



## Ensuring Every Child Has the Opportunity to Attend Theatre

### The Current Context

In 2019/20 only 26% of 5-10 years old and 54% of 11-15 year olds engaged in theatre and drama activities. For 11-15 year olds, only 25% engaged in theatre and drama 'outside of school'<sup>1</sup>.

The National Curriculum **requires** every state-funded school to promote children's cultural development, preparing them for the experiences of later life. Whilst the private school sector is **able to** invest in cultural education, the state sector has **suffered** a significant reduction in provision, due in part to the marginalisation of arts subjects in schools over the last twenty years.<sup>2</sup>

Children from low-income families are missing out the most because they are less likely to have access to cultural experiences outside of school.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis has led to a reduction in school trips including theatre visits.

Parents and teachers have reported a decline in children accessing culture via school trips, disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged intakes at 68% decline verses 44% in more affluent areas.

### Why does this matter and what can be gained?

To secure improved access to our cultural capital and sustain our world leading theatre reputation, we must ensure all children have the opportunity to experience theatre. A visit to the theatre can:

#### Provide cultural enrichment

- Theatre broadens children's horizons, shaping their sense of the world and their place within it.

#### Offer educational benefits

- The immersive experience of theatre helps children to learn<sup>4</sup>, whilst structured arts activities can increase cognitive skills across all subject areas.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-annual-child-release/arts-taking-part-survey-201920>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pec.ac.uk/blog/class-inequality-in-the-creative-industries-is-rooted-in-unequal-access-to-arts-and-cultural-education>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Beyond-school-enrichment-report-onward.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X18761034>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/evidence/key-research-findings-the-case-for-cultural-learning/>



Scan QR code to find out more about our campaign



- Children from low-income families who participate in arts at school are three times more likely to get a degree.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Help build empathy**

- Watching theatrical performances helps children to develop emotional intelligence.<sup>7 8</sup>

#### **Promote well-being**

- Children and young people report that engaging in cultural and creative activities, such as drama, helps them to "relax and de-stress".<sup>4</sup>

#### **Spark a lucrative career and address skills shortages**

- This campaign will raise awareness of the highly skilled off-stage STEM orientated theatre jobs open to young people at a time when the industry is facing significant skills shortages.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Boost audience figures**

- This initiative would help to raise audience figures over the long-term, boosting economic activity, resulting in more jobs across the UK.

#### **Support the growth of our economy**

- Theatre is a key component of the broader creative industries which, prior to Covid, contributed £116bn in Gross Value Added (GVA).<sup>10</sup>
- Our research indicates that the theatre industry alone generates £2.39bn GVA and supports 205,000 workers.
- For every £1 spent on a theatre ticket, an additional spend of £1.40 is generated in local economies.<sup>11</sup>

## **Our Proposal: Funding to ensure all children can attend the theatre before they leave school**

We want children and young people to experience as much theatre and live performance as possible at every age.

We estimate that to provide annual funding for approximately 800,000 children a year to visit the theatre, covering transport, theatre tickets, and teacher supervision would cost a maximum of £42.33 per child, or a total cost of £34million per year. This figure assumes that theatres charge £25 per ticket. However, costs could be reduced further through voluntary contributions from theatres, private sector

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/evidence/key-research-findings-the-case-for-cultural-learning/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://bmcpubhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11233-6>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002210312100038X#bb0050>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.nordicity.com/de/cache/work/15/Nordicity\\_UK\\_Theatre\\_Workforce\\_Review\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.nordicity.com/de/cache/work/15/Nordicity_UK_Theatre_Workforce_Review_Report_2017.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-gross-value-added/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-provisional-gross-value-added>

<sup>11</sup> Economic Impact Assessment of UK Theatre Sector, Sound Diplomacy, June 2023.



Scan QR code to find out more about our campaign



sponsorship and parents. With these voluntary contributions, we believe that the maximum cost would fall to around £14-18m per year.

With £1.5 million we could fund pilot programmes across three areas of cultural deprivation to test the viability of our proposals and enable an improved understanding of the barriers to theatre attendance. We are proposing identifying three towns with cultural deprivation within three regional mayoral areas to act as pilot areas over the period of a year. The pilots would include 37,000 children (5% of total 14 year old population in England). This would help us to explore how the project could be scaled to benefit all children across England and help the Government meet its commitment to increasing children's access to culture and delivering on its mission to break down the barriers to opportunity.

This initiative has widespread support.

In a poll, carried out on behalf of SOLT & UK Theatre, 84% of parents were either very supportive or supportive of a government programme to ensure at least one free trip to the theatre for every child before they leave school.

## Theatre for Every Child - Conclusion

Theatre should be for every child. Funding a pilot programme is a vital first step to begin to tackle the barriers to children's access to theatre, providing cultural enrichment and an investment in the future workforce of the creative industries, one of the fastest growing parts of the UK economy.

## Contact us

For further information contact [publicaffairs@soltukt.co.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@soltukt.co.uk)

Demonstrate your support for the [Theatre for Every Child Campaign](#) on social media using [#TheatreForEveryChild](#)

## Who We Are

[Society of London Theatre \(SOLT\)](#) represents approximately 230 London-based producers, theatre owners and managers, including all the major subsidised theatrical organisations in London.

[UK Theatre](#) represents approximately 240 theatres, dance companies, producers and arts centres throughout the UK. UK Theatre also operates as a professional association, supporting over 1,400 individuals working professionally in theatre and the performing arts in the UK.

**Our Vision**, and the world we want to see, is a **dynamic, sustainable and world-class theatre sector**

**Our Mission is to champion theatre and support our members to thrive**

We have **3 priority focus areas** that allows us to deliver on our vision and mission



Scan QR code to find out more about our campaign

THEATRE FOR  
EVERY CHILD



1. A growing, engaged and united **membership**, including a skilled, diverse and productive workforce for now and the future
2. To inspire, attract, retain and diversify theatre **audiences**
3. **Advocate** to support growth across the sector, underpinned by robust evidence.



Scan QR code to find out more about our campaign