region - while others have encouraged the youth service to take on the full cost. Although this frees Regional Arts money for other developments, it takes the work outside an arts sphere, leaving it to the mercy of changes in local authority spending and without any kind of arts assessment. I foresee similar attempts by arts bodies in future to argue that the youth service should fund the work, part of a mistaken 'all art for young people is social service' approach. In reality, Theatre

in Youth Work is not youth work but an important art form, providing access to the arts for a wide range of otherwise neglected young people, many of them outside the youth service.

### **3.2. Arts workers working with young people**

As a result of the same broad philosophy and at about the same time, arts workers from different backgrounds began working in youth work settings, in part as a recognition that young people didn't necessarily find community arts centres any more welcoming than other cultural institutions. In many instances, arts access and experience were an end in themselves, in others workers recognised the importance of young people using the arts to say things that were important to them. To distinguish this work from youth arts projects which are rooted in youth work principles it might usefully be described as 'youth-oriented arts work'. It involves an enormous range of different arts professionals, from professional artists to part time freelance workers with an equally wide variety of agencies accepting funding responsibilities.

Over the last five years, a significant shift in Arts Council thinking has meant that delivering workshops and projects, once discouraged, has become an increasingly desirable quality in a professional company. The result can be professional artists of the highest calibre (with no pretence at being amateurs) thrown into work with young people to which they are entirely unsuited. At best it works brilliantly - at worst it reinforces stereotypes on both sides. Arts practitioners, however good, do not necessarily know how to work with young people in an informal setting. The common trap is to think that anyone can instinctively do arts work with young people. Thus one major regional theatre encourages anyone on the administrative staff who would like to 'have a go' to join in on its summer youth project. We need to recognise that running work shops with young people demands considerable skill, experience and training and should be valued as such. The problem looks set to become acute, since the solution to locking funding up in large inaccessible institutions seems to be asking them to do work for which they are entirely unprepared, rather than passing the resources onto skilled practitioners.

Another approach to 'putting young people in touch with professional artists' are the arts amateur posts funded from RAA or local authority arts budgets which involve young people with a specific skill. For these workers, like the full time arts development or community arts workers employed by the local authority, young people are often just part of a vast 'Community' brief. Many have never had the opportunity to understand how the youth service operates or what they might offer young people. Very often innovative work occurs in projects where 'young people' are untangled from 'the community' and identified as a specific group, as for example by Birmingham's Arts Motivators, with a brief to encourage young people to use the arts across the board.



In areas without these resources (and often in areas with them), the face to face work is done by part-time freelance workers, often artists in their own right, working on a sessional basis and paid by the local authority or the youth service. Lincolnshire Youth Service, with no money for youth arts but lots of imagination, employs drama 'activity leaders' from the same budget as canoeing instructors. These are the workers who deserve clear aims, a strong sense of what they are doing and why, planning and evaluation; and for whom no formal training exists.

### **3.2.1. The need for direction**

All this work needs coherence and direction, proper training, support, management and funding, but the signs are that the excitement of more and more work getting off the ground is seen as enough. The danger of all youth-orientated arts work is, that without clear policy and appropriate training we will simply see an increase in work for art's sake catering for those teenagers who already have the confidence to know what they want. In fact, work which is just about 'access to the arts' is frequently not even about that. A northern arts centre recently opened a community recording studio. The first visitors were three eager young men. This is in itself an achievement but it is not enough. The future task for arts workers must be to identify those young people who have never thought the arts were for them, as a priority, and to find the imaginative strategies that will reach them. Taking mobile music and recording equipment to groups where disabled teenagers and young women meet - to groups who perhaps have never expressed an interest in making music because they didn't think it would be possible - may be the only way. A range of work needs to tap into young people's interests and to offer possibilities they never imagined.

### **3.3. The arts in the youth service**

All these developments have both affected, and been affected by, changes in the youth service. Workers in the early eighties struggling vainly to move away from a male dominated, sports orientated service towards the notions of participation, empowerment and decision making advocated by the Thompson Report were galvanised by seeing their young people directly involved in arts work. The growth of work with girls highlighted the importance of youth work focussed on talking and expressing idea, on encouraging young women to explore their creativity and try things they had always wanted to do, from film making to abseiling. Similarly, in the early eighties, day-time work with young people who were unemployed frequently centered on the arts - an area where they felt confident and skilled. Alongside this was a growing recognition that the youth service was failing to meet the needs of Black youth. In some clubs used by Black teenagers there was a recognition of the importance of Black culture and history.

