Growing the Grassroots:
the contribution of the amateur arts to communities

Conference Report
18 October 2011
Cecil Sharp House, London

Sponsored by: Arts and Humanities Research Council
Organised by: Voluntary Arts, University of Exeter, Third Sector Research Centre and University of Glamorgan
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Sponsored by: Arts and Humanities Research Council
Organised by: Voluntary Arts, University of Exeter, Third Sector Research Centre and University of Glamorgan
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1. Key Messages

‘Growing the Grassroots’ was organised through a partnership between Voluntary Arts, the University of Exeter, the Third Sector Research Centre (University of Birmingham) and the University of Glamorgan. The event was sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and hosted by The English Folk Dance and Song Society at their home in Cecil Sharp House, London. The day’s activities centred around two key exercises: gathering participants’ experiences of the impact of amateur arts in communities; and developing practical ideas on how that impact could be measured. The value of the amateur arts and its contribution to communities was identified across five dimensions:

- Health and wellbeing: including reducing individual isolation, promoting positive physical and mental health, keeping fit, feeling good, reducing stress and enabling self expression.
- Local economy: sustaining community buildings through hiring space, generating income through events, the purchase or hire of materials and equipment, managing local assets, fundraising for local and international causes, and developing potential opportunities for employment in cultural industries.
- Cultural identity: building solidarity and pride, promoting community cohesion through linking different groups, developing understandings of cultural heritage, transferring skills across generations and promoting a sense of place and belonging.
- Participation: developing social networks, promoting volunteering and collaboration, building confidence and a sense of shared identity.
- Skills development: promoting the development of transferable skills between the voluntary arts and the work-place (and vice versa), enabling participants to develop new skills in a safe environment, promoting learning and employability in cultural and other industries.

In terms of developing tools for measuring the impact of these five dimensions more effectively, there was discussion on whether amateur arts groups would either want or need to quantify their contribution to communities; and the potential value of identifying the outcomes of their activities in terms of influencing policy and raising the profile of amateur arts. There was agreement that any tools which might be developed to help amateur arts groups ‘measure’ their contributions to community life should:

- be simple to use and draw on information groups already held – for example, income, expenditure, attendance at events and levels of participation within voluntary arts groups;
- use existing anecdotes about the effect of participation in amateur arts – for example on the physical and mental wellbeing of participants – into a collective narrative to show the importance of amateur arts to participants and communities;
- be of practical use to amateur arts groups and adaptable in terms of different audiences - for example, policy makers, venue owners, potential funders (whether statutory bodies or grant making trust) or as a means of encouraging participation and increasing audiences.
A summary of all the key words used throughout the day (with the largest being the most frequently used) is presented in the word cloud:

![Word Cloud Image]

2. Introduction

‘Growing the Grassroots’ was organised through a partnership between Voluntary Arts, the University of Exeter, the Third Sector Research Centre (University of Birmingham) and the University of Glamorgan. The event was sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and hosted by The English Folk Dance and Song Society at their home in Cecil Sharp House, London.

The purpose of the day was to:

- present the initial findings of a scoping study, undertaken by the above partners, into the role of grassroots/amateur arts groups in communities;
- explore the scoping study in more detail and gather the participant experiences of the impact of amateur arts;
- develop ideas for measuring the impact of amateur arts groups in communities;
- celebrate the amateur arts through performances and presentations.
The conference programme consisted of:

- opening remarks from Ed Vaizey – MP: Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries;
- a presentation of the findings from the key scoping by Jenny Phillimore (Third Sector Research Centre) and Jane Milling (University of Birmingham);
- a workshop session examining the impact of the amateur arts in terms of health and wellbeing, local economies, participation, cultural identity, skills and knowledge;
- presentations by Quilts 4 London on their Cultural Olympiad project, and by the Royal Shakespeare Company on the Open Stages amateur theatre project;
- performances by the Cecil Sharp Community Choir and Dance Around the World;
- further workshop sessions exploring what impact information amateur arts groups currently keep and how/whether this could be enhanced to demonstrate impact more effectively;
- a final plenary to identify next steps arising from both the initial scoping study and the Growing the Grassroots event.

As organisers of the Growing the Grassroots event, we would like to thank all the participants – both as performers and contributors. Your ideas form the basis for the current report and will inform future research into the role amateur arts play in community life.
3. Growing the Grassroots: opening remarks

Ed Vaizey - MP: Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries

Firstly, may I thank the Voluntary Arts (VA) for inviting me here today, and indeed thank everybody for coming along. As I’ve said many times before – to the point where you might be quite tired of hearing it - the voluntary arts sector is the very embodiment of the Big Society idea, so it’s always good to see Robin Simpson (VA) and others in the field, to hear what the sector is up to.

And it’s also the reason why I’m very pleased to be here today to discuss the initial findings of this report. The report [scoping study] – as I’m sure you’re aware – is the result of the work that VA has been carrying out with the Third Sector Research Centre and other partners to look at the role of grassroots arts activity in communities. The project has received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Connected Communities programme, so I’d like to express my thanks to them for the support they’ve given it. And, while we’re quickly running through the thank yous, I should of course mention our hosts who have provided the venue for this seminar.

In 2008 my Department, along with the Arts Council, decided to commission research to gain a clearer understanding of just what the scale of national voluntary and amateur arts activity truly was. The publication of that research- Our Creative Talent - gave an excellent insight into what was happening and where. In fact, it provided some pretty impressive stats in terms of just how many individuals were getting involved in voluntary arts. It revealed that there were more than 49,000 amateur arts groups in England with an estimated 5.9 million members. Then, add to that the further 3.5 million people volunteering as extras or helpers. Which isn’t bad going for a sector that had sometimes struggled to be noticed in terms of its influence.

So we know this is not about a few people dabbling here and there, but about a serious commitment by a considerable number of individuals. People who are involved in the voluntary arts come to it with a great deal of passion, with no financial reward. Within my constituency we have – among other things – the Wantage art group, the Wantage camera club and the Hanney book club. The civil servants in my Department run a book club, a choir and a creative writing club. And I’ve even heard rumours in parliament of a female tap dancing troupe named, rather brilliantly, The Division Belles.

The result of all the enthusiasm and commitment people put into these groups is often really terrific work. So given that their efforts and achievements are not surrounded by the award brouhaha often associated with the professional arts, I was delighted to attend the first Voluntary Arts Epic Awards
earlier in the year. Those Awards I felt, really provided an opportunity for hard working and dedicated people in the voluntary arts world to receive some well-deserved plaudits, and also to raise the profile of what they are doing.

