

**New audiences for the arts**

**The New Audiences Programme 1998-2003  
Executive summary**

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**and**

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## **Executive summary**

### **Facts and figures**

The purpose of the New Audiences Programme was to encourage as many people as possible to participate in and benefit from the arts in England. The programme ran between 1998 and 2003 with a total budget of £20 million.

The aims of the programme were to:

- tackle barriers which stop people engaging with the arts
- increase the range and number of people participating
- create opportunities for people to become involved in the arts in different spaces and places
- allow learning and sharing of experiences between organisations to improve audience development

New Audiences sought to build on success whilst promoting innovation in audience development practice. It placed great emphasis on evaluation, both through independently commissioned research and self-evaluations carried out by funded organisations. The programme was strongly committed to documenting and disseminating evidence, and a key legacy is its project archive on [www.artscouncil.org.uk/newaudiences](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/newaudiences)

Over five years, the programme had 14 funding strands, each aiming to address specific audience development issues. As priorities changed, strands were adapted or replaced. Some had a national focus, others responded to the priorities of individual regions. (See Appendix 1)

Funding criteria included: appropriateness for the target audience; potential impact on longer term audience development; and quality of arts activity. Many projects attracted 'live' audiences at venues or events. Others reached people in more indirect ways, such as through TV and radio programmes or online web casts.

New Audiences also invested in areas such as training, research and the creation of new audience development related posts.

A review of the programme has identified the following priority areas, which provide the structure for this report: general audiences, young people, diversity, disability, families, inclusion, rural and older people.

The following key facts and figures illustrate the reach of the programme. These are based on maximum values (see research findings, Appendix 2).

## **Audiences**

- New Audiences attracted a total of 4,027,085 attendances for live arts events and activities
- Of the 4,027,085 attendances recorded, a total of 980,578 attendances were generated by festival activity
- Analysis of audience figures by projects' audience focus reveals that of the total attendances:
  - 44% were recorded for general audiences projects
  - 35% were recorded for young people projects
  - 14% were recorded for diversity projects
  - 2% were recorded for disability projects
  - 2% were recorded for social inclusion projects
  - 1% were recorded for family and for rural projects
  - 0.3% were recorded for older people projects
- A further 7.25 million 'itinerant' attendances were recorded by eight projects. These included projects such as Poems on the Underground and Poems in the Waiting Room (excluded from total figures)
- Broadcast figures were not possible to quantify: however, figures for individual projects were recorded eg Operatunity (average 1.7 million for each of the four broadcasts) and The Slot (1.4 million)

## **Awards**

- New Audiences supported 1,157 awards between 1998 and 2003
- The largest funding strand was Regional Challenge – totalling £5,798,306. This constituted over 60% of the awards within the programme and 29% of total expenditure
- Analysis of awards by audience focus shows that the highest project spend went to those aiming at general audiences, making up around one third of total programme expenditure (33% or £6.4 million). Young people awards made up 24% of total spend (£4.7 million), whilst a fifth of the programme (20%) went to awards addressing diversity (£3.9 million). Nine per cent of the programme's expenditure went to disability projects (£1.8 million), 5% of awards went to family (£1.1 million) and social inclusion (£1.1 million), 4%

to rural awards (£0.7 million) and 1% to awards targeting older people (£0.2 million)

- The New Audiences Programme also funded different types of award. 74% of awards (or 66% of expenditure) went to projects for 'live' audience events or activities. £876,785 (3%) went towards broadcasting and new media projects and £602,510 (2%) went to promotional projects such as arts days or weeks
- Just over a fifth of the programme, £4,019,495, was invested in research or development projects which did not aim to generate audiences for events but may have employed posts/coordinators, or supported training or specific research projects eg Developing the Market for Contemporary Art, Impact of Folk Festivals

## **Key findings by audience focus**

### **General audiences**

£6,859,626 went to 298 projects relating to the audience focus of general audiences. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 1,756,679, including 415,263 attending festivals. There was an emphasis on reaching non-attenders and on encouraging people to try out arts activities new to them.

