taking part counts

the contribution of art, culture and sport to national outcomes

cultural services
Targets matter. They express what organisations are trying to achieve. They affect behaviour. They set the terms of the relationship between central and local government. They are a powerful force for mobilising and focusing public spending.

So for people who care about art, culture and sport, a crucial debate is now underway. The government is deciding the future place of art, culture and sport in the new set of national outcomes which will be at the centre of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). This will affect not only cultural services but also determine the future relationship with key outcomes such as health, educational attainment, economic vitality and community cohesion.

This new generation of outcomes and indicators, describing the government’s key strategic priorities, will be enshrined in Public Service Agreements (PSAs). Along with departmental strategic objectives, which apply to individual government departments, the framework will cover the full spectrum of government’s activity.

The local government white paper promised a streamlined local performance management framework. At its core will be 30-40 national outcomes reflecting issues of universal concern applying to councils and their work with local partners. Progress will be measured against a set of 200 indicators. The Local Government Association applauded this aspect of the white paper – a simplification it had campaigned for.

This will form one element of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), to be introduced from April 2009, replacing the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Joint Area Reviews, Annual Performance assessment and Social Services Star ratings – Best Value performance plans are also to be abolished.

There are currently 28 indicators alone in Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2006 (called ‘The Harder Test’) relating to cultural services. As a result of the white paper commitments, we know that this set will be dramatically streamlined, and that local government will be responsible for its own performance and improvement. Against that background, the IDeA, with national partners, is developing a single improvement tool.

We need to get this change right. With fewer indicators, there will be less scope for irrelevance, and less built-in focus on specific service delivery issues. The new outcomes and indicator set will need to focus on what matters most to local citizens. In our view, for art, culture and sport, that is taking part; and ensuring that the participation of under-represented groups in our society is addressed.

### Taking part counts – the contribution of art, culture and sport to national outcomes

**IDeA cultural improvement project**

Over the last three years, supported by the cultural services improvement project, the cultural services sector has focused on developing its approach to self improvement.

As well as strengthening data and performance measurement, the sector has invested heavily in self improvement tools such as TAES, arts@ the strategic centre, and ‘Inspiring learning for all’. It is now rapidly moving towards a single improvement tool operating across the sector. In addition, it has developed peer-based challenge through validation and review now being used by a number of authorities to support improvement. Regional improvement networks are forming in most regions in a variety of formats.

Leadership programmes are being developed in at least three regions and eight different improvement projects have recently been funded from the capacity building fund in eight of the nine English regions.

As the national improvement strategy for local government takes shape the sector will be in a stronger position to contribute to local priorities and demonstrate the difference it has made.
Widening participation

Our proposal is to make taking part – ‘participation’ in the professional jargon – the principal indicator of the success of art, cultural and sporting services.

Cultural services are optional public services – unlike, for example pre-16 education, where attendance is compulsory.

Cultural services also compete with other activities, including highly-marketed leisure services, terrestrial and satellite TV, computer games and the film and music industries, for our free time. Against the background of a crowded and competitive leisure market, building participation is a tough challenge.

It would clearly be easier to target other things. What is special about participation?

There are two main ways of valuing participation in cultural activities:

- for its intrinsic value, the self expression, fun and sense of fulfilment they provide – this is integral to the role cultural activities play in placeshaping;

- for its instrumental value, the contribution they make to economic development, educational attainment, physical and mental health, community cohesion and safer communities.

In both cases, measuring participation is to directly measure the impact that culture and sport are having on people’s lives. Despite the challenges it may present, personal impact is undoubtedly what committed professionals in art, culture and sport are in business to achieve.

A key challenge is to widen participation, to ensure that people with mental and physical disability, from black and ethnic minority groups and from social classes C2, D and E play a fuller part in our cultural and sporting life. The data shows that they are currently less likely to take part – for example, 70 per cent of all adults have visited a heritage site in the last 12 months – but for black and ethnic minority adults it is 51 per cent, for disabled people 59 per cent and for social classes C2, D and E, it is 57 per cent. The figures for visits to museums, galleries and arts opportunities are equally as disappointing.

But seeking to widen participation is complex – within the priority groups there can be significant variations in participation that require careful targeting. For example, at a national level, black and minority ethnic groups, participation in sport is only marginally lower than that of all adults but 10 percentage points higher than adults from socio-economic groups C2, D and E. At a local level, councils will want to target highly specific groups where for a wide range of reasons there are concerns about participation.

1 Taking part: the national survey of culture, leisure and sport. Final PSA3 baselines from the 2005-06 survey, DCMS, 14 December 2006
Participation and national priorities

The evidence from national studies shows that participation in art, culture and sport can be linked to a range of priorities which might feature among central government’s chosen CSR objectives:

- **The importance of sport to health is well evidenced** Activity delivers benefits in combating cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity, diabetes and cancer, as well as building musculoskeletal health and psychological well-being.