I should also – very quickly at this juncture – plug the fact that the Department currently has a consultation out on Deregulating Entertainment. The aim of our proposed change is to remove a lot of the red tape around putting on live music and theatre and dance events. Which I’m sure everyone here will welcome, and I would encourage those of you that haven’t to feed in. At DCMS we recognise the importance of smaller local events, and the voluntary arts more widely, which is why we’re keen to push these changes through. But of course, if you want to win the argument about their importance, having statistics and research to back you up can be very useful.

One of the things I’ve learned is that civil servants love evidence. And if civil servants at my Department love evidence, then their counterparts at the Treasury have a slightly unhealthy relationship with it. Which is why any study in this area is to be welcomed.

The paper you’ll be discussing today marks the beginning of a process in researching the benefits of amateur arts to communities. The initial findings show, through worldwide research gathering, just where and how the amateur and voluntary arts can make a difference. I can sum up the key findings very briefly:

1. The voluntary arts impact on the individual, through such benefits as improved health and well-being, increased self-esteem and friendships.
2. They impact on the wider community - helping to provide a collective identity, improving areas in which people live and aiding social cohesion.
3. They impact on educational attainment, with some participants experiencing an increase in literacy, verbal, technical and communication skills. Participation can also broaden people’s cultural horizons and encourage experimentation and innovation.
4. They impact on the local and wider economy, for example through people coming to local areas to attend voluntary arts events and the purchase from local businesses of materials and equipment.
5. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the amateur arts are about having fun. The study so far shows that many participants viewed their arts activity as much more than a hobby. Engagement gave them – or gives them - personal fulfilment. Amateur arts enables people to discover new sides to their personality, to be creative, take risks and try new mediums.

This morning is just the beginning of work in this area though. This seminar provides an opportunity for the study team involved to consult a range of you with an interest in the voluntary and amateur sector. They want to tap into your expertise. Today’s discussions will contribute towards the study team’s final report which I will look forward to reading at the end of his year. So the feedback you give today is really valuable. What is anticipated is that this study will lead to the development of a standard empirical approach so the impact of grassroots arts activities across the UK, and more widely can be properly measured. This will enable a more complete appreciation of why participating in the voluntary arts is so valuable.

I look forward to hearing from Robin the outcomes of those discussions and in seeing the final results of the research.
4. The role of grassroots arts activities in communities – summary of the key findings from the scoping study

The following section summarises the key findings from the grassroots arts scoping study and will form the basis of the executive summary for the final report to be submitted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council in December 2011. For a copy of the presentation on the day by Jane Milling and Jenny Phillimore click here.

This study is presented as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s ‘Connected Communities’ research theme. It’s a theme that is supported by the range of Research Councils in the areas of the arts, humanities, social sciences as well as the material sciences, new technology and medicine. The expressed purpose of the research that is being produced is to – ‘mobilise the potential for increasingly inter-connected, culturally diverse, communities to enhance participation, prosperity, sustainability, health and well-being by better connecting research, stakeholders and communities. In other words to provide information to help communities get better at what they do. We have been looking here at what voluntary arts organisations do, how they do it and what the benefits of the work are for individuals and communities.

At the core of the programme is research to understand the changing nature of communities, in their historical and cultural contexts, and the value of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life. This better understanding will also inform the development of more effective community based interventions to address key economic and social challenges. Engagement with communities at all stages of the research is a key feature of the work.

The programme seeks to connect research expertise and data relevant to communities from across the research base in order to develop a more holistic understanding of community life rather than tackling issues in isolation.

The whole process is challenging definitions of what communities are and how they work especially in the light cast by new technology and the potential for new community connectedness that this brings. The challenges are considerable - how do we maintain individual rights and aspirations and include them in a developing sense of community? Voluntary arts groups are part of the wider social connectedness of community whilst bringing their own, often determinedly idiosyncratic, activity to the ecology of arts work in Great Britain. The research, if it is to be of value, should help you understand what you do and perhaps even get better at it.

Voluntary arts organisations in Great Britain form a natural and very productive focus for a study like this. The activity is varied in content, the levels of voluntariness are high and the achievement of these organisations in artistic, creative, technical and other terms is significant. They bring groups of people together creating communities of shared interest and skill development.

The study, which is seen as a scoping study which will lead to further research activity, is produced jointly by researchers from the Universities of Exeter, Birmingham and Glamorgan in collaboration with
Voluntary Arts who have provided guidance and material help throughout the project and their involvement has led directly to this day of knowledge exchange and ideas.

A significant part of the research activity has been to explore and establish what is already widely known about the value of voluntary arts and to see where this points for the future.

Underpinning the commission is a strong body of reported belief that arts activity, grounded in community participation, contributes significantly to the wider objectives of government, local authorities and communities themselves in developing the capacity of our civil society. This study has intended to evaluate such general beliefs by developing rigorous research evidence derived from a research methodology, which engaged directly with the beneficiaries of such activities in the community. The participatory part of the project is represented in this meeting at which we intend to discover more about your own views of the benefits of participation in the voluntary arts. You are the experts in the area.

We have produced an overview and analysis of available and relevant evidence, about the voluntary arts sector. A study of this kind derives enormous benefit from work that has been conducted elsewhere and an important element of the methodology is a review of current literature. International evidence on the impact of arts-based activities on the maintenance and regeneration has been examined and is included in the report. The overwhelming conclusion from that body of literature is that arts based practice does indeed make a very significant and positive contribution to the development of the attributes of civil society. Civil Society refers to the arena of un-coerced activity around shared interests purposes and values.

It's difficult to separate reports, surveys and other information that deal with the voluntary arts sector from other arts sectors with a base in community, these include of course, professionally-led community arts activity. The voluntary arts sector supports locally based cultural activity which largely pre-dates the ‘instrumental’ interventions of the community arts movement, arts and health, arts and regeneration and other self-conscious arts activity that takes place in social contexts. In this sense the voluntary arts lead the participatory arts in Great Britain.

The following areas briefly identify the major issues emerging from the literature review and place them in the wider context of the principle social policy areas associated with the process.