The general audiences category included projects without a specific audience target, those that aimed to reach out to non-arts attenders, those encouraging people to try out aspects of the arts with which they were unfamiliar and those which were necessarily aiming for a broad audience, for example some new media and broadcasting projects.

Key themes in this section are:

- developing new national partnerships
- testing new marketing methods
- experimenting with where and when the arts can be experienced

New national partnerships were particularly important in relation to broadcasting and national arts campaigns. New Audiences helped the Arts Council to strengthen its profile as an effective public campaigner through its support for national promotional events such as Architecture Week and National Poetry Day.

New Audiences supported new models of arts broadcasting which proved popular and innovative, such as Operatunity on Channel 4 and My Dream Home with the *Saturday Mirror*. £857,477 was invested in partnerships with arts broadcasters and in broadcast related research.

New marketing approaches were tested. Concepts such as ‘ambassador marketing’ and ‘test drive’ campaigns were applied and developed through the programme with a resulting body of detailed knowledge from organisations to support wider audience development practice.

Recognising that the arts need to adapt to people’s lifestyles, organisations experimented with the time or place at which they showed their work. Information was gathered on issues such as the impact of late night opening and the potential to engage audiences in retail settings, seen most successfully in the At Home with Art partnership between Tate Gallery and Homebase stores.

Placing work where a ready made ‘new audience’ might be found, such as in NHS waiting rooms, or on public transport – the famous Poems on the Underground and beyond – produced encouraging results. Festivals took art out into the streets or to other familiar public places.

Many New Audiences research projects broke new ground, particularly *Not for the Likes of You* (Morton Smyth Ltd, Arts Council England, 2004), which identifies learning curves and models of good practice for organisations wishing to make fundamental changes to the way they work.

### **Findings**

- The success of broadcast projects indicates new policy directions for the Arts Council
- ‘Ambassador’ or network marketing is effective, though time and resource intensive
- Test Drive the Arts marketing is effective in attracting people to new venues and artforms
- The basics of marketing have to be in place, including knowledge about existing and new target audiences; accurate mailing lists; effective communication methods; targeted advertising
- Projects in new places and at new times can draw in new audiences, particularly those not used to attending arts venues

- Collaborations with mainstream retailers have potential to create new markets for the work of contemporary artists

## **Young people**

£5,733,298 went to 408 projects relating to the audience focus of young people. Of this, £300,000 went on one major research project, Sheffield Theatres' How Much? The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 1,341,416. Projects addressed underfives through to late 20s.

Key themes in this section are:

- addressing barriers to attendance and participation
- new marketing approaches
- encouraging participation

The New Audiences Programme has supported inventive practice to increase the attendance and participation rates of young audiences. It has helped arts organisations promote young people's ownership of arts venues, enabled young people to view the arts as a creative opportunity and supported arts organisations in developing an attitudinal shift in their policies and practices. The programme has also created opportunities for young people to access art in alternative places and spaces and developed a range of projects in school settings.

Arts organisations consulted with young people to learn more about their needs, interests and preferred channels of communication, and included them in project planning, implementation and delivery. They created relationships through 'ambassadors' or network marketing, for example in The Laing Art Gallery's Art Ambassadors project. They offered arts activities in places which young people use, including nightclubs and social spaces, as well as schools. They forged links with non-arts agencies to attract 'hard to reach' young people, including those at risk of offending, as in The Reading Agency's YouthBOOX and in London, the Arts Council's Creative Neighbourhoods programme.

## **Findings**

- Barriers which deter young people include lack of transport, time or opportunity, price, availability of information, having no one to go with, negative peer pressure, and negative perceptions about arts activities, venues and 'typical' audiences

- Consultation and personal contact bring greater awareness of young people's perceptions, issues and needs, and lead to better project planning
- There is a lack of arts workers experienced in working with young people, particularly those who are socially excluded, and training is needed
- Organisations can appeal to young peoples' interests by adapting their programmes, delivering more interactive activity, or placing their projects in non-traditional venues with the right ambience and ethos
- Partnerships are important, particularly where partners have specialist knowledge that can help arts organisations to build relationships with young people. Positive influence by peers, friends, teachers and mentors is also an important factor in encouraging young people to attend
- Successful communication methods combine a familiar medium eg text messaging with language relevant to young people, though word of mouth is most successful

## **Diversity**

£4,252,138 went to 209 projects relating to the audience focus of cultural diversity. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 544,753. This includes Black, Asian, Chinese and other minority ethnic communities.