There is a substantial and negative impact on both individual and public health from inactive lifestyles. Correspondingly there is high preventative and therapeutic potential in physical activity – for people at all stages of life, of both sexes and in different socio-economic circumstances. The Chief Medical Officer made this clear in 2004 saying “there are few public health initiatives that have greater potential for improving public health and well-being than increasing activity levels of the population of England… The scientific evidence is compelling. Physical activity not only contributes to well-being, but is also essential for good general health. People who are physically active reduce their risks of developing major chronic diseases by up to 50 per cent and the risk of premature death by about 20-30 per cent.” The economic costs of physical inactivity in England are £8.2 billion annually, with an additional cost of obesity, estimated at £2.5 billion annually.

Sport England’s Active Sport Survey (2006) have based their reporting around the recommended levels of activity and we know that:

21 per cent of the adult population (8.5 million people) take part regularly in sport and active recreation. Regular participation in sport and recreation is defined as taking part on at least three days a week in moderate-intensity sport and active recreation (at least 12 days in the last four weeks) for at least 30 minutes continuously in any one session.

- **Our museums, galleries, heritage sites, libraries and archives are recognised around the globe for their excellence, as a prime destination for tourists and are a source of inspiration and creativity for our high-growth industries contributing to our economic vitality** There are over 42 million visits each year to major museums and galleries alone, our annual exports of cultural goods are £11.6 billion and the creative industries are growing at six per cent a year. In Nottinghamshire alone, in 2004, 37 million tourists brought £1.2 billion to the local economy,
supporting over 21,000 jobs. Tony Travers (London School of Economics) has commented that “Museums and galleries offer a major internationally-traded service (by generating exports) while also underpinning the creativity upon which future high value-added economic activity is likely to be based. Thus, the sub-sector will help in the development of new services, products and even manufactured goods. States without such collections and centres of knowledge will find life more difficult.”

An evaluation of the impact of the Commonwealth Games held in Manchester in 2002 showed that:

- 6,500 jobs were created;
- 300,000 additional visitors were attracted to Manchester;
- £670 million of additional inward investment to Manchester was generated; and
- a 150 acre derelict site was regenerated and 72,000 square metres of employment floor space created.

- Public libraries are local symbols of continuous learning and make a significant contribution to the educational attainment of young people For example, Bookstart is a national programme that encourages parents to read with children as early an age as possible – the programme is largely co-ordinated through libraries who host events and provide reading packs. The Bookstart scheme was evaluated through longitudinal studies carried out by the University of Birmingham. The final stage of the Bookstart evaluation by the University of Birmingham, reported in 2000 (1), took a random sample of 43 Birmingham pupils who had been given Bookstart packs at nine months, matched it with a control group and compared their performance in their Key Stage 1 national tests. The Bookstart children, on both teacher assessment and test results, performed significantly better; showing that their earlier advantage when starting school remained as their primary education continues.

- The national Vital Link programme is helping attract more adults with low literacy levels into learning

Research explored the outcomes of participation in libraries’ creative reading activity for emergent readers – more than three quarters of participants in focus groups identified evidence of an improvement in skills, more than half identified evidence of a change in their attitudes or values about reading, learning and libraries and a positive impact on their health and well-being. The report Confidence All Round said “the increased confidence, skills and self-esteem identified by emergent readers contributes clearly to the outcomes for promoting the economic vitality of communities and consequently indirectly to better employment opportunities.”

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2 Museums and galleries in Britain – economic, social and creative impacts, Tony Travers (LSE), December 2006
3 http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/earlyyears/bookstartresearch.html#Summary
4 Confidence all round – the impact on emergent adult readers of reading for pleasure through libraries – The Vital Link, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, November 2005
• The arts, culture and sport build social capital, bring people and communities together, develop understanding and provide the bedrock of many friendships and networks promoting community cohesion. Volunteering is a mainstay of the arts, culture and sport, providing a passionate and committed voluntary labour force, particularly at local level, that ensures events and activities take place – 2.7 million people put some voluntary time into sport – with an estimated 1.8 million hours of unpaid support every week of the year. Volunteering brings young people together, often with people from other generations, combining a way of expressing altruism and social purpose with a way of developing skills and making new friends. The Citizenship Survey 2005 showed a relationship between voluntary activities and having friends of different ethnic groups and with different incomes, and trusting people in the neighbourhood.

There are many examples of excellent work by local councils using participation in cultural services in order to make a measurable contribution to cross-cutting local priorities. Here are just a few:

• Researchers at the school of music, University of Southampton found that live interactive music has an important role to play in reducing apathy in patients with moderate and severe dementia.

• In partnership with NACRO, Leicester City Council established Score 4 Sport in a new leisure centre – using sport as a positive activity to discourage young people most at risk from offending. Score 4 Sport is recognised as having a real impact in the deprived Braunstone area. Criminal offences have dropped on the estate by 23 per cent – with a significant drop in the fear of crime by local people. This reduction has taken place against the background of increasing usage of the centre’s facilities, particularly by priority groups.