**Social Impact - personal and community development**

Participation in cultural and sporting activities has been shown to result in gaining new skills, improving informal and formal learning, increasing self-confidence, self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth, improving or creating social networks, enhancing quality of life, promoting social cohesion, personal and community empowerment, improving personal and local image, identifying and creating a sense of well-being. For example, for ethnic minority groups, all of the above personal and social aspects can occur, and, in addition, participation in cultural activities relating to their own culture can result in an enhanced sense of pride within, and ‘empowerment’ of, the community. For disabled people, participation can reduce isolation, increase social networks and enhance quality of life. The social connectednesses provided by voluntary arts activity can bring significant health benefits to older participants.
Education

Robust and longitudinal research studies have shown that there is an association between cultural possessions in the home/culture, in family background and educational performance; that there is a link between cultural participation and increased literacy and that participation in music and visual arts is linked to being above average in reading, maths and behaviour.

It is believed by educators that arts activities and creativity in education have a positive educational impact on the majority of pupils.

Participation in arts education can lead to not only the development of arts and knowledge skills, but to increased confidence and the development of communication skills, an understanding of diversity and transferable skills for future employment.

Various quantitative research projects have provided information on the level and extent of participation by the general population in culture, the arts and sport. Such studies have shown that certain groups are under-represented in participation in the arts. These groups include the disabled, the elderly, and demographic groups in the lower economic range.

The gaps in knowledge

The study has revealed many gaps in the available information about the voluntary arts sector and these gaps point to further work that needs to be undertaken. The gaps include:

- Data collection: research on participation (and therefore non-participation), and views and attitudes to culture needs to be carried out on a large-scale, consistent basis, so that information can be disaggregated at least to local authority level.
- Longitudinal studies: very few longitudinal studies are available to inform the assessment of the social and economic impact of cultural and sports initiatives, programmes and major events over the medium to long-term. There is a need to measure beyond the immediate social and economic impact of voluntary cultural initiatives, programmes and activity.
- Under-represented groups: more research needs to be carried out, particularly at a national level on attitudes held and behavioural reasons behind non-participation by some groups in cultural activities; and guidance for the cultural agencies on how to promote inclusion can be drawn from examples of good practice.
- Well-being and quality of life: more research should be undertaken on the definition, analysis and measurement of the concepts of ‘well-being’ and ‘quality of life’, as often they are cited as the outcomes of participation in arts, culture activities.
- Arts and health: there is a need for a more formal outcome evaluation of the role of arts in health, with many projects being too small-scale for rigorous analysis; there is also a need, where appropriate, for the social and economic impact of the benefits of arts interventions in healthcare to be assessed, with financial savings to the National Health Service demonstrated by economically evaluating the beneficial impact to patients’ health.
- Employment: there has been little research or evaluation of projects or programmes designed to increase participation in the arts and culture, and how these impact on future employment; research has demonstrated that participation in arts activities at school can develop transferable
skills for the workplace, but there is little evidence on the actual employment effect and no work at all directly with voluntary arts organisations.

- Art for its own sake: there is a need for research on the social impact of art itself. Research on the intrinsic nature of art and its capacity to provide meaning to different individuals and different cultures would assist art providers to better understand what art means to target audiences and perhaps encourage more participation and attendance.

- Monitoring and evaluation: various evaluation toolkits are made available by certain organisations; however, there is a clear gap in the availability of a consistent, common evaluation framework which can be used by all sectors to evaluate programmes and initiatives.

The future
The workshops convened at the Growing the Grass Roots event on the 18 October 2011 provided us with an opportunity to explore how the gaps in information could be filled. We plan to incorporate the ideas that emerge into our final report which will be available on the Voluntary Arts and the Third Sector Research Centre websites. We are also bidding for further funds that will enable us to develop methods to collect robust and reliable data about the voluntary arts sector.
5. The benefits and impact of amateur arts in communities (workshop)

This workshop took the form of a ‘World Café’. Participants worked in, and could move between, groups to address the question of what difference grassroots arts organisations made in communities in terms of:

- health and wellbeing;
- local economy;
- cultural identity;
- participation;
- skills and knowledge.

The key points from each discussion group are recorded in this section of the conference report. Participants were also asked, using post-its, to identify up to five words they associated with the amateur arts. These are represented in the word cloud below.
Group 1: What difference do grass roots arts groups/activities make for health and wellbeing?

- Singing is well known to impact on physical health, particularly pulmonary health.

- Amateur arts is all about creating positive human experiences. Joy is fundamental to well-being. Amateur arts is fun and enjoyment rather than work. It’s about being “in the flow”, distracted or removed from everyday lives and problems.

- Art enables people to externalise their problems – they express themselves and feel better as a result. People who just sit in front of the TV are more likely to internalise their problems.

- Being stimulated to perform or create, particularly in a group, reduces isolation.

- Artists say “it’s cheaper than therapy” but it’s better too because therapy focuses a person on their problems, its inherently negative, whereas art is all about positivity, creating, doing.....

- Art is the closest thing you can get to a religious experience in a secular society.

- Amateur arts enables “quiet communication”, non verbal sharing, entry to a different life (albeit briefly) and membership of an unspoken community. It takes people beyond self to “a different and special place”.

- People use it to cope with bereavement. It enables them to feel a sense of belonging and to enjoy friendship even after most trying experiences. Group amateur arts is about togetherness.

- Love is an inherent part of amateur arts. Artists love what they do and the love they feel spills over to fellow man (sic).

- Amateur arts is refreshing, renewing, endorphin releasing. The enjoyment makes you feel better physically and mentally. You release endorphins. You can feel that your blood pressure drops after a stressful day.

- Amateur arts provides a safe space for young people to mature. Art is an intermediary between adolescence and adulthood. Adults in that setting can be role models. In the safe haven of an arts group YP can grow, develop and become more confident. Its more positive and supportive than sport. Fewer YP are disenfranchised by art.

- Evidence from projects like Key Changes (Islington) that art can empower people with mental health problems to take control over their lives.

- The act of creating is valuable – you make something that wasn’t there before (even if it’s a song). If you are pleased it makes you feel good.
• The flip side is that you may **feel frustrated** or even depressed if you strive to do something and can’t. How you feel depends on the level of support available in your group and whether groups are competitive or exclusionary.

• Art is good for physical health. Some GPs prescribe it. Quantitative work is needed to calculate whether **the number of GP visits are reduced** after attending amateur arts groups.

• **Being in the audience** can have a profound effect on individuals and groups.

• An elderly man rarely interacted after moving into a care home. When taken to a WWII music event he **reconnected** with his earlier life, it evoked his past and he was able to sing. A performance can make you nostalgic. Can make you emotional, may reduce isolation. May offer an opportunity for emotional release.