Key themes in this section are:

- supporting arts organisations to develop a holistic approach
- developing partnerships between mainstream arts organisations and community based Black and minority ethnic organisations
- developing Black and minority ethnic artists and organisations

The programme gathered feedback into the motivations, barriers and opportunities for developing interest from Black and minority ethnic communities and piloted new approaches to reaching out to new audiences within them. There was a range of research and development work, and 'ambassador' projects such as the three-year Networking Project with arts organisations in Birmingham. As ever, partnership projects were particularly successful, in this case between a mainstream arts organisation and a local Black community centre. The partnership, between the Hudawi Centre and Lawrence Batley Theatre, prospered due to senior management commitment on both sides.

A pioneering broadcast partnership was effected between Arts Council England, East Midlands and BBC East Midlands in the Roots project, now an England-wide

success in raising the profile of Asian, African, Caribbean and Chinese arts on BBC television, radio and online. The £535,000 The Diversity Programme in East England used the American 'incubator' or 'innovation centre' model to support Black and minority ethnic arts. Diversity projects also aimed to attract new audiences to Black and minority ethnic work, encouraging work to enter the 'mainstream' and reach broader audiences through touring and new distribution channels.

### ***Findings***

- Barriers include lack of relevant product, price, timing, access to promotional material, and lack of peer group representation across staff, artists and audiences
- Challenges faced by organisations included imbalance of experience and expertise in new partnerships, setting up equitable relationships, and a lack of engagement by the 'mainstream'
- Partnership working enables mainstream and community organisations to build capacity through the exchange of expertise and experience
- Successful partnerships require long-term commitment, firm leadership from senior management, time/resources, a willingness to challenge preconceptions, strategic planning, clarity about partners' aims, a skills audit/training, support from mentors, advisors or coordinators, and a dedicated project champion
- Venues need to review their programming, presentation, physical space, communications, staff training and customer care
- New Audiences has created a new body of skilled Black and minority ethnic workers able to act as catalysts for change within organisations
- It is crucial that the links between communities and organisations are able to be maintained beyond the employment of any one key individual
- There are ethical difficulties around monitoring the ethnicity of audiences, and an effective methodology is needed
- Support for Black and minority ethnic organisations was a significant achievement of New Audiences

### **Disability**

£1,974,661 went to 111 projects relating to the audience focus of disability. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 95,254. Projects addressed people with specific impairments, including people who are deaf or



hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted, wheelchair users or with limited mobility, and people with learning disabilities or mental health issues.

Key themes in this section are:

- addressing barriers to attendance and participation
- supporting arts organisations to change
- supporting disability arts and artists

The New Audiences Programme aimed to tackle some of the physical, attitudinal, sensory and intellectual barriers of disabled people in engaging with arts activities and events.

The programme supported research into barriers to attendance, such as the interactive research project for young people with learning difficulties Includedo by Mind the Gap. Many organisations reviewed their information and access policies and were supported in developing disability awareness training programmes, research and audits into disabled people's access needs and wants. Many looked at issues of physical access, transport, and marketing and networking approaches, such as the Q Arts Hands Up! project for deaf audiences. Other projects supported the development, production and presentation of new work by disabled and deaf artists, encouraging such work to be programmed by mainstream venues, such as the Arts Council's Innovate project in London.

