

Access to Arts 2009-2010

An evaluation report of partnership development



Arts Council England's mission is to promote 'great art for everyone'. That can only be achieved through the imagination, creativity and commitment of the organisations we support. Naturally, most of those who produce and present the arts, strive for excellence in their work. But those that focus on the second half of our mission – enabling everyone to have access to the best art we have – are no less important. Without an engaged audience, great art touches no one.

Access to Arts Evaluation Report, (2008) New Horizons; Forward by François Matarasso.

Developed and delivered by

DOUBLE IMPACT

In partnership with

FRAMEWORK and CITY ARTS

Cover illustration

Access to Arts visit at New Art Exchange, exhibition 'Pork - Knocker Dreams'

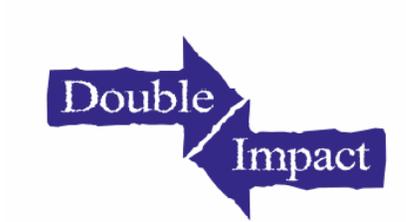
Photographs of visits by Jo Wheeler and participants

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1. Introduction

1.1 Access to Arts report

The action research will explore and examine partnership structures and strategies that support the long term funding and co-provision of activity which broadens vulnerable people's knowledge of the arts. Given that smaller scale projects have limited resources to develop funding streams, this research, carried out by City Arts, will evaluate capacity for provision using existing budgets alongside new funds. The researchers were commissioned to work alongside staff at Double Impact who have managed the Access to Arts programme to date. This current programme follows on from the success of an initial programme co-ordinated by Jo Wheeler for Double Impact and is detailed below. The experiences of key arts partners and co-providers form the basis of this evaluation.

1.2 Background of the Access to Arts Programme

The Access to Arts initiative began in January 2006 and has since slowly developed its reach and partnership working under the management of Double Impact. This initiative consists of a programme of visits to arts venues, supported by creative art workshops that were designed to increase the independent use of these venues in Nottingham, by vulnerable and socially excluded people.

The programme is a partnership between Double Impact, Framework and City Arts. The particular focus of this evaluation is to examine partnerships and their vital role in developing and embedding a strategy for longer term sustainable funding and best practice. This project is the second partnership programme of three, delivered by Double Impact, the last being funded by Arts Council England.

Key findings from the first evaluation suggest that participants became more independent regarding access to art venues; confidence was enhanced; group dynamics improved sociability and opportunities for sharing; raised creative awareness and opportunities for learning were gained and participants subsequently engaged in new opportunities as a result of the programme.

1.3 Arts Venues

During the previous programme, research examined the impact on arts venues and partner organisations. Venue representatives reported that they had found this an easy programme to be involved in and welcomed its ethos. It was generally felt that the Access to Arts programme contributed to audience development and education objectives and activities.

The number of arts venues involved in the programme has increased and now includes: Broadway Cinema and Media Centre; Lakeside Arts Centre, Wollaton Hall; New Art Exchange; Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries, Nottingham Contemporary; Nottingham Playhouse; Royal Centre and The Art Organisation.

Awareness training in working with vulnerable groups was offered to four venues but only taken up by one, due to staffing limitations.

The value participants placed on venues differed. This was a matter of personal preferences for art forms as much as any particular show or exhibition.

For further information on arts venues see Appendix 1.

1.4 Core Partners

This programme presented a logical partnership between Double Impact, Framework and City Arts who all work to engage vulnerable people experiencing significant social exclusion due to a wide range of factors, including substance misuse / dependence, homelessness, poor educational and offending backgrounds, mental health problems and long-term unemployment. Each organisation had an allocation of one third of places for participants wanting to engage with the visits programme. For participants, the programme offered opportunities for social engagement and enriching learning to take place within a supportive group, and for arts venues, the opportunity to connect with a more diverse audience group.

All the partners felt that the programme met the ethos of their organisations in respect of additional learning opportunities for participants, volunteer opportunities, breaking down barriers and access to learning and the offer of complimentary and additional services.

Partners valued the investment and feedback from participants. Both Framework and City Arts indicated that the Access to Arts programme complemented existing activity and they would welcome developing the partnership further. During the first programme which was a pilot, accommodating partners' different practices, management and resources proved challenging at times. The feedback from this experience has benefited and helped shape the current programme which, as a result, now includes a strengthened referral process, a partnership agreement, better communication between partners, a 'User Forum' and enhanced strategic role for the steering group.

Evidence from the initial evaluation has highlighted a number of organisational issues that could enhance any future programme of this kind. Learning about partnership working, particularly in aspects of planning, delivery and resources, has been gained.. It has highlighted, for instance, the need for more support, both at a partnership level and the one-to-one support required to help particular individuals visit the venues. It has indicated that time given to communicating the aims and needs of the programme strengthens practice and enables a responsive approach to both addressing problems and seeking new opportunities. Awareness training is still under-used at this time and there may be scope for greater take-up by venues and opportunities to foster additional practical workshops for visiting participants at the venues.

For further details of these organisations see Appendix 2 and aims of the Access to Arts programme Appendix 3.

2. The Evaluation

2.1 Methodology

City Arts has been commissioned to work in partnership with Double Impact to design, oversee and implement the research. It was proposed that an interview/questionnaire research method be used to elicit responses around the development of partnership working.