• Others have noted how severely autistic children became “bright and interested” when absorbed in the spectacle of a period dance performance. The music and colours, probably the rhythm **stimulated**. They came out of themselves and started to move.

• Dancing **keeps you fit**. Some dancing, i.e. social dance, you can do regardless of age.

• Can be a spur to **lose weight**, to change unhealthy habits, if the dynamics and trust are right.

• The opportunity for physical expression, self-expression and the emotional content of the music make you **feel good**.

• **Looking wonderful**, feeling beautiful or observing something beautiful make you feel good.

• Doing something you love, feeling “the completeness of the moment”. **Living in the moment** away from all your worries.

• Amateur arts creates collective memories that are **humanising** and promote societal well-being.

• Workplace choirs and amateur dramatics **de-stresses** in a work environment.

• Little things like beads can connect people. They fascinate, are beautiful and have global appeal.

• There is pleasure associated with embellishment and adornment – makes you feel good, **happy**.

• **Craft enables self expression**. It’s a transitional mechanism.

• The product is important, takes care and excellence. You need to be dextrous.

• **It’s tactile**. Textures are real. They make you feel vital, good, and are a reaction to the virtual world.

• Making makes you feel **powerful**, it feels good to create, to innovate.

• There are **negative sides** to amateur arts. Important to raise health and welfare issues via networks.

• Performance in small rooms causes ear damage. Fumes from paints can cause respiratory problems. Work in small scale can impact on eye sight. It’s important to be aware of the **risks** and what you can do to mitigate them.
Group 2: What difference do grass roots arts groups/activities make for the local economy?

- It’s important to capture economic impact to influence policy.
- People involved in voluntary arts don’t think about its contribution to economies: does that make it more effective?
- What is the role of the voluntary arts in asset transfer? Room hire in village halls and community centres etc as vital for sustaining community assets.
- Voluntary arts recycle money within communities – purchase of materials, room hire etc.
- Voluntary arts contribute to the economy as producers, consumers, facilitators:
  - The materials and spaces used all contribute to local economies and the supply chain.
  - Voluntary arts as an integrated economy: it cuts across different sectors of production: from dance ware in a sports shop to beads.
  - Many publishers rely on voluntary arts for their survival (play scripts, sheet music etc. and then there are the royalties to artist.
  - Cost of travelling to events/rehearsals etc (car, public transport) contributes to the economy – but what about the carbon footprint?
- Voluntary arts not valued in terms of their contribution to the creative industries.
- Arts activities can ‘keep people going’ in mundane or stressful jobs. Something to look forward to makes people more productive in the workplace.
- Youth voluntary arts as a way into employment.
- Linking skills in the workplace with voluntary arts activity and vice versa – transferable skills needed in the economy.
- Important role in fundraising for local causes. There is also an international element to this – example of an art group raising money to support an orphanage in Armenia.
- Participation in voluntary arts helps people be healthier: reduced costs to the NHS.
- People can move on from voluntary arts: earn part of their income from arts based activity: establishing social enterprises, self employment and portfolio working as a growing part of the economy.
- Cross over between voluntary arts and hiring in professionals (e.g. conductors).
- Very local voluntary arts can be crucial in rural communities: too far/expensive to travel to professional productions.
- Can the voluntary arts contribute to quality of life indicators: gross national happiness.


Group 3: What difference do grass roots arts groups/activities make for cultural identity?

- Cultural Identity
  - Cultural identity can operate at the **local, national and international** level.
  - Culture can **travel** – international diasporas take with them and perhaps ossify – Scottish dancing in South Africa may be less open to innovation by expatriate group than in Scotland.
  - Activities of amateur groups **make connections** within the group, then connect to other worlds of practitioners from the local to the regional to national and beyond. Participation in this way makes the artistic activity part of the identity of the participants – a two-way street.
  - We forget the **rich complex cultures** of Britain – the wassail, mumming, cider-pressing, willow industry, also high culture – a shared passion for British music, as much as folk arts.
  - Many of the forms that are part of British cultural identity now were first European traditions or **international traditions**, the traffic has been both ways – the quadrille – or types of quilting.
  - Amateur arts groups are committed to maintaining, uncovering and **extending cultural traditions**. The mumming in Somerset or Herefordshire is different now, takes cognisance of contemporary issues, but still bound to original form; morris is differently perceived to early dance – baroque, quadrille etc.
  - Many amateur groups – particularly umbrella groups – are committed to research of cultural identity and the art form – links to academics, a source and resource of historic knowledge as well as praxis.
  - **Buildings and resources** are central to the identity of many groups – Cecil Sharp House offers mixed cultural activity (Jewish and Balkan interests)
  - Buildings can establish **sense of place** and centre from which to do outreach, particularly for Little Theatres.
  - Artistic identity can become **professional identity** – basket weavers can make a small living, through practice, teaching courses, making, and sustains industry with variety of outcomes – willow as tool, but also charcoal industry for artists.
  - Amateur arts play an important role in developing **NEW cultural traditions** – through work with young people, both in passing on new skills to them and absorbing new skills from them ; folk goes electric, young people take charge.
  - **Technology** adds to and extends practices – opening new connections to the global, sending material digitally – Cecil Sharp House choir can circulate music on mp3 players to be learnt more quickly.
  - Technology also begins to **close the gap** between the amateur and the professional – amateurs can access and use industry standard equipment – lighting rigs in little theatres no longer large complex, dangerous grids, but ipad run LED mini-lights; video and film editing – “everyone can edit and distribute” creatively.
  - Recruitment can occur and **web-presence** is important, technology useful for keeping in touch but can lead to the expectation of organising more and become overload.
Also, one doesn’t need to know a member to become a member anymore. However, many people still likely to be recruited to participation through word of mouth and direct social contact, rather than through web pages says choir.

Umbrella organisations, like Early Dance Society, can use technology as a shared clearing house- offering services, linking groups, advertising gigs, mixing professional and amateur dancers, solving problems for enquirers and putting individuals in touch with related artists and practitioners in their locale.

Technology can extend communication between groups and within, one doesn’t need to be local anymore for Bead Society members to extend knowledge and connections, website development and service has aided expansion of what umbrella organisations can offer.

All activity remains subsidised by the volunteers, it is not profit driven, most often related to charity fund raising. Teams bond in volunteering for talks and functions, offering crucial admin, publicising flagship events, producing publications, and lobbying for art. The Umbrella body: advice good, direction bad - the membership lead the agenda.