### ***Findings***

- Organisations worked individually and within consortia to explore marketing, customer care, personnel management, programming and access issues
- Many organisations changed their marketing practices, introducing new promotional formats and developing partnerships with the community/voluntary sector to reach disabled groups
- Disabled people played a critical role in developing projects, as artists, consultants and ambassadors. They helped to expand networks, some becoming board members of mainstream organisations
- Disabled trainees worked alongside arts professionals to develop skills and access opportunities for employment and professional development
- However, there is still a lack of trained, specialist facilitators who can work with arts organisations to develop audiences with disabilities
- There is a need to support disabled artists and disability arts organisations for sustainable audience development

- There are ethical difficulties around monitoring disability amongst audiences, and an effective methodology is needed
- There is a greater understanding of motivations and barriers to participation due to new methods of gathering information and feedback from disabled audiences
- Arts organisations need guidance and training in becoming inclusive and new models of 'flexible' training were piloted through New Audiences

## **Families**

£1,326,954 went to 40 projects relating to the audience focus of families. The total number of audiences reached by family projects was 55,822. The term 'family' embraced a range of ages and relationships, from very small children to elders and from single parent to extended families and carers.

Key themes in this section are:

- making venues family friendly
- reaching low income families
- consortia working to develop family audiences

New Audiences supported organisations in research and training to develop understanding of families' needs, improvements to venue policies and facilities for family audiences. Family friendly training was provided for arts venue staff such as The Barbican Centre's Barbican Beacon project and Oakengates Theatre and Lawley Sure Start project. It supported new forms and ways of presenting arts work to family audiences, and promotional campaigns, eg Classic FM's Classic Families project.

The programme also supported education and outreach work with family groups, involvement of families in venue programming and marketing, ticket pricing and transport schemes. Some projects involved consortia working by organisations, as in Arts Council's Oxford Family Friendly project in the South East.

## **Findings**

- Current barriers include lack of understanding of family needs, limited resources and inadequate facilities, a lack of arts 'product' for the whole family, and inappropriate communication and marketing

- Barriers for low income families also include cost, transport, lack of childcare, lack of time and the perception that the arts are exclusive and elitist
- A family friendly approach must offer programming that will appeal to all within the family group, create a safe environment with appropriate facilities, offer a warm and genuine welcome, provide information for planning a visit, and represent value for money
- Additional financial resources are not necessarily required. Changes in customer care, for example, may require little investment but can make a huge difference
- There is a paucity of high quality family work and this has an impact on audience development
- Partnerships with non-arts agencies and through consortia working can result in shared networks, contacts, marketing data, resources, and knowledge of good practice, though they take time to develop
- Family friendliness helps arts organisations become inclusive and welcoming focal points within communities, enabling them to contribute to social objectives. It can generate additional income for the arts and stimulate the development of artistic programming

## **Inclusion**

£1,488,050 went to 58 projects relating to the audience focus of social inclusion. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 93,721. Target audiences included people who were homeless, in prisons and within the criminal justice system, in health settings, on low incomes, or living in areas of social and economic deprivation.

Key themes in this section are:

- measuring impact
- developing partnerships
- artists' professional development

New Audiences supported a substantial amount of research, from a major research and evaluation programme The Arts and Social Inclusion to action research projects by individual organisations. The Arts Council brokered partnerships between mainstream arts organisations and specialist organisations working in the field of social inclusion, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and Cardboard Citizens, a professional theatre company working primarily with

homeless people. Other projects focused on refugees, asylum seekers and young homeless people. Some Arts Council regional offices allocated their Regional Challenge funding to social inclusion projects, from London's four-year programme Arts and Inclusion to Yorkshire's major focus on young excluded people.

### **Findings**

- A clearer shared understanding is needed amongst artists, organisations and policy formers about the meaning of terms such as 'access' and 'social inclusion', as independent research identified confusion
- Few projects aimed explicitly to 'solve' problems of social exclusion and practitioners were understandably wary of making claims about cause and effect
- Partnerships with non-arts agencies such as Sure Start, Education Action Zones and the criminal justice system levered substantial match funding, but can be labour intensive for small organisations
- Mainstream arts organisations and organisations specialising in social exclusion can work successfully together, sharing resources and expertise
- Many organisations specialising in inclusion work are on short-term project funding, which runs contrary to a basic requirement of inclusion work: long-term development and sustainability
- Artists should be supported in developing work in the area of social inclusion, particularly through appropriate training. Projects need to build in opportunities for artists to develop their creative practice, as well as work towards social outcomes
- The major programme of national research resulted in publications including *The Art of Inclusion*. Qualitative process based evaluation was undertaken but the research was unable to prove the 'hard' impact of work. A more rigorous and persuasive evidence base is needed.

