



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
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Auditor General for Wales

Well-being of Future Generations Increasing Participation in Areas with Under-developed Reach of the Arts – **Arts Council of Wales**

Audit year: 2019

Date issued: December 2019

Document reference: 1653A2019-20



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This work was delivered by Rachel Davies.

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Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their wellbeing objectives; and taking steps to meet them.
- 2 The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner 'which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.
- 3 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 4 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 5 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, **Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**. He concluded that public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 6 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 7 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their wellbeing objectives, the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their wellbeing objectives.
- 8 Our work at the Arts Council focussed on a specific priority within its 2018-19 operational plan, which is 'Increasing participation, inclusion and engagement in localities with underdeveloped reach of the arts', one of the steps the Arts Council is taking to meet its wellbeing objectives. This is referred to as the 'step' for the purposes of this work.
- 9 We ran an initial workshop with staff from the Arts Council on 31 January 2019, which explored how each of the five ways of working had been applied to this step. We also undertook fieldwork during the period March to July 2019 which involved reviewing key documents and undertaking interviews with staff from the Arts Council, external stakeholders and partner organisations.
- 10 This report sets out the findings from our examination of the step and it also sets out the Arts Council's response to our findings.

What we examined

- 11 We examined the extent to which the Arts Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in relation to its step: increasing participation, inclusion and engagement in localities with underdeveloped reach of the arts.
- 12 The Arts Council's mission is to put the arts at the heart of the life and wellbeing of Wales. The Arts Council believes that the arts can benefit everyone and therefore it is proactive in ensuring that the arts are accessible to as many people and communities as possible.
- 13 The Arts Council's internal research has shown that the take-up of opportunities to see and participate in art happens most frequently in the same areas. These areas tend to be more affluent communities, as well as areas where there is a high level of provision of arts services. The research has also highlighted 'cold spots' in Wales where the take-up of art is particularly low.
- 14 The Arts Council set a priority in its 2018-19 Operational Plan to increase participation, inclusion and engagement in localities with underdeveloped reach of the arts. The Arts Council specified actions under this priority which were:
 - working with the Arts Portfolio Wales (APW)¹ to adopt an additional geographical area to its normal localities in order to focus on particular areas with low participation;
 - support the development of Fusion² projects through the engagement of Arts Council funded APW organisations or invest in developing a partnership approach where APW extends its work into under-represented geographical areas; and
 - increase levels of participation amongst adults and young people experiencing material deprivation.
- 15 In order to make progress against this priority the Arts Council commissioned '64 million artists' a UK-based social enterprise with extensive experience of research and development work and facilitating cultural change, to examine the Arts Council's current participatory and engagement work in more detail to help identify good practices for engaging with communities and to identify barriers preventing certain localities from participating in art. The results of this work have been discussed at Council.
- 16 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working':

¹ APW is the name given to the group of artists and organisations to which the Arts Council provides funding towards its core costs and activities.

² Fusion is the Welsh Government partnership programme intended to make it easier for individuals and communities to take part in culture and heritage activities.

Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**³ document.

The five ways of working
Long term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
Integration Considering how the public body's wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the wellbeing goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its wellbeing objectives.
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 17 Our examination found that: In its efforts to increase participation, inclusion and engagement in areas with under-developed reach of the arts, the Arts Council is demonstrating commitment to the sustainable development principle, but it recognises the need to further embed the five ways of working.

³ Welsh Government, **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**, 2015

Detailed report

Part One: Examination Findings

The Arts Council has a clear aim to increase participation, inclusion and engagement but there is scope to lengthen the planning horizon and improve the measurement of long-term impacts

What we looked for

- 18 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 19 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

What we found

- 20 We identified the following strengths:
- the Arts Council has developed a five-year corporate plan for 2018-2023 called 'For the Benefit of All', which includes a key priority around widening engagement to reach more widely into all communities in Wales. The step we have looked at as part of this examination aligns with the five-year priority set out in the Corporate plan.
 - in order to better understand the long term needs and challenges the Arts Council has reviewed the available research to highlight localities where activity rates from lottery-funded projects are low and has mapped this information to the deprivation index to identify patterns over time.
 - the Arts Council has recognised that it needs a more radical approach to ensure there is change in levels of participation in arts in the longer term. It has been proactive in commissioning a review by '64 Million Artists' which examined the participatory and engagement work undertaken by the Arts Council, to capture learning and to develop more effective future actions and proposals that will lead to lasting change.