Amateur work produces pride in cultural identity – is reaffirming – and shares culture and cultural traditions – Dance of the world offers dancers a chance to reveal something of who they are and their culture that is not usually aired, and to take pride in it and have others participate in it. Produces a respect for their cultural identity.

Amateur arts can pay attention to neglected heritages – popular dance of the world, only practiced by ordinary people or by women, not part of 'national cultural' export.

Amateur arts allows cultural identity to be diverse, local, community-based, not homogenised into professional structures or identities.

Amateur arts offers a richer, more complex texture of meaning for audiences, in the identity of participants – adds to the appreciation of the performance further.

- Creativity

Are amateur arts anti-innovative – Little Theatre thinks this is probably so, a safe repertoire in the larger groups – bigger venues can't afford to be nonstandard, while smaller groups still surprise with unusual repertoire. Small-scale can allow more radical work, but it reaches a smaller audience.

Amateur groups can be more creative – they are not told or hedged around by the Arts council, they don't have to liaise with large structures like the cultural Olympiad, which promises much but is so large it achieves very little.

In the professional world ideas could not be dreamt up and followed through so speedily – the Quilts4London project would never have happened through formal channels, it would have taken too much planning. Large scale projects like that are often perceived as too risky.

Opportunity for risk-taking – no funding agenda, fewer constraints, not a search for big audiences or mainstream 'success'.

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- Amateur groups can be more creative – they are not told or hedged around by the Arts council, they don't have to liaise with large structures like the cultural Olympiad, which promises much but is so large it achieves very little.

- In the professional world ideas could not be dreamt up and followed through so speedily – the Quilts4London project would never have happened through formal channels, it would have taken too much planning. Large scale projects like that are often perceived as too risky.

- Opportunity for risk-taking – no funding agenda, fewer constraints, not a search for big audiences or mainstream 'success'.

- Umbrella organisations, like Early Dance Society, can use technology as a shared clearing house- offering services, linking groups, advertising gigs, mixing professional and amateur dancers, solving problems for enquirers and putting individuals in touch with related artists and practitioners in their locale.

- Technology can extend communication between groups and within, one doesn’t need to be local anymore for Bead Society members to extend knowledge and connections, website development and service has aided expansion of what umbrella organisations can offer.

- All activity remains subsidised by the volunteers, it is not profit driven, most often related to charity fund raising. Teams bond in volunteering for talks and functions, offering crucial admin, publicising flagship events, producing publications, and lobbying for art. The Umbrella body: advice good, direction bad - the membership lead the agenda.

- Amateur work produces pride in cultural identity – is reaffirming – and shares culture and cultural traditions – Dance of the world offers dancers a chance to reveal something of who they are and their culture that is not usually aired, and to take pride in it and have others participate in it. Produces a respect for their cultural identity.

- Amateur arts can pay attention to neglected heritages – popular dance of the world, only practiced by ordinary people or by women, not part of 'national cultural' export.

- Amateur arts allows cultural identity to be diverse, local, community-based, not homogenised into professional structures or identities.

- Amateur arts offers a richer, more complex texture of meaning for audiences, in the identity of participants – adds to the appreciation of the performance further.

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- Opportunity for risk-taking – no funding agenda, fewer constraints, not a search for big audiences or mainstream 'success'.
Amateur arts offers **satisfaction through doing**. “I made this” – members are valued and acknowledge as creative and for their creative skills.

A disagreement between Quilters Guild and Basketweavers was illuminating: Weavers said core skills were crucial start to allow creative expression – one moved from **competence into creative innovation**, unless you know the tradition you can’t move into the non-traditional: Quilters said spontaneity is the liberation of the non-specialist, have a conceptual idea and let the skills follow to learn to aid achievement of creative ideas, so that creativity isn’t stifled by ‘how it’s done’. A dual understanding of creativity – one side sees creativity as functional making, other sees creativity as conceptual aesthetic. Core skills are needed for creativity, but a diversity of skills allows for freedom of expression.

**Mistakes** are not so significant as in the professional world, and are differently valued by the audience.

Amateur arts **unleashes creativity**, it passes on new skills that members felt ‘locked out of’ when they see them in the professional context – the professional musician or actor, or production.

Creativity – what is chosen and what is seen is part of the activity – the film societies link to community settings, and offer very diverse fare providing **new experiences** for audiences, and offering new audiences to developing film artists.

Local, regional identity and culture is sustained through amateur arts in local projects and the detailed texture of British culture.

**Group 4:** What difference do grass roots arts groups/activities make for **participants and participation**?

- **Direct Involvement**
  - Builds **interpersonal ties** and social connectedness. There is a sense in which volunteering improves health
  - Creating activity that **draws people together** who might otherwise not be
  - Engaged in constructive social activity.
  - Fostering **trust** between participants and thereby increasing a more general trust of others
  - Providing an experience of **collective efficacy** and civic engagement, which can
  - Spur participants to further collective action
  - Arts events may be a source of **pride** for residents (participants and non- participants alike) in their community, increasing their sense of connection to that community.
  - Providing an experience for participants to **learn** technical and interpersonal skills important for collective organising
  - Increasing the scope of individuals’ **social networks**
  - Providing an experience for the organisations involved to enhance their **capacities**. Much of this comes when organisations’ establish ties and learn how to work, consult and
coordinate with other organisations and, sometimes, government bodies in order to accomplish their goals.

- Builds inter-personal ties and **promotes volunteering**, which improves health and confidence.
- Increases opportunities for **self-expression**. Voluntary Arts activity is usually inclusive but can be skills based and exclusive depending on the art form.
- Increases sense of individual efficacy and **self-esteem**
- Improves individuals’ sense of belonging or **attachment** to a community
- Improves **human capital**: skills and creative abilities
- Builds individual **social networks**.
- Enhances ability to **work with others** and communicate ideas.
- Increases sense of **collective identity** and efficacy.
- Builds **social capital** by getting people involved, by connecting organisations to each other and by giving participants experience in organizing and working with local government and third sector organisations.
- **Learning and knowledge** are shared – people learn from each other rather than in a formal pedagogic situation.
- Provide a cheaper and probably more efficient **alternative to courses** in FE Colleges.
- There is strong potential for **inter-generational sharing** and practice within these groups.
- There is often a determination within voluntary arts organisations to resist engaging with official funding routes which can be based on a distrust of ‘government agendas’ and a lack of willingness to take time to engage with the process of ‘jumping through hoops’.

