

Equal access to the arts for children and young people with disabilities

A briefing to support press, speakers and policy teams

Sharon Hodgson MP hosts the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto reception at the House of Commons on the 22nd of January 2019.

The event is supported by nasen working with Every Child Should and the manifesto's authors Paul Morrow and Rachel Christophides.

The reception celebrates the 100th signatory to the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto, considers findings of the work so far and makes a call for the Arts Council to place true disability access at the core of their 2020-2030 Strategy.

Too often children and young people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, are excluded from full access to culture and arts. The general demise in access to the arts – both in school and in school visits to arts settings - compounds this exclusion.

The Cultural Inclusion Manifesto is a set of shared beliefs which aim to both drive and guide inclusive practice in the fields of education, art and culture. Signatories affirm their commitment to these beliefs as well as to collaborative working across sectors to encourage and inform the inclusion of disabled children and young people in artistic and cultural experiences.

The manifesto now has over **100** signatories from a range of stakeholders including arts and culture organisations, schools, disability charities, disabled artists, MPs, Peers, London Assembly Members, disabled children and their families.

What are we asking for?

1. For individuals and organisations to sign the Manifesto

The manifesto is a pledge of support, but it is also an emerging community of practice committed to improving access to the arts. From the start of the manifesto just over a year ago, through to the launch at the Lyric Hammersmith in July and the first conference in October 2018, the manifesto has been a catalyst for new partnerships, conversations and approaches. The volume of signatories demonstrates the traction that this cross-sector initiative has gained, acknowledging the need for greater collaboration that can lead to significant and meaningful shifts in both policy and practice.

The pledge can be signed here <https://culturalinclusion.uk/support> and individuals and organisations are supported to share their experiences, come to events and set up their own #culturalinclusion manifesto projects.

2. For the Arts Council to develop a specific cultural inclusion strategy around disability

The Arts Council is the key conduit for government funding for the arts. Over 2018-2022 the Arts Council have c£2billion of funding from across government to support great art and culture for everyone. They are currently developing their 2020-2030 strategy. Where Arts Council fund others tend to follow, and the research policies and positions of the Arts Council set the tone for the whole arts and cultural sector.

There are many areas of good inclusive practice across the arts, cultural and heritage sectors and we are capturing these through the culturalinclusion.uk website. But this needs to be the common experience for **everyone**.

We have heard – consistently – that disability inclusion is sporadic and over reliant on both individuals and the efforts of organisations with disability at their core. In many arts and cultural strategies disability is often the least developed in terms of approaches to access and inclusion. For example, the (London) Mayor’s Cultural Strategy has many strengths but only mentions disability a handful of times and 3 of these are in the glossary. Reports on art cuts in schools rarely focus on the impact in special schools. Programmes on careers in the art and cultural sectors rarely focus on career pathways for young adults with significant learning difficulties.

A holistic Arts Council Strategy on disability should:

- Be developed with disabled children and young people and their families: with a particular focus on those with severe and complex learning disabilities or physical impairments.
- Consider the access of children and young people to arts, culture and heritage as:
 - **students of arts and culture:** with access to high quality teaching and learning delivered by qualified staff and experts in both the arts and education,
 - **consumers and audience:** both through physical settings but also through digital and other mediums,
 - **makers of arts and culture:** not just programmes for emerging talent but a true entitlement for all children and young people with disabilities to have the chance to create and perform,
 - **the subjects of arts and culture:** their stories and lives told truly - and in the round,
 - **members of the arts workforce:** exploring routes for volunteering, work placements and qualifications that reflect a broad range of ability and the inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities, in governance at every level.
- Develop pathways that support children and young people with significant disabilities from early years to 25 (and into adult provision) providing a progressive range of experiences.
- Develop the sector leadership to deliver the strategy with a particular focus on helping settings review their own practice in inclusion and developing plans to address.
- Consider both the investment plan to implement the strategy but also whether grant making could be linked to an organisation’s disability inclusion review and action.

Such a strategy could usefully draw on existing proposals and work, including:

- Andrew Miller: Disability Champion for Arts and Culture on careers in the arts https://culturalinclusion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Andrew-Miller_s-speech-for-Cultural-Inclusion-Conference.pdf
- Stephen Unwin: Director, Writer and Teacher on a manifesto for writing about young people with learning disabilities <http://www.stephenunwin.uk/thoughts-and-provocations/2018/10/21/writing-about-people-with-learning-disabilities-a-manifesto>
- VocalEyes: Recommendations in State of Access to Museums 2018 developed in partnership with Autism in Museums and Stagertext <https://culturalinclusion.uk/link/state-of-museum-access-2018/>
- NASEN's work on Whole School SEND developing a model for schools to review their inclusion and practice around children and young people with disabilities <https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/>
- The work of A New Direction connecting Special Schools with an expertise in arts and culture to both support each other and to work with arts and cultural organisations <https://www.anewdirection.org.uk/what-we-do/schools/send-network>

It should be clear that there is some remarkable work happening to include children and young people in culture and the arts. And there are great role models of disabled artists and of young people who are moving beyond inclusion into disrupting and redefining the arts and culture context.