A real desire from Black teenagers to create work which explored those issues led to the development of projects like the Black Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, funded by the youth service but more than half way to being an arts centre.

Arts work in the youth service really took off in the mid-eighties causing something of an arts revolution in work with young people, with the realisation that arts work is good youth work, that it can deliver most youth work objectives effectively, and that it should be placed 'at the core of the work' rather than as an activity. In this respect, the best arts work in the youth service is well ahead of many community arts projects. It's now possible to find anything from youth workers using a drama exercise, a fanzine or photo story as part of their ordinary youth work to specific youth arts projects funded by the youth service - working through the arts with a solid youth work foundation. Many 'Youth Arts workers', are former arts or community arts workers who became so interested in young people that they gained youth work experience and now have a double skill. Although generally salaried by the youth service they may work from an arts building or a main house theatre as well as a youth centre. These are the projects with clear 'youth arts' aims which go far beyond simple access to the arts. They are about enabling and empowering young people, about encouraging them to communicate, to participate, to explore ideas and make statements about the things that are important, through the arts. Significantly, Britain does not, as yet, have arts projects run by and for young people as is the case in some European countries. I think we can expect innovative change in this area after 1992 as young people observe the provision available to their European counterparts.

### **3.3.1. The question of participation**

This work is unashamedly about young people's participation in the arts. As such it reframes the whole question of how public arts subsidy should be spent, presenting a dilemma to arts funders who only fund 'professional' work: hence the ludicrous situation in which they may fund the professional amateur, but not the materials or the project. It is a debate which raises very important questions about the nature of art and culture which will have to be addressed, not least because in any area where people are artistically disenfranchised, performance, training and participation are needed in tandem. In addition, young people's work does not fit into carefully delineated 'art form areas'; any one project may include dance, drama, music, video, rap, Bhangra (a situation paralleled by almost every non Eurocentric art form). Very often this work throws up new ideas which are eagerly pounced on by 'professional' artists. The current response, ignoring the debate and locating youth arts across art form budgets or entirely within the youth service, has simply everyone spending a great deal of time trying to prise money out of several people at once. All youth arts workers share the common difficulty of constantly searching for money for projects which takes them on an endless

round to little used youth service budgets, the local Regional Arts body, the local authority, borough or city council, obscure local trusts, the Princes Trust and the Gulbenkian.

There is a real danger that the Arts Council and some RABs will continue to isolate themselves from these developments and in turn lose any real purchase and strategic control over what is happening. It is significant that in the field, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (which doesn't share these difficulties over definitions) is informally known as the 'Arts Council for Young People', and it is the Gulbenkian whose name is attached to almost every important development - the Arts Development Programme at Youth Clubs UK, the ArtsCore Project in West Yorkshire, the youth arts post at Eastern Arts. Of all the RAAs, only Eastern appointed a Youth Arts officer and even as I write, this post has been axed in the recent round of cost saving cuts. The new RABs have not signalled their intentions to appoint youth arts officers, and neither I nor anyone else in the field is persuaded by arguments that it is needless since the issue is at the core of everyone's agenda. It is observably the case that where youth arts officers or disability arts officers are appointed change occurs.

#### **4. The state of provision**

As a result of all these developments the overall national picture is very ad hoc, with huge variations from county to county, depending on local structures, history, politicking and a large amount of luck. Thus Lancashire, an area with a big commitment to youth arts and a sympathetic if under resourced RAA, has a range of provision including a recently opened performing arts and media resource centre for young people, a youth arts worker based at the Dukes Playhouse, a dance amateur, various excellent local companies (some funded, some not), a long term involvement with Red Ladder and so forth. By contrast, Lincolnshire Youth Service has access to the services of one over stretched community arts worker (shared by the whole county) some activity leader session money, and £500 to spend on the arts filtered down from the RAA through the education department. Humberside acquired a youth arts budget from the local authority out of the blue and has built a post and programme round it. Berkshire on the other hand has fought valiantly to establish a policy and is now looking to put it into practice.