### Audience Participation in Voluntary Arts events

- Increases opportunities for **enjoyment** within a community.
- **Relieves stress**.
- Increases **cultural capital** within a geographical area.
- Enhances **visuo-spatial reasoning** (Mozart effect).
- Increases **tolerance** of others people (esp. tourists/visitors). People spend money on attending the arts and on local businesses. Further, local spending by these arts venues and patronized businesses has indirect multiplier effects.
- Builds community identity and **pride**.
- Leads to positive community norms, such as diversity, **tolerance** and free expression.
- People come together who might not otherwise come into contact with each other.

### Wider benefits

- Increases **individual opportunity** and propensity to be involved in the arts more widely.
- Increases propensity of other community members to **participate** in the arts.
- Increases **attractiveness of area** to tourists, businesses, people (esp. high-skill workers) and investments.
- Fosters a “creative milieu” that could spur **economic growth** in creative industries.
• Greater likelihood of **regeneration**.
• Improves community **image and status**.

**Challenges to the work**

• There is a danger of **complacency** and a lack of interest in experimentation. The ‘We don’t need to learn more’ problem.
• There are issues around **management** and leadership that can lead organisations to ossify.
• Models of **leadership** and processes can create an emphasis on identifying when mistakes are made rather than allowing for a diversity of levels of attainment.
• Collecting systematic **information** can be difficult.
• There is often a considerable **collective archive** in voluntary arts associations. There are difficulties in the digitisation of the archive.
• Often individuals who have been with an organisation for a long time, even over **generations** will have their own archive of programmes, posters, photographs, minutes, audience figures and so on.

**Group 5: What difference do grass roots arts groups/activities make for developing skills and knowledge?**

• **Individuals’ Skills Development:**

• Development of **social skills** – interacting with others; true especially for young people; older people also benefit in finding new social skills, new connections with people and new interests; particularly post-work/retirement – previously they might have had fixed roles and expectations, through arts activities they might find a new identity.

• Development of **cognitive skills** – all ages: some examples:
  
  o a cancer patient experienced loss of faculties which were later regained through working with dance.
  o Stroke patients – [www.rosettalife.org](http://www.rosettalife.org) – which does research around reimagining creative lives post-illness.
  o Learning skills changes the brain – Robert Winston.

• **Passing on of skills** –
  
  o intergenerational: Joan (Arts Council Ireland) didn’t learn to knit at school – her grandmother taught her.
  o Succession planning – it is important that participants make sure the organization can run without them – so they must also perhaps pass on newly learnt skills.

• **Passing on of cultural background/history.** For example, an African-American storyteller worked with prison inmates 80% of whom were Latino, giving them insights into their background.
and culture that were till then unknown to them. Traditional dance passes on skills in a specific geographical area that might have otherwise died out.

- **Arts is not a career!** Many ethnic groups do not consider arts activities to be something you do as a career (see Literature Review and Chinese Opera Tradition in Singapore).

- **Discovering and developing talent** – breakdancing for example – which can then be developed through learning the skills of that particular art form.

- **Improved academic performance** – participants develop self-esteem and confidence which then helps them with academic skills development.

- **Communication skills** – verbal; and through the art work itself.

- **Developing of emotional awareness and skills** such as empathy.

- Developing **wider understandings and knowledge** of the world and widen the scale of a person’s thinking: for example, through the work of Quilts 4 London participants gain and communicate understandings about the Olympics; Visual arts activities bring non-hearing communities together. It might then lead to the development of new skills in that activity: for example someone who joins a theatre group might then help with the technical side of a production and discover and develop new skills in lighting, sound or electrics; someone who makes mince pies for an organization may go onto organizing a church fete.

- Developing **previously untapped skills** and resources: participants may join an activity/group and will then take on an additional admin role, - writing newsletters or articles, dealing with publicity and marketing, book-keeping or other financial roles, for example. Others may initially join in an admin role but then go on to take part in the art activity itself.

- Development of **IT skills**: many organizations have their own websites and are very “savvy” with new ways of communication, such as social networking. Developing such media skills is especially important for rural communities who can then showcase their work over the internet.

- Developing **independent learning skills** – participants are in control of their own learning.

- **Training people to enjoy** learning skills as opposed to learning them with the idea of becoming a full-time artist.
  
  o The idea that arts skills training has to lead to employment is an assumption made by policy makers.
  o An arts training might give you skills relevant to your current employment
  o There is no such thing as a waste of time or money in terms of developing skills through arts activities.

- **Community Knowledge and Understandings**
  
  o **Passing on of local** (which can mean family or street, for example) variations, stories, memories – so that a community memory bank is created and continued.
  o A sense of **giving back** to the community
  o **Changing things**: Fine Cell is an organization that offers embroidery work to prisoners – they got the laws on prisoners earnings changed.
Other Points

- Professional/amateur tension:
  - There is acknowledgement of the negative connotation of the word ‘amateur’.
  - There is a feeling that the quality of experience in participating in volunteer arts activities is as high or higher than in professional organizations.
  - Community cinemas and film societies are adamant that they are professional and that they offer perhaps more and different resources from other (more mainstream) cinemas.
  - There is also the sense that you don’t have to be ‘a professional’ to develop skills that are required for volunteer arts orgs. A great sense of DIY.
  - There was also the view that you need more passion and enthusiasm to participate in volunteer arts activities.

- **Doing something for pleasure** and learning as opposed to learning through participation in an Adult Education Class. Sometimes groups form from participants in an Adult Ed. Class and go on to create something different which has its own life.

- **Self-directed** learning – participants are in control of their learning

- Amateur arts orgs **not tied to funding** outcomes.

- **Young people often volunteer** with amateur arts orgs in order to be able to put the experience on their CV.

- Group stake on their own identity – they can be self-replicating and self-selecting; but then other breakaway groups start and develop their own identity.

- For Making Music, the levels of engagement in music, why is music important? They discovered that music making was inherently a **mentoring activity** – they had paired disparate groups, but it was in the music making that the mentoring occurred.
6. Quilts 4 London (presentation)

The Quilters’ Guild of the British Isles is supporting projects inspired by London 2012 within the theme of “Quilting in the Spirit of the Games”. Voluntary Arts worked with the Quilters’ Guild and LOCOG to develop an Inspire Mark application for two quilting projects.