An information sheet was given to each venue prior to taking part and informed consent was obtained from each participant interviewed. One-to-one interviews were conducted by staff at City Arts. A series of questions were designed to examine and explore partnership working in line with the objectives of the overall Access to Arts programme. All interviews were digitally recorded and participants will be offered the opportunity to read a draft of the report before publication. A separate strand of evaluation will also be completed to reflect the participant's experience of the programme. It is intended that results from this research will inform recommendations for the future development of the programme.

For information on the interview questions see Appendix 4.

2.2 Data Analysis

Data for the findings which follow is based on thirteen interviews with the seven different venues taken at the beginning and end of the programme. Data was not collected from one organisation for a follow-up interview due to limited time.

Three separate interviews were also carried out with Double Impact, Framework and City Arts, the three core partners, - towards the end of the programme.

Each of the interviews was then transcribed. The interview data was analysed with a view to identifying both the intrinsic and instrumental elements gained from the partners and has been set out in thematic areas. All comments in italics stem from the interviewees.

2.3 Ethics

The evaluation adopted a participatory approach to the collection and analysis of data underpinned by the ethical principles of collaboration, confidentiality, negotiation and accessibility. The format adopted is as follows:

- Confidentiality was maintained throughout the interviews and they were digitally recorded to reflect the accuracy of participant's experiences.
- Participants are not named in the report.
- To ensure accuracy and fairness, aspects of the report that affect particular groups will be shared with them for the opportunity to comment and make amendments in the context of the research.
- In the interests of furthering learning about the programme the final report will be available to all participants, partners, organisations and the wider public.

The report was written and produced by Kate Duncan with support from the Double Impact's Access to Arts team. The final outcome was achieved through consultation at a number of focus group meetings.

Please note that this report is a draft and will be distributed to the User Forum Group and partners to ensure that the final evaluation is conducted and reported accurately, honestly and fairly according to the Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation of the United Kingdom Evaluation Society.

Copyright of the report lies with Double Impact.

For further information on the objectives of the research see Appendix 5.

3. Key Evaluation Findings

3.1 Venues and Partners

During the previous programme, research examined the impact of the programme on arts venues and partner organisations. The venue representatives reported that they had found Access to Arts an easy programme to be involved in, and welcomed it as an extension of what they already do. Awareness training in working with vulnerable groups was offered to four venues but only taken up by one, due to staffing limitations. The value participants placed on venues differed, this was a matter of personal preference for the art form as much as the particular show or exhibition. Arts partners also felt that the Access to Arts programme contributed to their audience development and education activities.

3.2 Action Research

An in-depth evaluation process was necessary in order to summarise the views of venue representatives and gain an insight into what impact the most recent Access to Arts programme has had upon the partner organisations and cultural venues.

Representatives of all of the venues agreed to be interviewed. However due to some organisational capacities and heavy workloads, this in itself proved to be a challenge.

The arts venues interviewed include; Broadway Cinema and Media Centre; Lakeside Arts Centre, New Art Exchange; Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries, Nottingham Contemporary; Nottingham Playhouse and The Art Organisation. Subsequent meetings have also been arranged independently with the venues to explore the wider implications of partnership working and possible consortium development. It was agreed at these meetings that this will be an ongoing process and has potential for further development.

3.3 The structure of cultural organisations

The participating venues function in very different ways due to specific organisational frameworks, art forms and areas of work, cultural and geographical remits, funding and business strands. The venues also vary considerably in scale and have different strategic approaches and staffing structures in place. Most of the cultural venues that were interviewed employ a key member of staff who is responsible for developing the educational or outreach /community strands of their work.

The research highlighted that a single person is often responsible for an extensive remit that can include hands-on delivery of workshops with the public. Some of these individuals are in full-time posts some work part-time.

Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries is a good example of an organisation with a varying and wide remit including exhibition space, educational and outreach work. The staffing structure includes a small team of people responsible for developing strands of work with audiences and the wider community. Other venues also have the capacity and funding to employ professional artists to enhance the delivery of projects and programmes. Most notably, Nottingham Contemporary employs several 'associate artists', a structure that enables the organisation to develop a consistent programme of work that engages with their audiences.

It is also important to note that both the New Art Exchange and Nottingham Contemporary are relatively new organisations inhabiting new purpose built venues. The research indicates that both organisations are still 'finding their feet' in terms of engaging with potential audiences and establishing strategic direction. The Broadway Cinema and Media Centre has also recently undergone a period of regeneration, including extending the reach of the organisation and the role it plays within the community. The Broadway is a social enterprise and has many commercial business strands that support its sustainability.

In juxtaposition to this, The Art Organisation is also a social enterprise which relies on the tenancy of its spaces, room rental, community activities and volunteers to maintain the organisation and its activities. Both the Broadway and The Art Organisation are independent organisations in terms of funding, so audience development is not a funding requirement or outcome in the same way as it is for other organisations more reliant on subsidy.

Both the Lakeside Arts Centre and Nottingham Playhouse are very well established in terms of their educational strands of work. Feedback from participants on the Access to Arts programme suggested that both organisations had offered particularly well-planned activities and workshops alongside the cultural visits.

4. Access for Audiences

4.1 Nottingham Playhouse

The Playhouse has operated since 1947 and its main aim is to provide plays with a broadly educative agenda, alongside which workshops that explore debate and dialogue with audiences are delivered. The Playhouse remit is wide and the organisation seeks to place the venue on the cultural map for young people, families and communities.