But there are still too many children and young people, particularly with severe and complex needs, whose access is limited.

We have a rare opportunity to build on the Arts Council's vision of arts for everyone to make a step change in #culturalinclusion.

Notes:

Website: culturalinclusion.uk

Email (general enquiries): info@culturalinclusion.uk

Twitter: #culturalinclusion

Press enquiries: Tel 07732 158569 or email anita@everychildshould.uk

For more on nasen see nasen.org.uk

For more on Every Child Should see everychildshould.uk

The event has been funded with support from James Bagley CEO of 31 Dover.

Speakers on the evening will be:

Sharon Hodgson MP. Sharon is the Labour MP for Washington and Sunderland West, having first been elected as an MP in 2005. Sharon is currently the Shadow Minister for Public Health and the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Art, Craft and Design in Education, Dyslexia and SpLD. Sharon has been a champion of #culturalinclusion from its beginning and was the first person to sign up to the Manifesto.

Dr Adam Boddison. Adam is the Chief Executive for nasen (National Association of Special Educational Needs) which is a charity supporting thousands of practitioners by providing relevant information, training and resources to enable school staff to meet all pupils' needs. Prior to this, Adam held a number of senior education roles including Director of the Centre for Professional Education at the University of Warwick, Academic Principal for IGGY (an educational social network for gifted teenagers) and West Midlands Area Coordinator for the Further Mathematics Support Programme. In addition to a range of teaching and leadership posts in both primary and secondary schools, Adam has a portfolio of education research and international education projects.

Anita Kerwin-Nye. Anita is the Founder of Every Child Should and a social entrepreneur who has built new entities from scratch and supported many other organisations – particularly those working in or between schools and the charity sector to improve outcomes for children and young people. Anita has particular interest and expertise in bringing together new collaborations, breaking down traditional barriers and increasing impact for all involved. Anita has worked with young people with special needs throughout her career, from outdoor education, teaching and youth work to founding The Communication Trust and creating and leading the consortium which delivered the Government's workforce development programme.

Paul Morrow. Paul is the author of the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto. He has spent 12 years working in SEND education, teaching art at Westminster Special schools. He has a MA in Art and Design in Education and a Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education from the Institute of Education. Paul has also worked as a consultant to the Royal Academy of Art and delivered workshops for the Arts and special Educational Needs and Disabilities Conference at the Museum of London. Paul is a practicing artist.

Attendees will also hear from a young person with disabilities on what cultural inclusion means to them.

Background statistics on #culturalinclusion and why the Manifesto is Needed

The people and organisations behind #culturalinclusion passionately believe in the power of arts and culture to transform lives and make a unique and invaluable contribution to the education, health and wellbeing of disabled children and young people. We want disabled children and young people to have equal access to a broad range of artistic and cultural experiences and opportunities. Sadly, this is currently not the case.

Statistics from the **Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)** demonstrate that:

- There is a significant difference between the proportion of children with and without a limiting disability who had visited a heritage site in the 5-10 age bracket (**53.1%** and **71.5%** respectively).
- Nondisabled children and young people aged 11-15 are **twice** as likely to visit a museum with their school than their disabled peers.

Similarly, research by the **Arts Council** identified the barriers that exist for disabled children and young people:

- **Physical access** - **42%** of venues in one study reporting that visually impaired people could access little of their collections (Shape Arts 2013).
- **Accessible information** - **nearly half** of learning disabled young people rely on parents, carers or schools for information about events and activities (Mencap 2009).
- **Poor accessibility on arts websites** - including buying tickets for cultural events (Consilium 2014).
- **Transport** – availability, accessibility, practicality and cost.
- **Support to attend arts** - especially outside of school hours (Mencap 2009).
- **Concerns from disabled people** - most learning disabled young people prefer inclusive sessions but have concerns about harassment, and whether they would “fit in” or be welcome. Making clear the level and pace of activity so people can judge whether it would be right for them is also important (Mencap 2009)

The report also identifies the challenges faced by artistic and cultural organisations and venues in making their offer accessible for disabled children and young people:

- A lack of understanding of how best to adapt or make accessible their venues and programme to include disabled people.
- A need for training in “customer care” and disability awareness to increase service levels and confidence in working with disabled children and young people.
- An inability to invest time and money into improving the accessibility of websites.
- A lack of budgeting for access provision.

The scope of the challenge is confirmed in the recently released **London Mayor’s Cultural Strategy** which points out that **almost a third** of UK museums provide no access information on their websites for disabled people planning a visit, and many theatres fail to reach audiences with disabilities.

