

UK Theatre and SOLT's response to DCMS Select Committee's Inquiry into the Social impact of participation in culture and sport

1. [SOLT](#) and [UK Theatre](#) are the trade associations and members' organisations representing the interests of those engaged in the production and presentation of medium to large-scale dramatic and lyric theatre in the UK. Their memberships are drawn from both subsidised and commercial theatre.
2. We are responding to this inquiry because we understand arts and culture, including theatre and the performing arts contribute
 - To Britain's future prosperity, national identity;
 - To health and social care outcomes, increasing diversity and community cohesion;
 - To national growth and local growth, directly through employment, and through attracting visitors to areas. Businesses and infrastructure – including restaurants and transport – develop around theatres and encourage a strong sense of place.
3. For the sector to continue to make a strong contribution we need to make sure that a diverse pipeline of home grown talent into the sector's future workforce is secured.
4. **Which programmes best demonstrate the positive social impact that participating in sport and culture can have on the five central themes of this inquiry?**
 - 4.1. UK Theatre has collected a number of case studies from our members that illustrate theatres impact on: Health; Education; Community Engagement; Diversity and Social Mobility:

4.1.1. Diversity and Social Mobility

Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT)

Volunteering and Employment

In line with CFT's mission to ensure that there is adequate signposting for employment and volunteering roles within CFT for **young people and adults with additional needs**, 2 members of CFYT Friday (people with people with additional needs) are currently employed as Front Of House Trainees.

14% of our volunteers have protected characteristics and participate in weekly volunteering activities such as assisting with tours and engaging with CFT's heritage/archive activities.

'I really like tour assisting as I enjoy watching people enjoy their time exploring the building. I feel that I have grown in confidence and have learnt to communicate better – it has really boosted my self-esteem.'

Volunteer Tour Assistant

Buddies Scheme

The idea for the scheme was born from the testimony of a 92 year-old long-standing audience member, who loved the Theatre but was no longer physically able to come alone.

4.1.2. Health

Birmingham Hippodrome - [Aero Breaks](#)

A pilot project engaging c.110 young people aged 14-25 in regular sports participation through our Hip-Hop dance fitness project, born out of our knowledge of how important **physical activity is for mental and physical wellbeing**. We developed four after school & community clubs delivering 24 weeks of free dance workshops offering young people the opportunity to develop resilient sporting habits, increased physical fitness levels, new skills and self-confidence. Working with local partners Break Mission and Sport Birmingham to reach priority groups, including BME, with a high quality programme, which is free at the point of access for participants.

Chichester Festival Theatre

Community Projects

CFT delivers theatre-skills workshops in partnership with The Chichester Centre, a Low Secure and Forensic **Mental Health facility**. This partnership won the **Positive Practice Award** from the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation.

Sessions focus on communication and team building exercises, and the opportunity to develop theatre skills through improvisation, devising and script work.

Participants created a series of short plays and the pieces were performed in the Minerva Theatre, where friends, family and staff from The Chichester Centre were invited to celebrate the work of the group; some participants chose to direct their plays, others chose to perform their work.

'It is a unique opportunity for our clients to engage in a world that many may not have experienced before, to look at opportunities for developing confidence and for gradually working together to enable a greater sense of social inclusion in the immediate area.' **Occupational Therapist - The Chichester Centre**

Dementia-Friendly Activities

CFT's Learning, Education & Participation (LEAP) department provides opportunities for **people living with dementia** and their families/carers to engage with fun and stimulating arts activities, to share experiences with other individuals in similar circumstances and to forge social connections.

Mind, Body, Sing, is a weekly dementia-friendly singing workshops run at a local Care Home.

Creative Responses involves reminiscence through drama exercises. By introducing simple practical drama exercises, games and songs, participants are invited to share their own tales and create new ones together in a relaxed creative atmosphere. These sessions will also be taken out to care homes within the local area.

4.1.3 Health – Further Examples

[Sheffield Theatres – Dementia](#): 'We are proud to be a Dementia Friendly organisation and offer a programme of activities that is both therapeutic to those living with Dementia and creates a chance for them and their families to interact socially, rather than focusing on symptoms, diagnosis or illness; improving quality of life and reducing isolation. From training our actors to become Dementia Friends, to offering free singing workshops and hosting a Dementia Friendly performance of our Christmas musical, Sheffield Theatres aims to support people living with Dementia to experience the joy of live theatre.'

[Ovalhouse Theatre - Demonstrate](#): 'is a dance led participatory arts programme for young people aged 8-16 on the autism spectrum and/or with complex and profound disabilities.'

4.4.4 Education

Northern Ballet

John has a complex and challenging home background, his mother struggles to cope with him and his five siblings after both his father and uncle committed suicide. Last year John was prone to violent outbursts of temper and he was on the verge of being excluded from his primary school in the heart of inner city Leeds. Staff had great difficulty engaging with him and his school work was of a very low standard.