While there is no Access Officer, the role of the Education Manager is to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support access to the venue. The Playhouse embraces new technology to help make performances accessible, along with other access measures including hearing loops, signing available at performances and signed productions, touch tours, commentary for people who are visually impaired or blind and specific tailor-made work with people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The organisation receives funding from Arts Council England and the Education Department funds its work largely through grants from Charitable Foundations and Trusts. Areas of responsibility for the Education Officer include:

- The development of partnerships within the community
- Artistic development of Roundabout Theatre (with schools etc)
- Influence over choices made for stage production (education and community remit)
- Community resources for those in full time or quasi education, with an aim to support young people's career development or offer support into a range of performing arts opportunities. Wider support consists of voluntary opportunities and placements for students attending both FE/HE.

4.2 Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries

The priorities of Nottingham Castle are largely influenced by Renaissance East Midlands (Renaissance is a national body representing the Museums Libraries and Archives Service) and Nottingham City Council, in working with priority groups and engaging learners within all age groups (formal learning and adult education settings). Their remit is to work with priority groups and widen their audiences, support organisational change, work force development and partnership working. The service is informed by Local Area Agreement priorities directly linked to ONE Nottingham's 2020 strategy that highlights the need to address *'building stronger*

healthier families and safer and happier communities'. (ONE Nottingham: The Nottingham Plan to 2020, pg 82/83)

Nottingham Castle has a strategic approach that is developed through an annual project plan linked to the priorities of Nottingham City Council, and bi-annually with Renaissance. Renaissance is the MLA's (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) programme that is aiming to transform England's regional museums. Funding from central government has enabled regional museums across the country to address their quality in delivering real results in support of education, learning, community development and economic regeneration. This structure provides opportunities to respond to national agendas and initiatives and "underpins the service and helps the organisation to engage and ensure that projects are more successful".

Nottingham Castle has an engagement team comprising six members of staff. The two main priorities are to fulfil their learning agenda and also target and widen audiences between the ages of 0 – 99 years of age. The agenda ensures that the organisation represents and is reflective of the communities living within Nottingham. This is further developed through their People's Panel and Young People's Steering Group, which together represent a very wide audience and ensure that "*people are at the heart of it*". The approach helps inform future projects and is enhanced by embedding consultation within projects..

It is evident that the Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries service is well resourced and adequately funded on a local and national level. Development of more specific projects is resourced through additional funding that is sought through grants.

4.3 Lakeside Arts Centre

The Lakeside Arts Centre is unique as a venue in respect of its direct link with Nottingham University. The venue has two key posts responsible for education and performing arts, both with a remit for the development of their outreach work. An additional post in the area of music also sits within the University but does not have a community focus. The main role for the two officers is audience development and enhancing the educational programme's links with hard to reach communities. A large proportion of the work is focussed on the gallery spaces and archive collections. The Access to Arts programme currently links with the Education Officer who is also responsible for some of the workshop delivery. The Education Team works in a structured way in line with a three year development plan for the organisation.

In a similar way to many of the venues, the access role is the responsibility of the Education Department whose broad remit is to work with schools, communities, colleges, children's centres and adults. The organisation believes that partnership working is crucial to the work that the Education Department does. The Lakeside has developed a good reputation for work with families and is committed to extending its remit to others within the community.

4.4 Nottingham Contemporary

Nottingham Contemporary is a relatively new organisation within the city and has a small learning team within which the Learning and Access Officer post sits. This team also includes five *Artist Facilitators* who deliver educational activities across the Learning Programme. The Curator of Public Programmes sits between the Learning and Exhibitions Programmes.

The organisation is relatively well funded through government sources and is also supported by Nottingham City Council and Arts Council England. The Education Department appears to be flexible in its approach to funding which could lead to the development of new projects with partners in the future. There is no doubt that as the organisation becomes more established, their partnership working and reach in the community will grow.

The key areas for development are largely concerned with audiences and continued research into particular areas that include schools, families and communities and hard to reach groups. Currently, most of their work is focused within Nottingham city, reflecting the support received from Nottingham City Council. However the education department is also aspires to furthering its reach into the county in the longer term. It is clear that Nottingham Contemporary is a good resource for schools, particularly in the county as there are few resources of its kind beyond the city. Nevertheless, the interest in attracting 'harder to reach audiences' into the gallery may prove more challenging. Nottingham Contemporary acknowledges that feedback from the public suggests there may be barriers to access and some preconceptions of the gallery space and what it has to offer. In response to this, other priority areas for Nottingham Contemporary include research into local, regional and national audiences.

It seems that the gallery will be putting considerable resources and focus into attempting to bridge current gaps in their reach and ability to attract diverse audiences to the venue. In response, the education department is designing projects to meet the needs of specific groups, and will be developing strategies, policies and training to address this further.

4.5 New Art Exchange

New Art Exchange currently employs an Education and Learning Manager, Community Engagement Officer and Youth Participation Officer. Their strategic roles and main areas of responsibility meet Arts Council England's priorities in engaging with audiences and local communities. The education work is developed alongside that of the Curator, Marketing and Operations managers.

As the New Art Exchange is a relatively new organisation in Nottingham the educational strand of work is still very much in development. The organisation acknowledges that there are still some physical barriers to be addressed within the space and in respect of its location. These are currently being explored through the Community Engagement Officer's role. The new venue has replaced a building that had a historical resonance with the local community and has now been replaced with a purpose built space. The organisation therefore recognises the need to re-

establish a relationship with the local community. This is being addressed through expanding community links and offering wider resources that are intended to respond more effectively to the diversity of audiences that the venue attracts and could potentially attract in the future. The New Art Exchange is also developing opportunities for people within the local community to access free arts activities. This is in response to the recognition that many local people may face barriers such as low income in accessing activities hosted by the venue.