⁴ See Appendix 1

- the Arts Council has examples of where it has been bold in its approach and invested in novel initiatives. An example of this is Ideas People Places which was a project aimed at embedding the arts in a genuine and meaningful way, in a small number of innovative regeneration projects, running for four years – from 2014 until 2019. The onus was on the community organisation that received the funding to determine how to use the money and what specific ‘art’ to undertake as it was recognised that the community group that better represents the community than the Arts Council or other funder. This project has helped deliver longer-lasting benefits within communities through genuine shared ownership, empowerment and mutual trust.

21 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- the Arts Council is still primarily planning in the medium term. The new corporate plan covers a five-year horizon, whereas the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) encourages a longer-term view.
- the Arts Council told us there is tension between the one-year Welsh Government funding cycle and the need to plan longer term. However, it acknowledges that longer-term horizon scanning in future years with the wellbeing goals in mind would help secure a longer-term mindset and would provide a more secure context for the Arts Council’s intermediate planning.
- measuring outcomes is a difficult task and the Arts Council does not yet have a robust approach to measuring progress and achievements on the journey to long-term change. The Arts Council recognises there is scope to strengthen the way it monitors and evaluates its participation activities, to capture long-term outcomes and to identify delivery milestones to drive progress.
- the Arts Council collects information from lottery-funded organisations, which highlights where art activity takes place. However, this same level of information is not currently collected from APW organisations, and therefore the Arts Council does not have a full understanding of the localities where art activity is happening.
- the engagement data collected by organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding is sparse. There is scope for the Arts Council to broaden this intelligence about the take-up of arts opportunities. This would help to develop a more complete understanding of the current pattern and trends of art activity in Wales to better inform long-term decision making in relation to this step.
- the Arts Council is an enabler as it allocates the money it receives from the Welsh Government and the National Lottery Distribution Fund. There is more work that could be done to influence the APW to ensure that there is a long-term focus on increasing participation rates in areas with low take-up. The Arts Council periodically reviews its investments and the next Investment Review presents a good opportunity to influence the APW and request information that will assist with longer-term planning.

The Arts Council has recognised that participation in arts can help with the wider health prevention agenda, but it does not yet have a detailed understanding of the root causes of the lack of participation in localities

What we looked for

- 22 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
 - resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
 - monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.
- 23 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘prevention’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

What we found

- 24 We identified the following strengths:
- the Arts Council has identified gaps in terms of communities accessing its funding. Research shows that there remain areas facing material deprivation that are still not accessing funding and therefore the Arts Council is taking action to prevent this position from getting worse.
 - the Arts Council recognised that its initial proposal of using APW to ‘adopt’ a geographical area and expand work in this area in addition to the ‘normal’ localities for their work was not the best way of tackling the problem and shifted resources to commission a review with a purpose of improving their understanding of the reasons for the lack of engagement.
 - the Arts Council is an active partner in the Welsh Government Fusion project, which aims to use collaboration to maximise the benefits that cultural participation can have for the people of Wales. This project brings together partners to help prevent poverty in communities.
 - the Arts and Health programme looks at how arts can make a greater contribution to the health and wellbeing of people in Wales. This programme has highlighted some good examples of how participation in art help with health and wellbeing and can link with the NHS prevention agenda.
- 25 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- the Arts Council does not yet have a full understanding of levels of participation and engagement in localities as it does not monitor the areas

⁵ See Appendix 1

where APW activities are undertaken and does not measure the arts happening through local community arts organisations. Without an understanding of the complete position and an understanding of the root causes of low engagement, it will be difficult to plan for lasting change and to prevent the low participation rates in localities from recurring.

- the Arts Council needs to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation of the success of this step in order to assess whether actions are leading to increases in participation. Current monitoring does not always measure the right thing. Its focus is often on quantity and not quality and it does not capture the longer-term impacts in order to be able to assess whether the problem in relation to participation levels is getting worse or the position is improving.
- there is scope for the Arts Council to better work with partners to see if initiatives such as Ideas People Places can secure longer-term funding to reduce the risk of a loss of momentum.
- the Arts Council should allow an opportunity for learning and reflection after novel and strategically significant projects like Ideas People Places, to be able to take the learning forward to future projects to help ensure lasting change.

