

IFRCS21 Beki Pope, Head of Fundraising, Chapter Cardiff Ltd

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Effaith Gostyngiadau Cyllid ar Ddiwylliant a Chwaraeon | Impact of Funding Reductions for Culture and Sport

Ymateb gan: Beki Pope, Pennaeth Codi Arian, Chapter Cardiff Ltd | Evidence from: Beki Pope, Head of Fundraising, Chapter Cardiff Ltd

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

Reduced funding has had a serious impact on our business model, creating increased difficulty delivering a balanced budget.

Pre-pandemic, we used income generated via the box office and the café bar alongside revenue funding from Arts Council Wales, to support our arts programming. Due to an increase in all costs (eg. Staff, energy, materials etc) and a fall in ticket sales and profit from our caffi bar, there is less income available to support arts activity, putting increased pressure on funding achieved via trusts and foundations, individual and corporate giving.

This has led to a reduction in our programme, including engagement work with schools, community groups, and support for Wales' talent pipeline. The reduction of funding has led to a loss of investment in the future of arts in Wales, including our ability to support research & development projects for emerging artists, across all artforms. It has been necessary for us to increase charges for hire spaces and rents for our studio associates and simultaneously reduce the availability of free or low-cost R&D spaces for emerging artists. This has had a negative effect for the sector as artists across all artforms find it harder and more expensive to find temporary rehearsal space, production studios etc, leading to more of them leaving the sector/ Wales to find work.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it.

We've reduced our general opening hours and the hours of our caff bar. We've increased prices across the business including the introduction of a booking fee on all ticket sales, caff bar prices, ticket prices. We have fewer opportunities for freelancers as we can manage most of the programme with core staff. We have fewer hours available for free or subsidised rehearsal space as we look to prioritise availability of space to organisations or individuals who can pay. Where possible, we've cut expenditure budgets across the organisation including fewer opportunities for paid staff training and professional development opportunities and look for free, low cost or funded courses. Finally, we've had to implement some redundancies to reduce the salaries bill but also reflect the revised opening hours.

In 2023-24 we were able to offer 5,432 hours of subsidised R&D space and £101,000 of rent support. For 2024 these figures have been reduced to 1,500 hours and £40,000.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

There is a potential loss of skills to the organisation and the sector as people leave Wales to seek opportunities elsewhere. The necessary freeze in salaries could lead to staff retention issues. Pressure on smaller staff teams will lead to burnout, encouraging skilled people to leave the sector.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Strategic investment in leadership skills – networking and advocacy opportunities. Support for art and creative learning in schools including GCSE and A Level. Clear and supported opportunities for paid apprenticeships in the sector. More sector relevant training and support for talent pipeline.

Review, support and invest in utilities ie energy costs to help lower these. Incentives for more environmentally sustainable opportunities, such as solar panels, or insulation and windows for older buildings.

Where funding is offered enable some of it to be provided prior to the activity happening to support the cashflow rather than on production of receipts and defrayment at the bank.

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

The enforced reduction in the programme has a huge impact on our engagement work, including schools, young people and community groups. The necessary increase in price is a barrier to attendance, as is the reduction in free and reduced price community tickets that we are in a position of offer. Embedded access support (BSL screenings, captioning, audio description etc) is harder to provide across the programme. We are unable to take risk across the programme, reducing the opportunity to reach new audiences.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

There appears to be a move away from monitoring the quality of the arts in Wales to a situation where the number of jobs created is the key driver. This does not support the overall economic impact that the arts can deliver nor does it help create a future for the industry.