As the organisation grows, local artists are also being supported. It is their intention to invite practitioners to take up residence within the venue for the creation of new work.

4.6 Broadway Cinema and Media Centre

There are some relatively new strands of education work at the Broadway where a small team of people support education and also work in the community on commercial film projects, intergenerational projects and work with young people. The team also includes two staff members who are employed to deliver a range of media courses that are open to the public. Other areas of responsibility include formal education work with schools and partnership working with New College Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies. The Broadway is also part of the Skills Council (SSC) for Creative Media, a national body that promotes and supports the media industries.

The Broadway raises income primarily through business, social and commercial strands of work. Although the company has charitable aims, it is not under high levels of pressure to develop specific audiences and work within targeted areas of the community. This leaves the organisation with a more flexible and organic approach to partnership working and community development than some other cultural venues within the city. However, this also means that the educational strands of work are not wholly embedded within the organisation. Their current work is in the process of development but this is reliant on the longer term sustainability of the education department through income from the commercial strands of work that the Broadway is involved in.

4.7 The Art Organisation (TAO)

The Art Organisation is a community investment company whose philosophy is to regenerate disused buildings that the community can use and access. Its founder has developed this model and has similar buildings in several other cities in England. The organisation operates in a very different way to many of the cultural organisations in the city, has a less formal structure and functions in a 'grass roots' manner. TAO's aims include supporting local communities to access exhibition and workshop space, a number of artist's studios and community ventures. This is achieved by developing partnerships with other agencies and organisations, individuals and community groups, to use their facilities and resources which include a dark room, screen printing, sewing machines, textile and woodwork workshops. The majority of TAO's staff work in a voluntary capacity and there is no particular remit to develop an educational strand to their work.

“The simplest target for us is to create space that is workable. We want to make sure that our networks are strong enough so that people know not just that it’s available, but that if you’re paying us that the money is going back into the community”.

4.8 Barriers to access

Many venue staff consulted felt that the arts themselves present a cultural barrier to access for some groups; and that their audiences are not always representative or reflective of the wider community. Some highlighted the fact that historical perceptions of the arts may prevent people from being open minded about what they are visiting and the reality of the work, and these myths are *“difficult to dispel”*. For example, the Lakeside representative believed there can be a perception within communities that through its association with the University, the venue is not for them as, *“the campus is for well-off, learned people”*.

Much of the terminology used during the interviews with venues highlighted consistent concerns around the notion of ‘preconceptions’, of *“an inherent perceived barrier to heritage and museums”* and that the general ‘culture’ within the community, was one of not valuing or appreciating the arts. Other important factors regarding access, suggested that some members of the community may feel socially excluded, or that there were income barriers that prevented some people in accessing expensive events and activities. Language barriers were also a concern and the way in which art work is presented to the public.

These views however did not stand in isolation and were confirmed by some of the participants taking part in the Access to Arts programme and through the case studies carried out as part of the evaluation. Participants initially spoke about *“arts not being for me”*, and *“ballet or opera not being for me”*. However, many of the participants asserted that once they had taken part in these events, their perceptions began to change and that they became more open-minded to visiting other events, taking part in activities and visiting venues independently.

There is a general feeling within venues that there is a strong need to reach out to communities and that audience development requires a change in approach, no longer assuming that people just walk through their doors. In order to address the need for diversification in attracting new audiences, all of the venues felt that direct promotion and good partnership working within communities was essential for success in dispelling myths and breaking down perceived barriers. Many of the larger organisations have developed intelligent marketing techniques to improve audience development and participation.

5. The Impact

5.1 Venues expectations of their involvement in the Access to Arts programme

The expectations of the cultural venues were wide and varied. Many of the venues were keen to be given the opportunity to work in partnership and seemed to be united in the view that the Access to Arts programme brought new audiences into their organisation. A number of the organisations suggested that they found it difficult to engage hard to reach audiences, giving the main reasons as practical barriers for vulnerable people in accessing their venue and lack of organisational capacity to build relationships with the wider community.

More directly, Nottingham Playhouse referred to the programme as allowing them “*to engage with a group of people not thinking that it is on their cultural map*”. They also expressed an interest in developing continuity with individual participants over a more extensive period of time, thereby enabling a greater “*quality of experience*” and in order to “*better target what is being offered in responding to people’s needs*”. In the longer term some of the venues were interested in how they could develop more tailor-made programmes to suit the needs of participants. Nottingham Contemporary expressed a wish that it was “*not just an add on group*” and that people could make “*more independent visits in the future*”. Many of the organisations also mentioned that there was a need to make their spaces more comfortable for participants, “*being aware of how people experience the gallery*”.

5.2 Access to Arts and the ethos of cultural partners

All venues felt that the programme fitted well with their ethos, alluding to the programme as, “*opening doors wider*” and initiating a dialogue with new audiences. Nottingham Playhouse indicated that the programme has extended staff skills in working and responding to this particular group’s needs. Nottingham Contemporary currently hosts a programme for mental health service users called *Art Outlook*. They felt that it was important to work towards designing bespoke workshops with harder to reach audiences in “*breaking down barriers to visiting a contemporary art gallery*” and in being “*involved with the venue in different ways*”. The Art Organisation explained that they “*spend nothing and let the community dictate to us what is going to be there, that’s the fundamental difference*”.