### **Rural**

£953,159 went to 152 projects relating to the audience focus of rural audiences. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 60,040.

During the period of the New Audiences Programme the national policy focus on rural regeneration intensified, partly in response to a growing sense of crisis in the countryside signalled by a recession in the agricultural economy, BSE, and the foot and mouth epidemic, a livestock disease which ravaged the countryside during 2001.

Key themes in this section are:

- regional programmes to support rural development
- rural networking projects
- responding to rural change

Some Arts Council regional offices used their Regional Challenge fund to focus on rural audiences, from North East's Tyranny of Distance and Regional Audience Development Initiative to West Midlands' Grass Roots programme which provided an 'entry point' to arts funding for rurally based groups. 'Network' or 'relationship' marketing approaches with rural communities were supported.

New Audiences supported the rural based arts development agency Littoral in two substantial programmes of work, Digital Arts and Rural Upland Communities in the Lancashire hill farming community, and Cultural Documents of the Foot and Mouth Crisis, which supported farming communities in documenting their experiences of the crisis, bringing rural issues to urban audiences.

### ***Findings***

- Barriers to audience development in rural areas include lack of information or data on audiences, lack of marketing skills within arts organisations or appropriate venues, and poor access to networks
- Rural based arts organisations are well placed, and should be supported, to develop a cultural response to issues affecting the communities in which they work
- Rural issues and contexts are an important stimulus for arts practitioners and the arts funding system should support artists in developing rural focused practices
- The 'tyranny of distance' can be overcome through outreach projects showing the work of urban based companies and practitioners in rural community settings
- Well planned and targeted outreach work can encourage better use of rural based arts facilities and expertise
- Specific funding is needed for work in rural areas, where the costs and organisational issues are very different than for urban based arts
- Grant schemes providing an entry point to arts funding for rurally based groups can be effective, though resource intensive

- Network marketing requires a key local contact to work with the outreach worker to provide an entry point into the target group. The outreach worker should have relative independence from competing stakeholders to remain responsive to group needs

## **Older people**

£322,900 of New Audiences funding went to 20 projects relating to the audience focus of older people. The total number of audiences reached by these projects was 13,369.

Key themes in this section are:

- involving older people in arts planning and participation
- addressing barriers to arts engagement

Following on from previous audience development work for older people by Arts Council regional offices in South East and Yorkshire, New Audiences supported a range of projects targeting older people. Some addressed barriers to attendance, such as Art Shape Gloucestershire's Action Research into Older People and the Arts, which also actively involved older people as researchers.

Some projects targeted older people living in nursing homes and day care centres, such as Oxfordshire Touring Theatre Company's Brief Journey, which also drew inter-generational work into the mix. Activities were offered in local community settings, such as village halls. English Sinfonia's M4 project offered audiences, including older people, recitals by a string quartet in sheltered housing, a supermarket and a garden centre.

A number of initiatives addressed transport as a barrier to attendance. The Arts Express Networking Project aimed to attract new rural audiences to arts events by providing free transport and using an animateur to carry out outreach work with rural community groups. Some organisations targeted older people from Black and minority ethnic groups. Leicester Haymarket's project, New Audiences Development, targeted first generation Asian communities and attempted to overcome barriers of language or unfamiliarity with the venue. Outreach activity in religious and community settings provided taster events for groups not ready to come into the theatre.