#### **5. A common purpose?**

One of the difficulties in this area is that the agencies involved know very little of one another or how they operate. Nor do they speak the same language - arts officer jargon sits ill with youth service practice. Few of the old RAA officers (or main house directors) know their local Principal Youth Officers. And yet funding partnerships are flourishing, underlining not only how far the work crosses



boundries, but the extent to which no one is prepared to take financial or overall responsibility. Tripartite arrangements involving a youth organisation, the local authority and an arts funder are common, and seem certain to increase in the next decade, but they run into problems because each agency wants different things. Proper assessment is difficult, management structures become blurred. They suddenly break down because one party is short of funds and tries to shuffle responsibility sideways. While these agencies share a number of crucial aims, each wanting young people to have access to the arts, each with a policy which highlights the needs of disenfranchised groups, in the end they are all unclear how to put this into practice and no-one wants to pay for it.

The frustrations are that in many areas the battle for recognition has been won - the battle for funding is only just beginning. Over and over again comes the refrain, "that sounds great, just what we need - but we haven't got any money". The challenge of the next decade will be to shift the necessary resources within the youth service and the arts. There needs to be a common understanding that youth arts is a reality, not an option, because in the end, it is the only way we fulfil responsibility to young people. Above all there needs to be a commitment to fund the work. Without this, we will be left with a host of exciting projects, as many variations in funding packages as there are youth services, and total disparity in provision.

## **6. Looking ahead - the next ten years**

Looking ahead, what is exciting is the increasing awareness that not all young people have the same needs, or the same access to the youth service. Many meet in other ways, girls' groups, Asian girls' groups, on the streets, deaf clubs, day centres. It is this knowledge which has led theatre companies and arts workers to work both within and outside conventional youth work settings. It is a trend which looks set to continue, opening up the youth service's domination of the field and drawing in agencies like social services or health education. It is all too easy to equate youth arts with the youth service. In the end, the central focus has to be young people.

A further exciting development over the next ten years will undoubtedly be the growth of Black arts projects and theatre companies in the regions. One of the important functions of youth arts is that, as many Black arts workers have emphasised, it offers an important alternative to the dominant culture which surrounds young people. It provides Black teenagers (and other young people) with the chance to explore Black culture and Black history and, increasingly, I believe, will do so for disabled teenagers. This may lead to any number of new projects outside current provision which will need proper resources. Up to now, youth arts has largely ignored disabled teenagers and young people with different

learning needs. Disability and the arts, an area neglected by almost all the agencies involved in this field, is, I think rightly, bubbling up to become one of the all important issues of the next decade. It will give an important dimension to the continuing 'whose art and on what terms' debate. I suspect that during the next decade, groups where young people have been most neglected will emerge as the energising force. At the same time there is likely to be an enormous demand for Black and disabled arts workers, highlighting the gap in relevant training.

From the arts side, it is unclear whether anyone has a real overview of the arts needs of young people, or whether the RABs are going to have personnel and time to make all important links with the youth service and other agencies. Critical questions hang on the re-structuring of the arts, since fine words have never produced better resources, and on a real worry that sponsorship and awards cannot (and should not) be the answer for youth arts. Already the reality is that cuts in local authority spending have meant cuts in arts grants and frozen posts and truncated programmes in the youth service. Much of what is to come hinges on the outcome of the youth service re-structuring currently in progress, and on what becomes of the youth service as a result of the proposed core curriculum. There is very real concern that the core curriculum will not do youth arts work any favours, that the arts are not yet sufficiently firmly established in youth work to hold their own at a time of such major potential change. The core curriculum may not address the fundamental need for a youth service about talking to and working with young people, about quality not quantity, about higher staff ratios, greater staff confidence and training, about how to address the really difficult youth work issues, about greater resources and more effective - less sports orientated - work. The other hot youth service issue is the demographic trend which means there will be fewer young people. While to the conventional end of the youth service, worried about numbers, this is a nightmare, to workers in youth arts it may finally provide the kick start to quality project work with small numbers as general provision.