The inequalities in access to artistic and cultural activities between disabled and non-disabled children and young people has been compounded by recent cuts in government funding and the increased emphasis on core academic subjects. A **BBC** survey of 1,200 secondary schools found that **nine out of every 10** had cut back on lesson time, staff or facilities in at least one creative arts subject.

Research conducted by Warwick University reveals that there has been a significant decline in the number of state schools offering arts subjects taught by specialist teachers. The report, the **Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Values**, found that between 2003 and 2013 there was a **50%** drop in GCSE entries for design and technology, **23%** for drama and **25%** for other craft-related subjects. Additionally, research from the **Education Policy Institute** has shown a decline in the proportion of pupils taking at least one arts subject at GCSE level. In 2016 it reached **53.5%**, the lowest level for a decade.

We believe inclusion and participation in artistic and cultural experiences are a human right. However, the Warwick Commission concluded that it is also essential to ensuring that we are focusing on the current and future needs of the cultural and creative industries as well as the broader need for innovation and growth in the UK. John Kampfner, from the **Creative Industries Federation**, said it was worrying that some schools were reporting that art subjects were now seen as softer options:

"Arts provision should also be seen as a core subject. There's nothing soft about subjects that create the talent that creates the fastest growing sector of our economy."

In addition to the educational value of inclusion and participation in the arts, and the contribution it makes to preparing our children and young people to meet the future needs of the UK economy, it also has an enormous impact of health and wellbeing. **The London Mayor's Cultural Strategy** notes:

"There is mounting evidence, commissioned by both arts and health bodies, that creativity and the arts make a significant difference to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. Culture can play a role within clinical settings and in the wider community. It can help people maintain good health and wellbeing or recover from illness."

The strategy refers to an arts-on-prescription project which led to a **37%** drop in GP consultation rates and a **27%** reduction in hospital admissions. This was estimated to save the NHS **£216** per patient.

The link between participation in the arts and improved health outcomes has long been recognised. Over a decade ago research conducted by the **Department of Health** found that:

- Arts and health are, and should be firmly recognised as being, integral to health, healthcare provision and healthcare environments, including supporting staff.
- Arts and health initiatives are delivering real and measurable benefits across a wide range of priority areas for health and can enable the Department and NHS to contribute to key wider Government initiatives.
- There is a wealth of good practice and a substantial evidence base.

More recently a review of the impact of arts on society, commissioned by the **Arts Council**, found:

- Those who attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost **60%** more likely to report good health compared to those that had not.
- Theatre goers were almost **25%** more likely to report good health.
- There is clear evidence that a higher frequency of engagement with arts and culture is generally associated with a higher level of subjective wellbeing.
- Engagement in structured arts and culture improves the cognitive abilities of children and young people.
- The use of arts, when delivered effectively, has the power to facilitate social interaction as well as ensuring that those in receipt of social care can pursue creative interests.
- Participation in dance has significant benefits for reducing loneliness and alleviating depression and anxiety for people in social care environments.

Last year the **All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing** conducted a review of the available evidence that arts and culture make an enormous contribution to improving health outcomes. They concluded:

“It is time to recognise the powerful contribution the arts can make to health and wellbeing. There are now many examples and much evidence of the beneficial impact they can have.”

Their report outlined three key messages:

- The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived.
- The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health.
- The arts can help save money in the health service and social care.

The Manifesto Supporters

The manifesto has (at 15th January 2019) 116 signatories from arts, culture and heritage organisations, politicians, disability organisations and people with disabilities and their families.

Supporters of the Manifesto include:

Long-standing members of parliament;

Sharon Hodgson MP. Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Art, Craft and Design in Education, Dyslexia and SpLD. *"I am passionate about the rights of disabled children and young people as well as a great believer in the power of arts and culture to make a real difference to their education, health and wellbeing. The Cultural Manifesto is an excellent initiative which offers strategic leadership across the sector by supporting and promoting the excellent inclusive practice that exists and encouraging others to put the needs of young people at the heart of their work."*

High profile arts, culture and heritage venues:

Royal Albert Hall. *"We, the Royal Albert Hall, commit to the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto because we fundamentally believe that all children and young people should have the right to access high quality arts and culture. Currently there is not equal access for children and young people with disabilities, and we are committed to working with partner organisations to address this across the arts sector. We recognise the power of arts and culture in supporting education, health and wellbeing for all young people. We believe that cultural organisations have the duty to reflect all of society, and we feel that the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto offers the opportunity to work strategically amongst a number of partners to ensure that we can do this to best effect."*

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; The Royal College of Music, and The National Gallery have also signed up to the manifesto.

And people who would benefit greatly from greater inclusive access to arts and culture for all:

Elly Chapple Mother to an exceptional child who is Deafblind and would love to be included. *"I support the manifesto because life is bigger than a classroom and shorter than you think. Because our time here should be broad, engaging, fun and full of life. And because every person has an equal right to this, every single person."*

View statements from all Manifesto supporters at: <https://culturalinclusion.uk/support>

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