The Arts Council is improving its internal integration but there is scope to clarify its wellbeing objectives, strengthen links between its strategic documents and consider how it can contribute to the delivery of partners' wellbeing objectives and vice versa

What we looked for

- 26 We looked for evidence of consideration of:
- how this step could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals;
 - how delivery of this step will impact on the Arts Council's wellbeing objectives and wider priorities;
 - how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' wellbeing objectives; and
 - the Arts Council embedding and integrating the Act within its everyday business.
- 27 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

⁶ See Appendix 1

What we found

28 We identified the following strengths:

- there has been improved internal integration through cross-organisational working, particularly at a senior level, since the Act. There has also been a greater level of staff input when preparing the operational plan.
- the Arts Council has established a Well-being of Future Generations Monitoring Group to assist Council in embedding the sustainable development principles.
- new cover paper templates have been issued to Council and the Senior Leadership Team which include sections asking authors to demonstrate how the issues in the paper have been affected by or contribute to the five ways of working.
- the Arts Council has developed good relationships with key partners, which enables discussions around joint working and the potential integration of objectives eg working with the Welsh Government on the Fusion Project where partners work towards the common goal of using culture to tackle poverty.
- the Arts and Health programme has demonstrated how art can make a greater contribution to the health and wellbeing of people in Wales and how participation in arts can impact on the objectives of health bodies.

29 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- for the 2018-19 operational plan, the Arts Council retro-fitted the seven wellbeing goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act to the Operational Plan priorities. Going forward, there is scope for the Arts Council to reconsider how its priorities/actions should align with the wellbeing goals.
- the Arts Council has several strategic documents which contain terminology such as commitments, actions, priorities, objectives and indicators. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain specifically what its wellbeing objectives are. There is scope for the Arts Council to clarify and clearly reference:
 - what its specific wellbeing objectives are;
 - how the wellbeing objectives address the seven wellbeing goals within the Act;
 - what specific steps/actions it will take to meet the objectives;
 - how the five ways of working have been applied in meeting these objectives; and
 - how performance against these objectives will be measured.
- the Arts Council's Well-being of Future Generations annual report contains information on indicators but there is no clear signposting to demonstrate how these indicators link to the Operational or Corporate plan. The Arts Council is still working through the best way of providing evidence that it is

meeting the requirements of the Act but there remains scope to create better linkages across strategic documents.

- there is a strong focus on the culture and community wellbeing goals in relation to the step we examined as part of this work. There is however scope to have a greater consideration of the other goals that are linked with the step eg what is the environmental impact of bringing international artists to work with communities?
- through our fieldwork some staff noted there is scope to better share information and new knowledge within and between teams. Having an awareness of the common themes between different programmes and initiatives will help enable staff at all levels to identify good practice and learn lessons.
- there is a good understanding of how the arts can help address the wellbeing cultural goal of other bodies. However, there is scope for the Arts Council to do more to consider how the step links to other wellbeing objectives of partners.

The Arts Council is committed to collaboration and has strong relationships with many stakeholders, however, there is scope to improve collaboration further so that the Arts Council can make a broader contribution to wellbeing

What we looked for

- 30 We looked for evidence that the Arts Council:
- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its wellbeing objectives, or assist another body to meet its wellbeing objectives);
 - is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
 - is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it, or its stakeholders meet wellbeing objectives.
- 31 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁷

What we found

- 32 We identified the following strengths:
- the Arts Council understands the importance and benefits of collaboration and this has now become the key enabling action in the corporate plan.

⁷ See Appendix 1

- the Arts Council has already collaborated with many organisations through this step and beyond, for example, the Fusion project, where the Arts Council provides strategic leadership to the partnership aiming to use culture as a tool to tackle poverty.
- the Arts Council has developed some good working relationships with the NHS, built on mutual trust and respect.
- the Arts Council has development officers linked with each of the APW organisations to act as key liaison points, which has led to some positive working relationships.
- the Ideas People Places project enabled the Arts Council to form effective partnerships with organisations that it had limited connections with previously eg housing associations, local authority regeneration departments and commercial planners.

33 We identified the following area for improvement:

- the Arts Council recognises there would be benefits in having better links with local authorities to discuss how the arts can benefit them and work together towards meeting their culture goal. This could possibly be through a 'connector' to facilitate relationship and capacity building to create collaborations between society, communities and artists/art organisations.

While there are some good examples of involvement in delivering the step, there was insufficient involvement of stakeholders when designing the step and there was no direct engagement with communities where there is low take-up of art

What we looked for

34 We looked for evidence that the Arts Council has:

- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
- effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
- used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
- sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.

35 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁸

⁸ See Appendix 1

What we found

36 We identified the following strengths:

- the Arts Council has recognised there was a lack of involvement with communities when designing this specific step. However, it commissioned 64 Million Artists to carry out a scoping study to examine engagement work in more detail to help inform future delivery programmes. This is a good opportunity for the Arts Council to reflect on how it should involve stakeholders effectively in future when taking actions and making decisions linked with increasing participation in areas with underdeveloped reach of the arts.
- although the Arts Council did not effectively involve stakeholders in the design of the step, there are some good examples of involvement within the delivery of this step. For example, Ideas People Places was a project that put the onus on the community organisation receiving the funding to determine how to use the money and what specific 'art' to undertake. The aim was to empower communities and help deliver better outcomes that the community values, rather than the funder. A further example is the Night Out Scheme that empowers community groups to put on professional performances in local venues and it is the community that decides what it wants rather than the Arts Council.