• South Gloucestershire Active for Life brought together key physical activity delivery agencies to dramatically increase, by over 14,000 people, the number of physically active people over 50 years and between 15-19 years old taking three sessions of physical activity last 30 minutes or more.

Measuring participation

The evidence suggests that participation in art, culture and sport contributes to a number of key national and local outcomes. The secondary question is how to measure it. There are broadly three ways of

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6. Keep music live: music and the alleviation of apathy in dementia subjects, Clive Holmes et al, School of music, University of Southampton, 2006
looking at participation: attendance, active participation and volunteering. At the moment, the emphasis of performance measures varies depending on the cultural or sporting activity. For example, the principal measure we apply to museums is attendance, rather than the active participation we target in sport. Individuals will progress through seeing, doing and helping and may during a cultural or sporting experience watch, get involved and help out. We should not underestimate the challenge measurement presents.

One measurement model already exists. The Active People Survey conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Sport England provides data to the local level based on a sample size of a minimum of 1,000 people in each area. The data show participation by age, gender, social class, ethnicity and disability. The results allow us to benchmark participation in sports and active recreation between local authorities. The survey is based on the nationally accepted definition of regular participation in sport and recreation – taking part at least three days a week in moderate intensity sport for at least 30 minutes continuously in any one session.

The comparable survey for culture and sport Taking Part: the National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport does not provide data at the local level. Nor is there a widely accepted benchmark for what ‘active’ participation should mean in areas other than sport.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has played an invaluable role in both leading and facilitating the debate, engaging both the national bodies and the local government community in open consultation. The challenge now for the Department, the Arts Council, English Heritage, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the local government community, alongside persuading the Treasury of the centrality of widening participation, is fourfold:

- First, to explore the case for a cross-cultural survey that would provide consistent, and therefore comparable, datasets at the local level to those that we now have for sport. There are clear economies of scale to be realised from co-operation, and clear benefits to having standardised data that can be used across spatial areas for benchmarking activity and targeting resources more effectively. Alternatively, it would be possible to set out a national framework that local councils can use themselves to provide comparable data sets;

- Second, to exercise caution in adding to this survey where there will be a clear trade-off between adding new requirements and keeping costs down. There will also be a case for being able to flex the survey locally;

- Third, to take a decision on whether to use the definitions of participation employed in the Taking
Part Survey, differentiating between regular attendance, active participation and volunteering, or to develop new ones;

- Fourth, to build the national evidence base on the relationship between participation in art, culture and sport and broader national priorities. The evidential link between sport and health is now commonly accepted – and the three times 30 minutes measure has entered into the public consciousness and conscience. The challenge for researchers is to develop similar proxies for participation in culture and mental health, community cohesion or educational attainment so that we develop a better understanding of the instrumental value of participation in art, culture and sport. In doing so we will help local partners position art, culture and sport with an appropriately high profile in Local Area Agreements.

**Securing resources**

The debate about the performance management framework for art, culture and sport is related to the debate about its funding. There is a strong case for resourcing art, culture and sport for its intrinsic benefits – because it enriches our lives and gives our communities identity. But their instrumental value also make a powerful case for properly funding them so that communities can derive their wider benefits.

The existing statistics on the levels of participation are impressive and lend weight to the importance of art, culture and sport in our lives:

- 70 per cent of all adults visit a historic environment site at least once a year;
- 43 per cent of adults visit a museum or gallery at least once a year;
- 48 per cent of adults visit a library at least once a year;
- 67 per cent of adults participate in at least one type of arts activity at least once a year;
- 67 per cent of adults participate in at least one type of active sport at least once a year.

Participation matters. Where resources are scarce, the business case for funding increasingly has to be based on the contribution to national priorities. Developing the data on participation and evidence on the relationship between art, culture and sport is about strengthening the business case. Where resources are scarce and cultural services pressed, a strong evidential link can make a marginal but decisive difference to funding decisions at both local and national levels.

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7 Expert commentators have made this point - for example, the National Audit Office in a joint report with the Audit Commission and Healthcare Commission commented that “the evidence on what works to tackle this new problem [childhood obesity] is in short supply.” Burns Own Partnership found “there is no body of literature which specifically examines the effectiveness of museums, libraries and archives activities in health/mental health in England”.

8 Taking part: the national survey of culture, leisure and sport, DCMS [2005]
Summary

Government should now:

- dramatically streamline the indicators related to cultural services, to focus on measuring participation in art, culture and sport, and in particular the participation by the priority groups currently under-represented in art, culture and sport;

- relate the participation indicator to a number of key national outcomes – the evidence supports a link between participation and various key outcomes including, for example, educational attainment, economic vitality, reducing crime and community cohesion. It is strongest in proving the relationship between regular physical activity to physical health and well-being;

- consider the options for a national survey on participation. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the national bodies, alongside local government, need to think creatively about the best way to fund such a survey, building on the model provided by the Active People Survey;

- strengthen the national evidence base on the link between participation and the key national outcomes.

The Local Government Association and IDeA have been actively participating in the debate so far, and look forward to helping make further progress on these four points.
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