For youth arts workers, a worst case scenario is perhaps that the picture remains pretty much the same. Those areas where individual enthusiasm and energy have got things going struggle on, and the situation in say, Lincolnshire remains unchanged. A best case scenario would see an increasing number of youth services with a regional plan and youths arts budget, buying in properly planned performing and project work (as Humberside or Lancashire already does), using freelance workers within an overall strategy, setting up indigenous youth arts projects and pressuring arts funders for better provision. It would see RABs with youth arts officer posts, and with youth arts as a policy and budgetary priority. It would see strategic youth arts planning within the Arts Council, and an increase in resources and numbers of companies. It would see arts professionals and youth workers involved in training which makes youth arts work more effective. It would see real change.

## **7. Making changes - within existing resources**

In the end, the paucity of existing resources will never enable this work to come to fruition. The most that working within existing resources can hope to do is clarify some confusions and lay the groundwork for real development. It is my belief that arts funders are ultimately responsible for ensuring there is a national arts strategy for young people and for putting this strategy into practice.

7.1. It is essential that the new RABs speedily designate responsibility for youth arts, and that this should not be lost by spreading it across art forms. There needs to be someone who is a point of contact, to whom application can be made, whose work is founded on a practical policy document.

7.2. There is a need for regional youth arts audits to identify what work is going on where and thus identify geographical areas and groups of young people within each region for whom provision is inadequate.

7.3. This audit should include clear analysis of how far the needs of young women, disabled teenagers and Black young people with regard to arts provision are being met.

7.4. RAB, youth agencies and local authorities should consult with the relevant local practitioners as to how the identified needs might be tackled.

7.5. In conjunction with the relevant practitioners each region should draw up and make public a practical and effective youth arts policy.

7.6. In direct relation to this, the youth service needs, where it has not done so, to be encouraged to identify a youth arts budget and the RAB to identify what figure within its organisation is going into youth arts provision. It would be interesting to compare these with sports activity budgets and 'adult art' spend respectively.

7.8. In order to avoid endless time-wasting, applications for small sums - for projects, individual performances, sessions from artists and so on - might be to a regional youth arts budget, which would include monies from local boroughs, trusts, RAB, and be administered by an independent steering group including appropriately supported young people.

7.9. The youth service, RAB, and local authority should be encouraged to explore what possibilities exist for imaginative partnerships with their local main house theatres, colleges of further education/polytechnics etc and to draw up clear guidelines for funding partnership agreements.

7.10. The arts funding bodies should initiate short courses for professional artists intending to work with young people.

7.11. The youth service should include an introduction to youth arts work as part of its basic training for part-time workers, and an understanding of youth arts work should be an element in all courses for full-time youth and community students.

7.12. The possibility of specific Theatre in Youth Work and youth arts courses at recognised drama schools/polytechnics should be explored.

7.13. An investigation into current discriminatory practices within drama schools should be immediately set up.

#### **7.14 A radical solution**

There is however another, more radical, solution within existing resources: major redistribution. In this model, funding would be shifted wholesale from moribund community arts projects, arts centres and buildings and reallocated to projects, agencies and companies which really could get work to young people. The youth service would also move funding out of conventional youth clubs and into flexible, strategic youth arts teams. This vision is not as unrealistic as it seems, indeed in some area it is starting to happen as a result of falling rolls, dwindling audiences, and clearly outmoded and ineffective practice. It is the kind of action that is needed for real change.

### **8. Using an increase in funding**

Many of us working in this field have a clear vision for the future which is based on need, on the obvious efficiency of this work in reaching young people, and on a belief that a massive shift in policy and resources would produce an arts policy that was truly for all.

#### **8.1 Aims**

8.1.1. That every young person should have easy access to a properly funded youth arts project where their experience and skills are valued.

8.1.2. That every young person should be able to see performing work from a wide variety of art forms in their youth centre, residential centre, or wherever appropriate.

8.1.3. That every young person should feel that their local

theatre/gallery/arts centre is accessible, and reflects their experience and interest at the same time as stretching and challenging them.

- 8.1.4. That young people (with proper support) should be encouraged to participate in the development and organisation of youth arts at every level.
- 8.1.5. That every worker in this field should have access to appropriate training.
- 8.1.6. That resources should be used effectively and if necessary , radically, to achieve these aims.

