

ENRICHING BRITAIN: CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND GROWTH

The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value

A response from Action for Children's Arts, 25th February 2015

Thank you to all involved for the hard work and we say yes to the 5 goals and yes again to the 53 recommendations with the following responses.

Considering early years are a crucial time within a human life for the development of emotional intelligence - vital to the development of creativity - we are disappointed that there is no reference to this or early years' arts provision. Also, that children as such don't get more mention in their own right. We know that children should be part of the 'all' that the report mentions frequently but, we also know that, unless they are included by name, they often get forgotten.

Goal 3 is to have 'a world-class creative and cultural education for all to ensure the wellbeing and creativity of the population as well as the future success of the Cultural and Creative Industries Ecosystem', which is of course what we all want. But when it comes to recommendations, most of them are about secondary schools and colleges and none of them is about nursery or primary schools.

The worrying decline in children's levels of participation in the arts, according to the latest Taking Part survey, is mentioned under Goal 2, which is for us all to have 'a rich cultural and expressive life'. We worry about the decline in participation too, especially as what passes for participation by children in this annual survey is only a bit higher than not taking part at all. We agree with the recommendation that Taking Part should be 'maintained as a respected and robust data set' so that it can 'drive decision making at all levels' especially when it comes to children.

The recommendation we find most interesting is that 'the necessary widening of participation at local and amateur levels should be funded by Arts Council England as part of its ongoing commitment to promoting participation and cultural diversity'. We would add 'its ongoing commitment to children and young people' because it's in our childhood and youth that our participation in the arts begins and, for children in particular, that has to be local.

So yes to that and yes to the 'strategic shift... from a funding and policy infrastructure that focuses on the support of the supply of cultural experiences to an approach that addresses unrepresentative levels of diversity and participation'. Our own report, 'Putting Children First', showed that children, who make up 15% of the population, only get 1% of the funding. That strategic shift would be a good start in putting this right.