5.3 Successful partnership working

It is clear that the way in which organisations approach partnership working differs according to capacity, resources and venue. However many common themes emerged and this is reflected in the generic responses to questions about partnership working.

During this piece of research, the dialogue with venues around successful partnership working, predominantly reflected and was dictated by, the structural framework of different organisations. For example, organisations such as the Broadway and The Art Organisation appear to have a fairly organic approach to partnership working and Nottingham Castle Museum & Galleries, a more formal approach. TAO described this in terms of “*working closely with the community*” and acknowledging that the process was about “*giving back as well as receiving*”. In contrast, Nottingham Castle referred to partnership work as “*creating comprehensive terms of reference*”, asserting that “*initial contracting is crucial*” and the evaluation of programmes is a high priority. Nottingham Castle also referred to successful partnership working as being about “*outward thinking*” and “*making informed decisions based on a social democratic view*”. This organisation also highlighted the importance of including participants and users in the process of planning and partnership working if successful outcomes are to be achieved.

Many organisations emphasised the need to build strong relationships in order to meet partnership working objectives, and the ability to work flexibly to “*make changes if needed*”. It was acknowledged that pre-project planning is a vital element and that it is important to “*manage expectations from the outset*”. More broadly, it was agreed that there was a “*mutual responsibility*” based on “*trust*” and that “*clearly stated aims and objectives are a crucial factor*” if a partnership is to be successful. Finally, some organisations believed that evaluating collaborative work was crucial in order to monitor the achievement of aims, learn from experience and inform project delivery.

5.4 Barriers to successful partnership working

In order to understand partnership working better it was important to open up the debate around some of the generic challenges that organisations face regarding partnership working.

The key themes that emerged were:

- Ensuring that projects meet targets and stay on schedule
- Overall management of projects – it is crucial to establish responsibilities at the outset
- Managing budgets
- Communication is key
- Lack of people with the key expertise within projects
- Developing trust within the community
- Capacity within teams/organisations can be a barrier to delivery of projects
- Anticipating risks and setting milestones
- Working in sync with other organisations

- Transparency – it is important that projects are fully integrated into the organisation
- Challenges occur when there are partners that may have contradictory responsibilities, aims and objectives
- Engaging in partnerships where the motive is less than altruistic is also a challenge

5.5 The benefits of partnership working with Access to Arts

In order for the future development of the Access to Arts programme to be successful it is also important to better understand the needs of the partner organisations. In terms of benefits, the common themes that emerged from the research were visitor and audience development and the opportunity to work with other organisations in the city.

As an example, one interviewee explained that organisations need to “*demonstrate to stakeholders an involvement with particular sectors of audience that would otherwise be hard to reach*”. Others felt that “*art should be available to as many people as possible*”, and there is a “*conscious responsibility in making work accessible*” and a “*wish to identify this programme of work as being mutually beneficial*”. This ‘responsibility’ could be met by building longer term partnerships that embed ‘culture’ directly with participants in order to sustain access to future events and exhibitions.

The New Art Exchange believed that the Access to Arts programme had helped stimulate discussion and that participants were engaged throughout the visits. People had been able to take part in a two way discussion and look at things that are unusual or not necessarily of interest to them, in order to challenge preconceptions, to “*break down the barriers that might have previously existed*”. Also on this theme, Nottingham Contemporary stated that it was a “*great opportunity to get an honest understanding of the audiences needs*” and gain feedback that can inform the organisation better in regard to “*what we offer*”.

The principle outcome for a large number of partner organisations, was that Access to Arts had helped increase their reach as their own capacity to focus on development work with hard to reach groups is limited. The potential to explore this area of development further is largely dictated by each organisation’s key priorities and constraints in developing wider audiences.

6. The Legacy

6.1 Measuring success

The research with partners has certainly highlighted a number of positive outcomes and reasons for the programme to move forward. It has demonstrated, for example, that the harder to reach audiences that the venues often find a challenge to engage can be reached. Many venues have expressed an interest in the programme's future continuation and a need for more collaborative working.

The key outcomes however do differ from the last evaluation report. Partners seem more engaged throughout this programme and are keen to play a greater role in the design and planning of any future programmes. It was also felt that delivery and resources had improved from the last programme. Communication has greatly improved due to the regularity of Steering Group meetings and the development of User Forum meetings that include the views of participants and the potential for opportunities to be identified. Many of the key contacts within this programme, that fulfil the education and outreach roles, felt confident in their ability to cater for and manage hard to reach groups. However they stated that wider awareness within their organisations would be useful. The evidence still suggests that the awareness training offered as part of this programme could be better utilised by venues.

6.2 Arts development

The programme has demonstrated that the approach to informal learning through arts development can be met through tailor-made projects in line with the needs of this particular audience. The value of the partnership has been to break down the barriers that might have previously existed for participants in terms of preconceptions about the arts. Feedback from both participants and venues indicated that the most successful workshops were those that had been planned in response to the group's particular needs. Where the participants had attended some of the public talks, their needs had not entirely been met. Many of the venues have since reviewed the way in which they deliver additional workshops and feel the need to embed this programme into their current educational work. During the programme many of the venues have been able to offer participants exciting opportunities to see what goes on behind the scenes and to meet with performers and artists. Some of the venues could see that this work, if longer term, may be additionally supported through aspects of the educational work they already deliver. In order to achieve this, some interviewees felt that the best way forward would be to formalise the partnership. Both the Lakeside and Playhouse had offered particularly good provision during this programme. Both venues suggested that more sustained visits from the same group could enhance the relationships made and help them to improve their offer. The Playhouse felt that further opportunities could develop, for example the group could establish a theatre strand and work towards a production of their own. The Lakeside

could offer use of the cafe gallery for exhibiting work produced as part of an ongoing programme.