## **Findings**

- There are difficulties in defining, monitoring and gathering information from older people, who often do not wish to be labelled and targeted as such
- Barriers to participation include geographic location, lack or cost of transport, safety, price, access to information, and having no one to go with. For older people still in full-time work, time pressures were more likely to be a barrier
- Partnership working is effective, and the older the audience, the more important it is to work across sectors, for instance with nursing and residential homes
- Both arts venues and older people prefer to choose from a wide variety of good quality products and do not just want special programmes for 'older people'
- Timing of events and customer care are important factors for some older people. Daytime events and matinee performances are popular, as are events supported by education work or offering social opportunities
- Older people are more willing to engage with new arts activities and venues if some sifting and selection has been done by someone whom they trust
- Ambassadorial schemes, group promotions, membership clubs, outreach schemes and culturally specific programming are all effective approaches

## **Achievements and conclusions**

New Audiences has made the Arts Council and those who participated in the programme think afresh about audience development. The programme has yielded many insights into how organisations work, provided many different models for arts and audience development, addressed key barriers for audiences and organisations, and raised issues for longer term development.

The structure of the programme, particularly between 2000–3, allowed Arts Council national and regional offices to take a strategic approach. Regional Challenge was particularly successful in fostering new relationships with community based and emergent organisations.

Organisations learnt more about audiences, shared models of good practice and ideas with other organisations, and changed their ways of working to become more inclusive. Physical, attitudinal, financial, personal and social barriers to attendance were identified and addressed. Organisations reviewed their practices and improved their image, attitudes, policies and services. The programme also

gave them the skills, knowledge and confidence to embark upon longer term audience development plans.

Audience development is a holistic process and organisations must examine their whole ethos and approach. 'Unconscious' barriers can be dismantled when organisations are genuinely committed to change. The message from *Not for the Likes of You* research is that organisations must model internally what they wish to achieve externally to be truly inclusive and attract broader audiences.

Partnerships were a real strength of the programme, particularly with non-arts sectors such as health, education and youth services. They were often crucial to success, attracting increased resources, new knowledge and expertise, information about audiences and mechanisms to reach them.

Many different approaches were tested to attract new audiences, from making the experience of attending less threatening, and developing outreach work tailored to specific groups, to changing the way in which work is presented.

The diversity of types of audience engagement – not just live attendance – was a particular strength of the programme. Projects created strong 'entry points' for new audiences, often giving people an unexpected arts experience in familiar public places. There were numerous attempts to present arts activity to fit in with 21st century lifestyles. The programme was particularly successful at increasing audiences from diverse, disabled and excluded communities.

New Audiences was about achieving a qualitative difference in the make-up of audiences. It recognised that changes of this nature take time. Audience development is about working towards a more equitable form of cultural participation, and this means connecting with wider social agendas such as diversity, inclusion and regeneration.

New Audiences has had an important impact on employment and training, and new consultants, researchers, project coordinators and facilitators have been brought into the arts, particularly from Black and minority ethnic communities. Organisations used New Audiences as a route in for new employees or board members, developing a more diverse organisational profile.

Projects were sometimes over-reliant on a lead individual, or failed to appreciate the level of additional work required, and they often needed longer for delivery than was allowed. There was a concern that the programme, being time-limited,



encouraged short-term thinking to long-term issues. The timescale of the programme posed challenges for the funding system and organisations.

Gaps in the audience development and skills base of the arts sector were apparent throughout the programme. Issues that need to be addressed include knowledge of good practice, access to training and advice, and support for organisations in effecting change.

Self-evaluation was encouraged and one of the achievements of the programme has been the documentation of experience, identifying what worked and what didn't and the reasons for this. This body of knowledge is a significant resource to prevent organisations reinventing the wheel. Though each project had its own dynamic, issues and context, good practice themes and issues have been identified by organisations and independent evaluators. Evaluations were of variable quality and it remains the case that organisations are often wary of evaluation as a process and sometimes see this process as 'additional'.

Increasing new attenders, readers, viewers, listeners, buyers and participants to one-off events or initiatives was not the sole purpose of the programme. Equally important is attracting them a second and third time and developing them as regular audiences for the arts.

The legacy of the programme resides in documentation, reports and research linked to a process of analysis, dissemination and publication. The most comprehensive resource is [www.artscouncil.org.uk/newaudiences](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/newaudiences) with a searchable database of all projects, which has been developed as an important learning resource for the sector. Reports and overview analysis commissioned by New Audiences will also be available in downloadable form from the site.

Ensuring a long-term legacy for the New Audiences Programme is now critical. Short-lived good practice must translate into successful ongoing activity.