This presentation described ‘A Gift of Quilts’ which is a project to encourage stitchers all over the UK to make and donate up to 500 patchwork quilts. The aim is to give a quilt to each country participating in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a unique sign of friendship and peace. The project was started by Jenny Rundle and Sharon Garrick and is open to anyone, individuals and groups. The project website gives comprehensive guidance for quilt registration and requirements.

‘Quilts 4 London’ is a project to make an A3-sized pennant for each athlete participating in the Games, about 14,000 pennants in total. Around 8,000 had been registered by September 2011. The project is open to people of all ages and abilities and gives quilters, felt makers, embroiderers and textile artists the opportunity to express their support through the medium of fabric, fibre and stitch. The idea came from quilters Irene Heathcote and Catherine Hill. Instructions and templates are freely downloadable from the website. The International Felt Makers Association, Batik Guild, Cross Stitch Guild, UK Hand Knitting Association, Guild of Silk Painters, the Braid Society, and the Woodturners of Great Britain are involved; it is a wonderful way to showcase the diverse forms of textiles.

For more information visit: www.agiftofquilts.co.uk and www.quilts4london.org.uk.

7. Royal Shakespeare Company: Open Stages Project (presentation)

Ian Wainwright introduced the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Open Stages project. This is a collaboration between the RSC, Voluntary Arts, professional theatre groups and individual and umbrella bodies in the world of voluntary arts theatre.

The aim is to support amateur theatre groups in producing Shakespeare plays as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations for the RSC. Almost 300 such productions will take place over 2011 and 2012 under the Open Stages banner. These include Star Wars inspired Twelfth Night, an all female production of Hamlet and the Royal Navy theatre group’s production of Much Ado About Nothing.

Ian described Open Stages as a two-way learning process: amateur theatre groups learning from professionals – but also the professionals learning how the amateur theatre works, he noted that, whilst amateur theatre had always thrived, there is a growing interest in this sector amongst professionals. No-one, for example, knew that there were thirteen amateur theatre groups in Stratford within a two mile radius of the RSC.

Open Stages was very much a learning and skills exchange. It was not about professional actors, theatre producers and others ‘telling amateur groups how to do it’. Indeed, throughout the project, the RSC had been extremely impressed at both the professionalism with which amateur theatre groups operate ‘on a shoe-string’, the quality of productions, their resilience and determination. What Open Stages was about was bridging the gap that had grown up between the funded professional theatre and amateur groups and reinforcing the message that theatre is for everyone.

The project ends in 2012. However, it is hoped that the energy and enthusiasm Open Stages has created will contribute to further collaborative projects in the future.

For more information visit http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/projects/open-stages.
8. Gathering evidence of impact with amateur arts groups (workshop)

In the current economic climate demonstrating impact is important – even with small grass roots arts groups. Yet the current scoping research shows that, whilst there have been economic impact studies undertaken for large capital intensive, arts projects and their role in regeneration (Sage, Gateshead for example) little is known about this in terms of communities and the amateur arts.

The debate on collecting evidence of impact was framed within a wider discussion of what were the benefits to grassroots arts groups of undertaking this activity and whether they had the capacity/desire to do so especially if they were not applying for or receiving external funding. A summary of those discussions is presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of collecting impact information</th>
<th>Issues in collecting impact information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bead Society- this information is crucial in a changing cultural climate, helps determine how the organisation develops or declines.</td>
<td>Why would groups want to collect information - what do they want to say to government and policy makers? Places to gather; relaxation of regulation; recognition of contribution; does sector want to organise for funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data might feed the growth of a group or for government to make decisions?</td>
<td>Why would we want to collect this information? Part of the strength of the sector is its independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy makers will want to know what ‘nudge’ produces these changes in society – to make better beads or more beads, or better social cohesion.</td>
<td>Measuring what it does formalises it – some people won’t like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to the sport lobby and sports industry, arts have been slow to claim impact. Are there links to existing data that could be drawn out to show benefits of amateur arts?</td>
<td>Collecting data is not what grassroots arts does. They don’t want to complete forms. It’s too much hassle. There would have to be a very good reason, would have to justify requests for information before people co-operated. They might think that the government would use the information against them. Perhaps to enforce rules or to put up hire charges. They are worried about being criticised for being too white and middle class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embroidery Guild, FineCell project – needlework in prison – a charity, improves behaviour, allows makers to earn money to buy phonecards or small privileges. Impact on wellbeing and behaviour in prison more generally, collecting evidence has an administrative advantage.</td>
<td>It feels invasive of privacy. Especially for the those groups meeting in private spaces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s important to collect information to stop the Government putting up barriers to amateur arts. To justify local government funding venues.</td>
<td>Only those groups that need public facilities should be involved, not those that are in private places and are self-funded. Why would those sorts of activities be of interest anyway?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data can support the argument for better facilities.</td>
<td>The development of “gorilla” or “pop up” arts activities that appear, do something and disappear is evidence that people do not want to bother where there are strings attached.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data can have a developmental role, can help facilitate improvement.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If you collected information about the money saved as a result of arts actions in say village halls or schools, you would have some justification for keeping rents affordable.</td>
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Working in three groups, participants were asked to address the following key questions

1. what impact information do grassroots arts groups currently collect (if none what are the barriers)?
2. what information could grassroots arts groups collect?
3. what impact information (currently not collected) would be helpful?
4. what would help grassroots arts groups gather impact information?

Debate was wide ranging and the following section aims to draw together the main questions, debates and ideas generated through these discussions.

1. what impact information do grassroots arts groups currently collect (if none what are the barriers)?

NODA undertake surveys, Making Music suggest surveys. They are collected at membership organisation level, but do individual groups collect data for themselves.

Information in mission statements.

Financial data is probably available: turnover, audience take (Little Theatres Guild), most organisations will have some level of account, know the number of their membership, know what events raise etc.

But how far do these reflect the flow of information to membership – Bead Society – what about materials, tools, technology, transport costs, hidden in miscellaneous rather than itemised, etc.

Quilters Guild have been making an archive of information: photographs with details of makers, exhibition space, type of work, materials etc. Accounts give idea of budget rather than actual money that exchanges through in kind, subventions etc.

How much micro financial data is available, and what does it tell you? Usually low income families and women who participate and what are they prepared to spend their money on? Capturing that expenditure and how it circulates within communities would be very interesting.

Some groups involved in fundraising for other causes will have donations information in their accounts.