The evidence from participants suggests that the support given by the venues has encouraged independent visits and the recent establishment of a 'Wednesday group' that meets regularly to attend different venues in the city. Several participants have expressed a wish to seek voluntary opportunities and this may be an area of significant development between partners in the future.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Creating a legacy for programme

The experiences reflected by partners during this six month programme have demonstrated that in working together you can be collectively stronger than working independently. This programme can cross the boundaries of funding restrictions, build on the development of audiences and provide additional capacity in assisting venues to reach wider audiences. The main benefits indicated refer to expertise, sharing of resources, capacity building, funding opportunities and stronger networks. The evaluation outcomes will no doubt strengthen the programme in the next stage of its development.

Therefore the key areas for development are as follows:

Improved **planning** within the project would provide a better framework in offering tailor-made support for participants. During this research organisations have stated their belief that through joint planning they could improve capacity, delivery, programming and approach to education and community work. Suggestions have been put forward that this objective could be achieved through consultation, regular meetings, training and recommendations that can help the on-going development of Access to Arts.

Accreditation was recommended by a number of organisations. Some organisations already offer accreditation as part of their educational remit. A couple of the venues also stated that this interest had arisen from looking at current gaps between the interest in the arts through an academic perspective and how venues can adapt their approach with diverse audiences in engaging with their spaces.

Embedding the Access to Arts programme within the venues will open up opportunities for planned programming regarding exhibitions and performances, and enhance the delivery of workshops that each of the education departments' offer. A number of the venues are interested in offering a regular programme in order to create longer term benefits for participants. For example, Nottingham Contemporary has suggested that if the groups were planned in advance they might be able to take advantage of opportunities to engage in workshops with high profile artists and shows such as the British Art Show.

Evidence from venues demonstrated that there was a need for **continuity** in developing longer-term relationships with groups. Venues were clear that engaging people more often would enhance coherent and active participation. This could further support participants in signposting opportunities between agencies and activities beyond the programme. Venues said that if groups were more established, this would enable them to develop strategies that would engage participants and better respond to their needs.

Several participants have stated that they would be interested in **voluntary** opportunities. In response to this, some of the venues have said that they may be

able to offer volunteer opportunities for participants in the longer term. Double Impact, Framework and City Arts already offer opportunities for people and would also be able to support voluntary opportunities for participants interested in specific areas of work.

In order for the partnership to be more formally developed, several of the venues recommended that there was a consistent approach to **evaluation** and that a framework could be devised that is consistent across the programme. Venues felt that if they had access to evaluation outcomes during the programme, this might strengthen their own commitment, especially if this could be disseminated to the leaders of their organisations. Evidence could substantially contribute to an organisation's social outcomes and validity as a service in achieving larger agendas such as social cohesion. The participants learning outcomes were important to organisations although some felt that if evaluation was an additional requirement, capacity to achieve this would be an issue. It was widely agreed that evaluation inevitably informs learning and ultimately the sustainability of the programme.

All these suggestions point towards the need for a sustained programme of longer duration, ideally between 2-5 years, to provide the necessary scope for recommendations to be embedded and to flourish, thus maximising the benefits to participants and venues of their engagement in the programme.

7.2 Future Partnership Development

Feedback from the research and subsequent meetings with venues has confirmed the commitment to work towards partnership development. Some partners were not sure if they could commit to a consortium approach due to the structure of their organisations. It was suggested that a more informal network would provide the dialogue necessary for the creation of new opportunities.

In relation to wider government agendas, the Access to Arts programme is a good model that links policies with provision. With political changes and new priorities in health, including the 'users' voice, this programme could move towards self directed services and health based approaches. Nottingham Castle, Lakeside, City Arts, Framework and Double Impact have already developed partnerships and areas of work within this sector. Opportunities to create links with high profile arts events and performances could be fostered through a partnership approach. The Playhouse also felt that their connections with further and higher education could help develop accreditation for participants and assist in the development of research around social inclusion.

Whilst recognising that potential partnerships with arts venues, service providers and education institutions could be extensive, the venues felt that the work should be more focused with regards to the design of a proposal and plans for the future. Future discussion around partnership working and the potential for developing a consortium approach would require research of different models and structures that could incorporate each organisation, their different needs and contributions. This process is still ongoing as it aims to secure the sustainability of the programme.

8. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the partners and people who have contributed to the compiling of this report. We would also like to thank the participants of Access to Arts who have contributed so much through consultation, the User Forum and Steering Group. A separate evaluation has been documented regarding the participants' experience of the project. All of this information aims to inform the future development of the project. Thank you to at City Arts who has helped with interviews and compiling evaluation data.

Project team

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Allie Spencer

Nottingham Contemporary

Bo Olawoye and associate artists

New Art Exchange

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The Royal Centre

David Longford

Wollaton Hall

The Art Organisation

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Visiting workshop artists

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Evaluation

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1

Profile of Venues

With the subsequent development of the programme (2010), Access to Arts has established a relationship with seven leading arts organisations in the city to support the programme by providing regular opportunities for participants to experience a wide range of cultural offers, engage with and visit different venues.