37 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- the step was initially designed without effectively involving stakeholders. Furthermore, some of the actions contained within the operational plan to address this step changed, for example, working with the Arts Portfolio Wales to 'adopt' a geographical area in addition to the 'normal' localities for their work. All projects/programmes could benefit from involving communities, artists and other key stakeholders from the outset to target their specific needs which should negate the need to use pre-determined assumptions.
- there is Arts Council research that identifies low take-up rates of art in largely deprived areas in Wales but so far there has not been enough direct engagement with potential service users to ensure the art initiatives that are rolled out actually reflect what people on the ground want.
- a vast majority of the Arts Council funding goes to the APW, but staff noted that there is often insufficient challenge on whether these organisations are seeking views of the people within their localities to understand their wants, needs and challenges.

Part Two: Arts Council's response

38 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to the Arts Council at a workshop in August 2019 that was attended by nominated Arts Council officers. At this workshop the Arts Council began to consider its response to our findings, which is set out below.

Long term

- Develop a compelling long-term vision for the arts in Wales, which will help partners with their long-term planning without committing the Arts Council to financial commitments that it has no means of guaranteeing. Longer-term horizon scanning in future years with the wellbeing goals in mind would help secure a longer-term mindset and would provide a more secure context for the Arts Council's intermediate planning.
- Ensure long-term and holistic thinking regarding the vision of Arts is reflected in operational planning.
- Develop improved mechanisms for measuring the long-term impact of Arts Council funded activity in order to inform investment choices and demonstrate the benefits to partners.
- Gather information on where Arts Council funded activity is taking place from APW organisations by, for example, including a question on the APW Survey.
- Put in place a more consistent and effective methodology for measuring engagement in lottery-funded activity and the activities of the APW.
- Through the Investment Review planning explore how best to encourage APW organisations to describe their longer-term ambitions; and their alignment with the Arts Council's corporate priorities.
- Allow lottery projects to be assessed over a longer timeframe to ensure the longer-term benefits are captured and measured.

Prevention

- Using the Arts in Wales survey and other data, identify localities where there are gaps in art activity in Wales (ie those areas where there is no Arts Council funded activity or community-led activity).
- Identify partners that could help identify the causes of the lack of participation in the arts in those localities to assist with decision making and planning for lasting change.
- Develop flexible procedures and processes that allow the Arts Council to work more flexibly with partners to identify opportunities to secure funding and develop business models that would allow projects to become sustainable over the longer term.

Integration

- Simplify the Arts Council's planning and reporting framework and create better linkages across strategic documents and programmes with the wellbeing objectives at the heart of these.
- Ensure that staff across the organisation are using the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to identify multiple benefits (ie, related to social, economic and environmental as well as cultural aspects of wellbeing) at the outset of projects.
- Develop further the current programme of cross-staff briefing sessions and exploit more the potential of news and information on the internal intranet, Hwb.
- Using the good working relationships established, consider the other objectives of partners and establish links to Arts Council business outside of culture.

Collaboration

- Continue to develop links with key organisations such as local authorities around local cultural strategies and planning, including developing links with representative bodies.

Involvement

- Make involvement the 'first step' in the process when working to increase participation in localities where there is underdeveloped reach of the arts. Further work will be undertaken to determine the best ways to involve communities.

Appendix 1

Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

Exhibit 2: Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified. We have not used the indicators as a checklist. They should be viewed as indicators. They helped us to form conclusions about the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its wellbeing objectives.

What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?

- There is a clear understanding of what 'long term' means in the context of the Act.
- They have designed the step to deliver the wellbeing objective/s and contribute to their long-term vision.
- They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long term (within the project context).
- They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends.
- Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities.
- Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered.
- There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long term.
- They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term.
- They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches.

What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?

- The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.
- The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.
- The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.
- There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and wellbeing objectives.
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies.
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives.
- There is an open culture where information is shared.
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the wellbeing objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies.
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the wellbeing goals and minimise negative impacts.
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours.

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries.
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity.
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make.
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate.

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why.
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood.
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver.
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital sources of information that will help deliver better outcomes.
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part.
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution.
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve.

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