John's school embarked on [Northern Ballet's Start project](#). His questions in workshops were perceptive and thoughtful and the positive feedback that he got from the workshop leaders began to build his confidence. Start gave him something to talk about and to write about and his support staff a topic that they knew would interest and enthuse him. The whole experience helped John to build relationships with adults and led to a significant shift in this behaviour. John's teacher credits Start with saving John from exclusion.

"Northern Ballet gave him something to hold on to in school. Working with them through Start was definitely the thing that got him through."

Class Teacher

John's social skills improved immeasurably during the project and also had a direct effect on his literacy skills by providing him with a subject that he wanted to read and write about. John gained a level 4 in his SATs, an enormous leap in his achievement and one that none of his teachers thought possible at the beginning of the year.

"Working with Northern Ballet gave him a connection, a positive link with school and an opportunity to use his intelligence." **Class Teacher**

John has successfully moved on to secondary school and has recently played a lead role in their production of Romeo and Juliet.

Chichester Festival Theatre

CFT has engaged with over 120 school pupils on a literacy project to support them to achieve higher attainment in literacy and confidence in writing.

All participants said that their confidence had increased. They felt that their voice had been heard and their own ideas were respected; each one revealed that they were hugely proud to be sharing their work with others and this achievement was one of the best they had attained at school.

'I really enjoyed the whole project and I enjoyed being out of my comfort zone. It has challenged me, which is good as I would usually go for an easier option. Thanks for helping me to develop my skills and making me more confident.' **School pupil**

Feedback from teachers confirmed that the programme had a huge impact and educational benefits.

'The children enjoyed the sessions so much, that they would even (without being asked) go and create additional work/plays because they were so inspired. A huge thank you to Luke and Alex for making the children feel special, making them laugh, making them feel inspired, allowing them to be creative and most of all, making Shakespeare fun!' **Teacher**

4.4.5 Community Engagement and Diversity

Northern Ballet

Pawel recently arrived from Poland into Year 6 at Armley Primary School in Leeds with practically no English. School has been a struggle for him both academically and socially. However, Pawel is very physically able and the Northern Ballet workshops have been a revelation for him. In movement and dance he is able to express himself confidently and enthusiastically. It doesn't matter if he doesn't understand everything that is said. During the [Start](#) sessions with Northern Ballet and now back at school during PE and dance, he is able to tap into an innate confidence and ability. He can relax a bit and succeed, he gains admiration from his peers and his confidence gets an immense boost.

*“Start is one of the best projects that I have ever been involved in
and I have been teaching for 30 years!”*

Class Teacher, Armley Primary School, Leeds

Chichester Festival Theatre

Chichester Festival Youth Theatre (CFYT) engages over 800 young people weekly through workshops at CFT and at nine satellite groups across West Sussex.

Participation can have a significant impact, helping young people to develop a strong sense of purpose and direction which can have a profound and far-reaching effect on their lives.

Vital and transferable abilities are also developed - the use of imagination, creativity and self-expression, critical reflection and analysis, an enhanced knowledge of social issues, cultural heritage and aesthetic appreciation.

Young people also develop problem solving, self-worth, self-discipline, respect and consideration for others.

Equally important is developing greater confidence and self-esteem.

‘I’m so grateful that my son gets the chance to be part of such a great organisation. It’s so important that kids like him, who don’t always have the easiest time at school, get to express themselves and be appreciated for what they are good at. It’s much more than just youth theatre; it’s a sense of belonging somewhere.’ Parent

Alumni of our programme say:

‘Everything I learnt from CFYT – how to walk into a room, how to communicate with many different people on many varied levels, how to question and think about all aspects of life. This has helped me to achieve all of the worthwhile things I am glad to say I have done to date’. CFYT Alumni

‘When I joined CFYT I had a terrible speech impediment – a stutter. Now, in my early twenties, I am a sports commentator – I put that down to gaining so much confidence in youth theatre sessions’.

CFYT Alumni

Chichester Festival Theatre, cont...

CFYT has been working in partnership with **West Sussex Young Carers**, running taster workshops at young carer hubs across the county. Young carers in the immediate locality are offered full bursary youth theatre membership. Feedback from family services suggests that these young people greatly benefit from the regular weekly break and time for friends and fun.

*'The Festival Theatre Workshops represent a different experience, one that many young carers would not have otherwise considered. Many of them have discovered new friends, much greater self-confidence and most importantly their own 'voice' to express themselves. **Young Carers Leader***

We work with young people and adults with additional needs. During these sessions, participants are given opportunity and space to explore their creativity and develop strong social bonds. They are encouraged to engage with the creation of their own work which gives them a sense of ownership and pride in the work they have created.

'My daughter has a severe stammer, which prevents her from taking full part in life and has left her unable to speak in public. I was absolutely astounded to hear her talking on the 'radio Show' presented by the group, and even more shocked to hear her confidently answering questions on stage about the play which were randomly put to her by the audience.' **Parent**

'In weekly sessions participants can explore drama freely with the support of practitioners. The creative outlet also encourages social skills, confidence building and communication; all of which aid their development and understanding. Unlike school productions, where lines are read and choreography is constructed by teachers, CFYT has a different dynamic, encouraging and engaging individuals' imaginations and letting them bring their visions to life in dramatic form.'