Nottingham Contemporary opened in November 2009 and is an international art centre consisting of four galleries, an auditorium, education space and study centre, café bar and shop. Nottingham Contemporary will stage four or five major exhibitions a year, bringing the work of many of the world's most important and exciting contemporary artists to Nottingham. The artistic, social philosophical and political ideas raised by the exhibitions will be explored through their educational programme and events.

The New Art Exchange was formed as a partnership between APNA Arts and EMACA Visual Arts. APNA Arts focused on South Asian arts and played a key role in the development of the Nottingham Mela. In 2008 The New Art Exchange was born and now offers a rich tapestry of styles, contexts and culturally diverse identities with new commissions, partnership working, touring shows and the creation of a new experimental space. The venue consists of a Main gallery, mezzanine gallery and central gallery space, dance/performance space, education/meeting space and public café.

Broadway Cinema is Nottingham's leading independent cinema with four screens, café bar and restaurant, studios and offices for film and media companies. The arts centre provides a focus for people and communities to make, show and see a wide range of world cinema, video and new digital media. Broadway's education programme includes film introductions, talks and courses for anyone interested in learning more about cinema.

Lakeside Arts Centre is the University of Nottingham's public arts centre presenting a varied programme of music, dance, theatre, visual art and family events. Set in the grounds of the University's Highfields Park and boating lake the centre includes the Djanogoly Art Gallery, Recital Hall and Theatre, the Walker and Weston Gallery spaces as well as two cafes. Lakeside has an extensive and varied education programme hosting a range of workshops, summer programmes, lunchtime talks and recitals.

Nottingham City Museums and Galleries department of the City Council manage many of the city's historical buildings, collections, gardens and parklands. These include Nottingham Castle Museum and Gallery, Wollaton Hall and Newstead Abbey, with impressive permanent and temporary exhibitions of collections, artifacts, traditional and contemporary arts programmed across the sites. The department has a strong focus on learning and access with an extensive education programme, connecting local community to the museums and galleries as centres for lifelong learning.

Nottingham Playhouse is the region's leading repertory theatre programming a host of performances including plays, comedy, dance and music. The Playhouse has a strong tradition of commissioning new works both in the form of original writing and more recently in the form of traditional pantomimes written and produced by former artistic director Kenneth Alan Taylor.

Opened in 2006 **The Art Organisation** at 21 Station Street is a relatively new art space for the city. The venue offers opportunities for arts to the community, classes, workshops, artist studios, exhibitions and the promotion of local and national artists and their artwork. Facilities include traditional darkroom printing, photography, screen-printing, textiles and sewing and a tea bar hosting exhibitions and art related events. Redevelopment has started on three further buildings on Station Street to house further creative opportunities and spaces.

Appendix 2

The Partner Organisations

Double Impact

Double Impact is a non-statutory drugs and alcohol agency founded in 1997 and recognised by Nottingham Crime and Drug Partnership as the main after-care treatment provider in the city. Double Impact provides a personalised support service to people with problematic substance use, which includes access to support from key workers, housing advice, education, personal development, vocational and non-vocational training and health related interventions. Since 2004, arts have been a key element in Double Impact's programme. For more information about Double Impact visit www.doubleimpact.org.uk and www.doubleimpactarts.org.uk.

Framework

Framework is Nottinghamshire's leading provider of housing, support, training, care and resettlement services to homeless and vulnerable people. Framework is a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and a registered social landlord. Framework also provides learning delivery and information, advice and guidance to its service user. These come under the umbrella name of 'The Academy'. The Academy was established early in 2005 to deliver learning programmes with a contract co-financed by Nottinghamshire Learning & Skills Council and the European Social Fund. The contract is to provide learning programmes for 'hard to reach' individuals, including homeless people and those vulnerable to mental health, alcohol and substance misuse and related problems. Participants in the programme were referred from this part of the service. For more information about Framework visit www.frameworkha.org

City Arts

City Arts is an innovative participatory arts organisation based in Nottingham and formed in 1997 from Nottingham Community Arts (established in 1974). The organisation delivers high quality arts opportunities within communities and focuses on:

- Developing core programmes of work that are community-led and partnership based, particularly work with young people at risk and arts and health programmes;
- Providing professional development and employment for artists working in community settings;
- Working in partnership to deliver initiatives that contribute to social inclusion;
- Adopting an inclusive approach to mainstreaming cultural diversity throughout the programme;
- Engaging in regional initiatives that promote the work of the participatory sector.

All of the projects are funded through vibrant partnerships with key organisations, including Arts Council England and Nottingham City Council. For more information about City Arts visit www.city-arts.org.uk

Appendix 3

Aims of the current programme

The overall aim of the project is to offer innovative, supported, informal learning opportunities for vulnerable people from 'hard to reach' groups, achieved through partnership between service providers and arts providers; and to examine structures and strategies for ongoing provision through research in action.

Achievements will include:

- enabling participants to develop their skills, knowledge and competence;
- facilitating a sense of community and reintegration into mainstream society;
- extending participants' horizons and ambitions;
- developing local partnership activity and examining structures and strategies for long term co-providing.

The informal adult learning infrastructure will be improved by:

- engaging local arts venues with vulnerable people from 'hard to reach' groups;
- innovative informal learning opportunities provided to vulnerable people from 'hard to reach' groups;
- partnerships between third sector organisations working in co-provision;
- a forum for informal learning/user groups to inform service providers and arts providers;
- visible activity in spaces for learning including social care venues, public arts venues, city public spaces and online sites;
- shared research findings which address partnership working in practice and policy issues.