## **8.2. A strategy for the next ten years**

- 8.2.1. A national youth arts strategy unit should be established with real power and resources to develop innovative projects, act as a pressure group on arts funders and the youth service, identify areas of need, promote training, resources and information.
- 8.2.2. A national youth arts strategy, based on the audit and consultations described under 7.5 and linked to regional policy should be developed which explored the major changes within arts and Youth service provision suggested under 7.14.
- 8.2.3. A youth arts officer post should be established in every RAB with a clear and active brief to develop youth arts regionally - which would include pressuring regional cultural institutions into action, setting up youth service/arts partnerships and initiating pilot projects.
- 8.2.4. Youth arts development posts should be established in local authorities where there is no provision.
- 8.2.5. Effective youth arts budgets should be earmarked both by the RABs and by the youth service, to provide well administered regional funds for youth arts which would include:
  - projects created by young people working with arts workers
  - projects created by young people
  - bringing in professional arts workers
  - bringing in professional art companies
  - strategic projects in area of inadequate provision.

- 8.2.6. Real collaboration between the arts funding bodies and youth agencies should be developed to set up a series of imaginative youth arts projects in areas where there is no provision.

This should be backed by the strategic use of well trained managed and supported freelance arts workers.

- 8.2.7. Agencies on the ArtsCore model should be developed in areas of least provision to support the development of the work.

- 8.2.8. Building on existing provision, a network of at least four clearly structured, properly resourced companies, touring specifically to young people outside education, should be established.

These companies would not and should not be base funded by the youth service.

They would have a real responsibility to Black teenagers, to disabled teenagers and to work with young women.

- 8.2.9. A further pilot company should be set up, working from the same basic principles in a different art form: dance, music, visual arts.

- 8.2.10. A network of 'youth cultural houses', based on the European model of Youth Houses, organised and run by young people supported by adult workers, should be set up. These might include opportunities for workshops, training and professional performances.

- 8.2.11. Youth arts workers with a real input to policy, programming and marketing should be attached to all major cultural institutions.

- 8.2.12. The comprehensive training programme described in 7.10, 11. and 12. should be initiated, linked to a new programme for Positive Action for Training in the Arts (similar to the PATH - Positive Action for Training in Housing - initiative for Black housing workers).

This should include:

A fully accredited course for youth arts workers, open to students from both youth work and the arts.

A fully accredited Theatre in Youth Work training.

### **8.3 Taking charge of change**

Overall this is a charter for change on a grand scale. Dick Chamberlain describes how all that stands between young people and the arts is adults; this is a way to own up to these responsibilities.



## Appendix 1: The case for professional training

(1) It is currently a national disgrace that most drama schools will not even audition disabled candidates, maintaining variously that they cannot fully participate in the course work ('Well how could you do stage fighting?') that they cannot fulfil the audition requirements ('We only audition candidates who can dance and sing as well as act'), that their buildings are inaccessible and/or that no support for disabled students is available. The final defence is that these candidates would have no employment prospects after leaving college.

It is my personal experience that there is currently a desperate shortage of professionally trained Black and disabled actors. I am constantly consulted about possible performers by directors from every sphere, from small scale companies to major television series.

(2) We need to recognise that for many Black actors, good youth theatres and youth arts projects have, of necessity become a substitute for professional training. Drama schools seem to have done little work to encourage Black students, while my experience is that casting and teaching methods seldom take account of the needs of Black students - there are generally no Black writers on the syllabus, no plays which feature Black characters, and no Black teaching staff. And this is after you summon up the courage to find out what drama schools are available, find the money to pay for an audition and then try to persuade a local authority to give you a grant!.

Most of the Black actors I have worked with over the last ten years received their 'training' from good youth theatres like the old Tricycle Youth Theatre, the Basement Project at the Albany Empire, the Leaveners and the former Cockpit Youth Theatre and from the community activities of companies like Tara Arts, Graeae and L' Overture.

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### Notes

- (1) Dick Chamberlain, Intention to Reality p.1
- (2) Raymond Williams, Culture and Society



# NOTES