Information is kept but not for data collection itself, rather the financial element is irrelevant, most people are not in it for the money, nor are the costs always financial.

Quilting – website has an analysis system that tells them every week what pages were looked at, for how long, where they’re from, where they link from, what they looked at etc. They track that information to show how international their reach is and to see the effect of any event or publicity drive they undertake. Recently they handed out leaflets at a weekend event and saw a direct correlation in visits to the site.

Some groups or individuals in them have extensive archives of the group’s history
2. what information could grassroots arts groups collect?

This discussion raised mainly questions on what data was available – but not collected/collated systematically or analysed.

Little Theatre – Twitter followers can be measured and twitter rates noted.

One could collect health data – there are a number of projects around art on prescription.

Could IT be used creatively? More diversely in information gathering?

Voluntary Arts – social media have analytics, where, who, when, etc.

What questions should we ask and what can we ask effectively?

Is the only way to gather information through survey? What other innovative ways might there be?

What is useful to us? Membership information? Anecdotal and personalised to market to potential members?

Voluntary Arts Ireland – could one map what impact would look like at a micro level not at a sector level?

Diverse crafts and activities are linked together – can claims move across? Profile what happens at local level to see how impacts work across the sector.

How are networks pulled together, and how much are impacts dependent on cultural intermediaries?

Would information on family involvement be useful. Some families are involved over generations

Evidence in press clippings and reviews of voluntary arts activities/groups.

Some choirs complete a form annually. Asks what the choir does for them and what it makes them feel as well as asking how things could be improved. Important where one person leads.
3. **what impact information (currently not collected) would be helpful?**

Little Theatre – does anyone analyse why people leave or what new skills new members acquire, or an audit of the skills people have in order to use their skills more properly in order to nurture them.

Social impact information. How do you collect this? Voluntary Arts suggested that although information is collected on that front it is predominantly anecdotal. For example:

- “We make things happen” – cohesion and well-being – two choirs found two members returned within two weeks of being bereaved, the choir was a place of support. You join to sing but social impacts happen without intention.
- Project LINUS collects comfort blankets to distribute to sick children, made by local ladies, 40 coordinators organised across country. 5 sets of people affected by each blanket – the maker, the child, the nurse, the doctor, the child’s family, the ‘ping effect’.

One could ask each membership group for information.

The key is understanding the value of the material collected.

Case study material is useful for making meaning for the creator and for the membership. How can it be interpreted to policy makers? Bring anecdotes together for building out theoretically-rich material.

What do most groups need to learn in order to be part of the bigger story?

Postcodes of attendees can help to identify “hot” and “cold” spots in terms of reach.

Membership might be taken as a proxy for civic participation.

In adult education they tell you learning goals at the beginning and then assess whether they were met at the end. Amateur arts could do that.

In the basket making newsletter they include information from basket makers given bursaries, so they know what the impact was – what they achieved or learned (in their own words).

It needs to go beyond data. There is no point just having it. It’s what you do with the data that matters. Who will do it?

An opportunity to feedback “makes them feel cared about”

The fact that people stay in an activity is evidence that they feel its beneficial enough to continue with.

How do we collect this information?

Interviews would be received more sympathetically than forms. They would want the researcher to be independent.

Umbrella groups should collect the information with the aid of volunteers. Could do a membership survey but a benchmark is needed.

Could ask questions like have social networks expanded? Number of GP visits reduced?
It would be useful to do case studies on different activities to focus on the activity and its wider impact. For example look at the local arts centre and everything that occurs there.

Perhaps instead of looking to particular projects and exploring their impact, you should do a wider survey of a sample of the general population. As both audiences and participants what they gain from amateur arts and then because a sample could extrapolate findings if statistically significant.

Could you do family trees of arts groups? People get involved and then branch out and do other things

4. **what would help grassroots arts groups gather impact information?**

There was agreement across groups that the collection of impact data needed to be simple/not time consuming, draw on what people collected anyway (attendance or participation rates) and be clearly beneficial to the group.

The suggestion that emerged from all the discussions was the potential to develop an ‘impact toolkit’ for voluntary arts groups which helped collect data for different audiences: for example:

This is the information that will help you speak to:

- policy makers;
- venue owners;
- statutory funders;
- grant making trusts or sponsors;
- audiences (increasing attendance);
- possible participants (increasing participation);
- existing members (feeling valued).

This would enable groups to select the collection of impact information which was most useful to them, whilst building a bigger picture of the social and economic impact of voluntary arts.
9. Concluding remarks: where next?

Robin Simpson (Voluntary Arts) thanked participants on behalf of the research team. The discussion had been wide ranging, of a very high quality and could inform next steps in developing further work from the initial scoping study.

In the immediate future the project would be publishing both the full scoping report and an executive summary as well as producing materials for the arts press and academic journals. A formal report on this stage of the work would be submitted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council in December 2011. A decision on a second stage of the research, exploring in more depth the impact of voluntary arts was also expected at the end of the year.

The challenge for this second stage would be in helping groups bring together what statistical information that was readily available and moving from anecdotes around impact to developing a collective narrative of the power and outcomes of amateur arts.
Annex: Delegate List

Growing the Grassroots
a one day conference from Voluntary Arts,
supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council

18 October 2011 – Cecil Sharp House, London

Delegate List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Organization/Role</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Angus McCabe</td>
<td>Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liz McDonald</td>
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<td>June Mason</td>
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<td>Jane Milling</td>
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<td>Ed Vaizey MP</td>
<td>Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries</td>
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<td>Tom Williams</td>
<td>Little Theatre Guild</td>
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About the Centre
The third sector provides support and services to millions of people. Whether providing front-line services, making policy or campaigning for change, good quality research is vital for organisations to achieve the best possible impact. The Third Sector Research Centre exists to develop the evidence base on, for and with the third sector in the UK. Working closely with practitioners, policy-makers and other academics, TSRC is undertaking and reviewing research, and making this research widely available. The Centre works in collaboration with the third sector, ensuring its research reflects the realities of those working within it, and helping to build the sector’s capacity to use and conduct research.

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Below the Radar
This research theme explores the role, function, impact and experiences of small community groups or activists. These include those working at a local level or in communities of interest - such as women’s groups or refugee and migrant groups. We are interested in both formal organisations and more informal community activity. The research is informed by a reference group which brings together practitioners from national community networks, policy makers and researchers, as well as others who bring particular perspectives on, for example, rural, gender or black and minority ethnic issues.

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