Expected outcomes of this programme:

- increased creative, intellectual and social skills among participants, increased take up of learning and personal development opportunities and increased integration with the community;
- increased independent use of arts venues in the city by vulnerable people from 'hard to reach' groups;
- increased skills in building new audiences for arts providers;
- a public exhibition of work in the city centre;

- a city wide forum of participants (from informal learning/user groups) for support, exchange of learning and to inform service providers and arts providers;
- identified structures and strategies for partnerships to secure support and funding for ongoing activity.

Appendix 4

Venues – Start of Project

1. What are the objectives for your area of responsibility? How are these agreed?
2. Do you have an Access Officer in post? If yes, what is their role and remit?
3. How do you approach issues of Access, in the broadest sense, to your venue?
4. What are the barriers to access to your venue, in your opinion?
5. What does “successful Partnership working” mean to you?
6. What current examples of partnership projects, if any, do you have in which you are currently involved with?
7. How does participation in the project (Access to Arts) meet your targets for (audience engagement /social inclusion/access or other agenda's that your organisation may have?
8. What categories do you use for audience engagement and how are these broken down?

Venues – End of Project

1. To what extent do you think the project has been a success?
2. From your perspective, what measurements of success are you using to determine this?
3. To what extent have your expectations about the project been met?
4. How has the project met your desired outcomes?
5. What impact, if any, has your involvement in the project had on your organisation?
6. What have you learned as a result of your engagement in this project?
 - i. Your organisation/resources/objectives
 - ii. Partnership working
 - iii. Results of working with participants.
7. What do you feel is the legacy of this Access to arts project on:
 - a.the participants

b. your department/organisation

c. partnership working between Double Impact, Framework and City Arts

8. In what ways do you think the project could be improved? Please be as specific as you can.
9. Where in the project delivery do you feel your organisation would have benefited from additional support?
10. How can the communication links between the partners and your organisation be improved, for future projects?
11. How would you like to see the partnership between your organisation and the other partners develop in the future?
12. What other involvement would your organisation like to have to this project in the future?
13. What specific recommendations do you want to make?
 - a. for future partnership working
 - b. for other possible projects
14. What training needs, if any, do you identify are required for your staff, as a result of this project?
15. What other final comments/feedback would you like to make about the project?

Partners

1. In your experience, what are the greatest benefits to an/your organisation of partnership working?
2. What are your expectations of the project?
3. What do you anticipate gaining as a result of working in partnership on this project?
4. How will working in partnership on this project inform your future working practice?
5. What specific measurements/indicators will you use to determine the success of the project?

6. What are your desired outcomes for the project?
7. What value/benefit do you perceive your involvement in this project will have for your organisation?
8. How does the project “fit” with your organisational values and ethos?
9. What do you consider to be the most likely obstacles to success in this project?
10. What measures can the partnership put in place, do you think, to overcome these obstacles?
11. In what ways, specifically, do you think communication between the various partners can be improved upon for future partnership programmes?
12. What are the key objectives/themes for your organisation for the coming year/couple of years?
13. To what extent do you share “best practice”, knowledge and values with others in Nottingham/East Midlands/UK?
14. In working with vulnerable groups/people how important is awareness training for your staff? If yes, how do you think it can be achieved in a sustainable way?
15. In your view, is there a way in which participants can be effectively signposted between the partners involved in this programme ?
16. What other programmes do you run/intend to run which you see as being suitable for users/clients of City Arts, Double Impact and Framework?
17. In your view, how can the project be further developed to meet your organisation’s objectives (for audience engagement /social inclusivity etc)

Partners – Follow up

- 1.To what extent do you think the project has been a success?
- 2.What measurements of success are you using to determine this?
- 3.To what extent have your expectations about the project been met?
- 4.How has the project met your desired outcomes?
- 5.What impact, if any, has the project had on your organisation?

6. What have you learned about your organisation as a result of your participation in this project?
7. What have you learned about working in partnership with other agencies in delivering this project?
8. What do you feel is the legacy of this project on:
 - a. the participants

 - b. your department/organisation
 - c. partnership working between Double Impact, Framework and City Arts
9. In what ways do you think the project could be improved? Please be as specific as you can.
10. How have your participants/clients benefited from engagement in the project?
11. Examples of specific feedback available?
12. Where in the project delivery do you feel your organisation would have benefited from additional support?
13. To what extent do you think that the project timescales were realistic?
14. How can the communication links between the partners be improved, for future projects
15. How would you like to see the partnership develop in the future?
16. How would you like to see the project develop in the future?
17. What specific recommendations do you want to make?
 - c. for future partnership working
 - d. for other possible projects
18. What other final personal comments/feedback would you like to make about the project?

Appendix 5

Aims of the evaluation

This research sets out to identify the partnership structures and processes needed to secure long-term support for vulnerable people to access cultural facilities in Nottingham as an element of social inclusion and personal development.

Objectives

Partnership working

- To examine partnership structures and strategies to support long term co-providing;
- Identifying structures and strategies for partnerships to secure funding for ongoing activity, including the User Group Forum;
- To examine what common themes arise that support successful partnerships working;
- To explore shared resources and the development of capacity building;
- Explore the challenges that small projects have in securing funding whilst delivering activity;
- Explore how learning takes place and is exchanged between organisations and stakeholders, enabling increased co-operation and improved provision in the future;
- Outlining recommendations for the future development of a sustainable programme of work.