School Teaching Assistant

4.4.6 Community Engagement and Diversity - Further examples

Cardboard Citizens: 'Cardboard Citizens tells stories that need to be told, through theatre performed on the stage, in the street, in hostels, centres and prisons; A creative hub for excluded people, our workshops, training, support and progression grow confidence, community and skills.'

Sherman 5: 'offers free membership and is designed to give people who have never attended a performance at Sherman Theatre the chance to do so. Sherman 5 is open to residents of Communities First areas across Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Newport and to members and gatekeepers of our partner community groups, all of which support people who face barriers and/or disadvantage.'

Clean Break: 'Our theatre-based education and training programme is integral to our ethos. For more than three decades, we have delivered high-quality theatre-based courses, awarded qualifications and offered specialist support, all of which are critical for the rehabilitation of women with experience of the criminal justice system. Run in prisons and from our women-only building in Kentish Town, our training and education programme helps participants to develop personal, social, professional and creative skills that often lead to education and employment.'

Ovalhouse Theatre - The Paper Project: 'The Paper Project began as collaboration between a group of young migrant artists at Ovalhouse's, Counterpoints Arts, and Mark Storor, an award-winning artist and theatre director who specialises in collaborating with participants who are on the margins of society.'

Theatre By the Lake – Living Well With Dementia: 'created in response to audience feedback and local demand. It gives people who are living with dementia in the community, and crucially their family and carers, the opportunity to access the arts in a way that suits their individual needs.'

5. How can access to cultural and sporting professions be improved to enable greater diversity? How can the Government build a pipeline of talent?

5.1. For theatre and the performing arts continue to contribute to the UK's creative industries they must draw on the talent base, and build audiences, from all areas of society. We believe that diversity in the workforce and audiences is key to ensuring resilience in the sector.

5.2. If the sector is to continue to thrive it is vital that its workforce becomes more representative of our society and includes more people from BAME backgrounds, who are disabled, and from low socio-economic backgrounds.

5.3. Careers Advice

Creative subjects are vital as part of a balanced curriculum to introduce young people to the range of careers available in the creative industries.

Subjects like IT and engineering are also needed. Areas such as automation are increasingly important on-stage, expertise in data management and tech systems becoming vital for ticket sales, fundraising and audience development.

5.4. Young people could be made more aware of the range of non-performance roles in the theatre industry. More informed career advice in schools to pupils, parents and teachers would be valuable, to improve knowledge about professions in our industry.

We are working on developing careers strategy for our sector and would be happy to share our progress with you.

6. Why has the Government not co-ordinated its efforts more effectively?

6.1. Individual Government departments are currently pursuing non-complementary policies, seemingly because the effect of one department's policy on another department's objective is not understood. The introduction of the Ebacc and the damaging effect on the take-up of creative subjects is at odds with the Government's focus on the Creative Industries as an early sector deal in the Industrial Strategy. The introduction of Apprenticeship Standards and T Levels could also align more effectively with the Industrial Strategy. A cross-departmental approach between BEIS, DCMS and DfE and DWP would ensure that departments were more coordinated on shared efforts to achieve overall outcomes.

6.2. National government could also coordinate with local government. For example, in response to a PQ on the 'effect of changes to local authority budgets on theatres across the UK', the Minister responded that 'It is for Local Authorities to decide how they invest but we are clear that investing in arts and culture is one of the best decisions local authorities can make.'¹ This puts arts institutions in a difficult place from which to coordinate campaign and apply for funding. There appears to be both national and local support for the arts, yet local budgets are cut and the beneficial work that local venues and organisations do is curtailed.

7. Has the sport sector been better for social mobility than the arts? If so, why?

7.1. Individuals enjoyment of and participation in arts and cultural activity is not reliant on talent and is available to all. Much could be done to improve the perception of arts and culture as an accessible activity (see <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2018/02/09/what-are-poshest-cultural-activities/>), and to improve the social diversity of those participating in and working in the industry. A 'This Girl Can' type of campaign to change perceptions of engaging in the arts, including its beneficial effects, could be transformative.

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-31/126002>

8. How can museums, galleries and other cultural venues boost access and social impact?

8.1. UK Theatre deliver the National Campaign for the Arts' *Hearts for the Arts Awards*. The awards celebrate the work that local authorities are doing to support and fund arts and cultural activity.

This year there were more nominations and from across all four countries of the UK. The nominations spanned the arts forms and regions. For further examples of how the arts impact on the five areas read more about the shortlisted and winning projects on the [Hearts for the Arts site](#).

8.2. The Arts Council's [Creative People and Places](#) site 'reached 1.45 million people who would not *ordinarily* participate in art and culture'².

² https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/11/arts-council-reach-more-people-divided-society-city-of-culture-hull-nicholas-serota?utm_content=buffer47b3a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer