

The Arts in Wales and Visual Impairment

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Wales Council for the Blind

WCB Conference 2002 The Arts in Wales and Visual Impairment

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The Programme

When: October 31st, 2002

Where: North Wales Conference Centre, Llandudno.

Are blind and partially sighted people getting the most from the arts in Wales?

- What are the barriers to participation and how can they be removed?
- What are the additional challenges posed to visually impaired artists?

This conference will explore these issues, drawing on the experiences and knowledge of visually impaired people, workers from the v.i. field and arts workers.

11.00 Introduction to the conference

11.10 Creative Future and Disability: Jenny Randerson AM - Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

11.30 Keynote Speech: Sybil Crouch - Chair, Arts Council for Wales

11.50 The impact of arts activities on the general education of visually impaired people: John Everett - Artist, former head of arts at Royal National College for the Blind, Hereford.

12.20 Summary of research into the arts and visual impairment in Wales: Richard Bowers - Communications Officer, WCB

12.50 Lunch

13.50 Workshops / Demonstrations: You may choose one workshop from each group. (We may have to allocate places according to availability but we shall try to provide at least one of your choices).

Group A workshops

- A portfolio of work by Creative Arts students at RNC
- Employment in the Arts
- Making the visual arts accessible

14.25 Group B workshops

- Tailoring Awareness Training for Dance Practitioners
- Reminiscence work in Pembrokeshire
- Audio description in the cinema: from script to screening
- Review of forum theatre activity with WCB's Young View group

15.00 Discussion groups

Your chance to contribute to a set of action points for developing services for visually impaired people in the arts in Wales. Your views will be incorporated into a report together with Richard Bowers' research. This report, along with an information pack, will be sent to all delegates after the conference.

15.30 Summing up

15.45 Refreshments

16.00 Finish

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who helped to make this conference a success. Wales Council for the Blind gratefully acknowledges the financial support of The Arts Council for Wales and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the following for their support in the development, preparation and delivery of the conference:

- Jenny Randerson AM
- Sybil Crouch
- John Everett
- Jemma Allen
- Solveig Frykman Lloyd
- Jo Harrison
- Mary Ings
- Ellie Morgan
- John Weston
- Stephan Stockton
- Carol Jones
- Gill Dowsett
- Edel McHugh
- Tobias Anderson
- Glen Deeks
- Amanda Hemmer
- John Everett
- Andrew Hubbard
- Nich Pearson
- Ceri Jackson
- The North Wales Conference Centre
- and staff of WCB.

Delegates

- Jemma Allen, Community Dance Wales
- Colin Antwis, Fieldsman Trails
- Sally Baker, Ty Newydd Writers' Centre
- Beverley Bell Hughes, Arts Disability Wales
- Alan Benbow, Drama Association of Wales
- Christina Bingle, Cirencester College
- Russell Bloom, Wales Council for the Blind
- Sybil Crouch, Arts Council of Wales
- Sian Dafydd, Sgript Cymru

- Kim Dewsbury, Denbighshire County Council
- Ann Dorsett, Carmarthenshire County Museum
- Gill Dowsett, Theatr Fforwm Cymru
- John Everett
- Gillian Fraser, Flintshire Libraries & Information Service
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- Lila Hamilton, London Arts
- Jo Harrison, Wales Council for the Blind
- Amanda Hemmer
- Mary Ings, Wales Council for the Blind
- Gwenno Eleri Jones, Oriel Mostyn
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- Carol Jones, Chapter Arts Centre
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- Tim Manson, Conwy County Borough Council
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- John Weston, Pembrokeshire County Council
- Emlyn Williams, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
- Gwilym Williams, North Wales Society for the Blind
- Haf Williams, North Wales Society for the Blind
- Tom Robards
- Ann Kellaway, Arts Council for Wales
- Lisa Parry, Newport CBC
- John Roberts
- Caroline Sansome, WCB
- Alex Sansome, WCB

WCB Staff present:

- Vanessa Webb, Director
- Richard Bowers, Conference Planner
- Deborah Tugwell, Administrative Assistant
- Rebecca Thomas, Administrator
- Nicola Jones, Training Officer
- Owen Williams, Technology Development Officer

- Nicky Malson, Sports Development Officer
- Vicky Richards, Rehab Development Officer

Speakers and presenters

- Jenny Randerson
- Sybil Crouch
- John Everett
- Richard Bowers
- Amanda Hemmer
- Elly Morgan
- John Weston
- Andrew Hubbard
- Nich Pearson
- Carol Jones
- Stephan Stockton
- Theatr Fforwm Cymru

Jenny Randerson, AM

Jenny Randerson, AM for Cardiff Central was appointed as the first National Assembly Culture and Sports Minister responsible for arts, sports, libraries, museums and the Welsh Language with the formation of the Liberal Democrat – Labour partnership Government in October 2000, since July 2002 she has also been Acting Deputy First Minister.

Educated at Bedford College, London University, Jenny's early career as a History and Economics teacher at Llanishen High School in Cardiff progressed to her becoming a lecturer and manager at Coleg Glan Hafren, Cardiff until she was elected to the Assembly in may 1999.

In the first 18 months of the Assembly she was Liberal Democrat Business Manager and Education spokesperson. Her role as the former Welsh Liberal Democrat Spokesperson on Arts, Culture and Sport and on the bidding Committee to bring the Commonwealth Games to Cardiff in the 1980's provides a strong background for this high profile portfolio introduced as part of the new partnership Agreement.

Jenny was a Cardiff Councillor for 18 Years and prior to election to the National Assembly for Wales, she was a JP and a former Leader of the Opposition on Cardiff County Council. Jenny Randerson is married with two adult children and lives in her Cardiff Central Constituency. Her interests include travelling and gardening, attending theatre and concerts and her family are keen amateur musicians.

As Culture Minister she unveiled the Welsh Government's first Culture Strategy "Creative Future - Cymru Greadigol" in February 2002. Her Ministerial priorities include strengthening the resource base available for culture, developing culture as a cross cutting issue which impacts on economic growth, community development and Wales' international profile and ensuring adequate support for the Welsh language and the development of bi-lingualism in Wales.

Sybil Crouch

A Liverpoolian by birth, Sybil considers Swansea as home, having come to the city as an art student in 1971. She worked in education and in the community arts field before joining West Wales Arts - where she was Deputy Director for 11 years.

A Welsh learner, Sybil is a passionate believer in the importance of the arts for young people. Sybil now manages Taliesin Arts Centre at Swansea University.

John Everett

A freelance art teacher and artist, John began developing the art department at the Royal National College in Hereford in 1978 and became its Head of Creative Arts in 1993. He co-authored, with Sue Blagden, the book about art and visual impairment, "What Colour is the Wind". The book accompanied the LOOK exhibition, organised by John and Sue in 1992, which toured major venues in the UK and Europe.

Since leaving the RNC he has continued his art practice, producing multi-media installations which explore human actions through video and sculpture. His solo exhibition at Hereford Art Gallery forms the basis of a new video installation.

Richard Bowers

Richard studied Fine Art at Cardiff in the mid '80s and subsequently worked as an arts administrator, a printmaker and, latterly, as Wales Council for the Blind's communications officer. He also operates as a sonic artist under the name **The Sound of Aircraft Attacking Britain**. He lives with his family in Penarth.

Amanda Hemmer

Amanda trained at Portsmouth in Fine Art and Performance. She started informal classes in drama and dance at Royal National College in 1994. Their popularity quickly moved them onto the main curriculum and since 1996 drama and dance have been offered as main units in BTEC First and National Diploma courses in Performing Arts. A number of her students progress to higher education and are starting professional careers as performers, the best known being Ryan Kelly, Jazzer in the Archers.

Elly Morgan

Elly Morgan was born and bred in Pembrokeshire and studied 3-D Design in Glass and Ceramics at Art College. She went on to study Art Therapy and Art Education PGCE. She taught Art & Design in mainstream schools for 8 years in Cumbria and Carmarthenshire and took the opportunity to travel a bit.

Elly re-located to Pembrokeshire as support worker with people with learning difficulties in a residential setting. She set up a workshop to make and sell her own creative work (ceramics and glass).

In 2000 she undertook a horse-trek in Mongolia in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind. This experience led to another recent horse-trek in Canada where she was a sighted guide for a friend she had met in Mongolia, again in aid of Guide Dogs. These treks led to her interest in working with VIP client group. She is now based in Pembrokeshire as Project worker for blind and partially sighted people and has forged links with ArtsCare and the various VIP groups that are established in the county.

John Weston

John has been a freelance graphic artist and writer for film and television for over 25 years. He is currently one of Arts Care's 'lead artists' working on various projects from visual and mental impairment to drug rehabilitation. He takes a special interest in recording VIP reminiscences

Andrew Hubbard

Andrew was educated at Swansea University and City University London, qualifying in 1984 with an MA in Speech and Language Pathology. He worked for West Glamorgan Health Service until 2000.

For the last three years he has been working as a Disability Equality Trainer with a particular specialism in the Disability Discrimination Act and barriers to employment.

Andrew is the Disability Officer for Crwth Chamber Music Ensemble based in Swansea and Sound Affairs Contemporary Music and Dance Company based in Cardiff.

Nich Pearson

Born 1950. Director of the Welsh Consumer Council since 1995. Has had a varied career in research, education and management. He has published widely on arts policy, transport, social and community care and new technology, and, while working for the Welsh Arts Council, set up an innovative consumer credit scheme to encourage the sale of works of art and craft. He is married to school head teacher Tania Walsh; has a daughter Myfanwy; and lives in Rhiwbina.

Carol Jones

Carol is Head of Marketing and Press at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff. Chapter was the first cinema in Britain to audio describe films and Carol was instrumental in setting up their programme of screenings in the early 90s. Chapter won the main prize in the British Gas/ADAPT awards of 1994 for its pioneering role in scripting and presenting live audio description.

Carol has written and presented audio description for film, ballet and exhibitions.

Stephan Stockton

Stephan is an independent marketing and management consultant working in the not-for-profit cultural sector. He has been an audio describer since 1994 and for Scottish Ballet developed the language and process for describing classical and modern dance. He has since worked with Earthfall to describe dance and physical theatre for radio.

He has written and presented audio description for film, ballet and the visual arts and his company, the next step, sponsored chapter for audio description development in cinema.

Theatr Fforwm Cymru

Theatr Fforwm Cymru is a registered charity based in Wales and using Theatre of the Oppressed. Work is undertaken with individuals, organisations and communities, enabling them to discover what they want to change about their lives and giving them the tools to change it. They are also interested in having fun.

Speeches

Creative Wales' and disability

Jenny Randerson AM (Minister for Sports, Culture and the Welsh Language)

Keynote Speech

Sybil Crouch (Chair, Arts Council for Wales)

Art education's impact on general education for pupils with a visual impairment

John Everett (artist, former Head of Arts at Hereford College for the Blind)

Some findings from research into arts provision for visually impaired people in Wales

Richard Bowers (Communications Officer, Wales Council for the Blind)

"Creative Wales" and Disability

Jenny Randerson, AM (Minister for Sports, Culture and the Welsh Language).

I was very pleased to be invited to this event today not only to tell you about my Culture Strategy, "Creative Future: Cymru Greadigol" but to listen to the issues which are important to the blind and partially sighted people of Wales. Today's conference will be discussing what the barriers to participation are, and how they can be removed, and what the challenges posed to visually impaired artists are. I would like to think

that I am aware of some of these issues, though I know I have much more to learn and understand.

Creative Future provides a challenging template for us all to aspire to achieve. It gives direction to the cultural bodies for which the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible, and, perhaps more importantly, cuts across policy not normally regarded as being cultural. Creative Future has many important features, one of the key ones being participation and equality of opportunity.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and access for all to the arts. I am well aware that there are barriers to cultural activities being available to everyone, and this is why I am particularly concerned to ensure that Creative Future contributes to the improvement of facilities available, and access to cultural activity for all the people of Wales.

Turning to visual impairment in particular, I think that raising awareness is an important factor, so that those who organise arts events can make sure they are truly accessible to visually impaired people. It is important, of course, to remember that the term "disabled" includes sensory disability as well as physical. Access is more than simply being able to get to and enter a building; access is also about being able to sense the art which is being displayed, or enjoy a performance which is taking place.

"Seeing" is perhaps considered to be the "conventional way" of experiencing the arts but organisers need to bear in mind that the arts can be experienced by other sensory means which are open to those who are visually impaired. This is where the Voluntary Sector can be of real help, by providing the link between organisers and audience.

I know about the survey which was recently undertaken by the Wales Council for the Blind which highlighted certain areas of particular concern to visually impaired people. One was access to information, and I am pleased to say that the Assembly Government has recently published guidelines to ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of producing all information in accessible formats. Not only does information have to be available in a suitable format, it also needs to reach the right people. Proper dissemination of information is vital, and again, I know that the Voluntary Sector can advise on this.

Another concern was the fact that staff at arts venues are often uncertain of how to react to visually impaired people and how to treat them. This, I am sure, is true of other disabilities as well, and it can only

be rectified by an increase in awareness all around, and I am sure that today's conference will give some impetus to disability equality training.

One of Creative Future's action points for 2003-04 is:

"to consider how cultural Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) can encourage funded organisations to take steps to ensure that black and minority ethnic communities and disabled people are fully represented in all aspects of the culture of Wales as participants and in audiences".

I am pleased to say that the Assembly and its partners have now started work on this action point and at the meeting of Cymru'n Creu last week, the Disability Rights Commission gave a presentation on the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act for Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) and Cultural Organisations. My fellow Cymru'n Creu colleagues - who incidentally include all of the Cultural ASPBs such as the Sports Council, Arts Council, as well as the Wales Tourist Board for example, WDA, the Broadcasters, the British Council and the Welsh Local Government Association - found it to be most enlightening. I encouraged them to take particular note of this action point and we will be taking further steps through further discussion at the Cymru'n Creu forum in order to achieve this objective for 2003-04.

I have also asked ASPBs to set realistic but challenging targets for achieving equality of opportunity and to be mindful in any capital developments for the need for premises, facilities and performance are accessible to all. I am determined to ensure that the Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies are taking these matters seriously.

In this vein, I am pleased that the Arts Council of Wales has commissioned an audit of arts venues to ascertain the current position in relation to making the facilities compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. The Arts Council asked the Burgess Partnership to undertake the work and I understand the report will be available at the end of November. I know that Sybil Crouch, Chair of the Arts Council is going to tell you more about that next.

Last year the Assembly Government provided additional funding of £150,000 to the Arts Council of Wales to run a Cultural Diversity Funding Scheme. I have asked the Arts Council to operate a similar scheme in recognition of the European Year of Disability in 2003. This scheme will fund projects to celebrate this very important year. The Arts Council plan to support activity both by and for disabled people to participate in the arts as practitioners, audience members and participants.

I also understand that the Arts Council is planning to review and update its Arts and Disability Strategy with Arts Disability Wales and this work will include disability arts. I believe that the Arts Council of Wales does much as a matter of course to engage with those who have a disability and to raise the profile and debate on arts and disability in Wales.

I firmly believe that the arts and culture have the power to transform ideas, people and attitudes. They can be instrumental in regeneration, training and education, and in encouraging participation by disenfranchised groups, promoting social inclusion and active citizenship.

It is vital that we appreciate and celebrate the dynamism and vitality of the diversity that already exists in Wales, but it is equally important that we propose steps that will encourage growth and new opportunities.

In many ways Wales has a cultural mix that exists nowhere else and we need to protect, nurture and encourage cultural growth. The Arts Council's regional structure and the significant increase in the arts budget should help realise these aims, however, the Arts Council and the Assembly Government cannot work alone, and I call on Local Authorities especially and other key bodies to also play an instrumental role.

Creative Future identifies the development of community arts groups as a major priority, because of their key role in encouraging participation in arts activities. I have also asked the Arts Council to develop strategies to recognise the importance of community, grass roots activity in developing the arts in Wales. The Council are devising funding schemes to support projects that take the arts into the lives of more people in Wales through, for example, local festivals, artists in schools, out of hours drama clubs and community development projects.

Engaging people in the arts at an early age can have enormous benefits all round and I have asked the Arts Council to establish a Youth Arts Fund and to increase the number of pilot youth arts strategies across Wales. The Council will be taking this forward in the context of its Five-Year Arts Development Strategy, "Supporting Creativity". An official launch of the Youth Arts Fund is planned for later this year.

I am also pleased that the Arts Council continues to work well with the Voluntary Cultural Sector and are proposing to introduce a working group to monitor relationships with the sector and the impact on the sector. The Council is committed to ensuring that the voluntary cultural sector has equal opportunity in funding and support from the Council. In

addition they are also looking to address the historical anomalies that have lead to this sector being under-funded.

Taking part in voluntary and community arts give people opportunities to become valuable members of their communities.

Local arts groups provide opportunities for social networking which help to generate a real social togetherness. And particularly valuable when professional arts provision is limited, the amateur sector provides audiences and participants with opportunities to enjoy music, dance, drama and crafts, often of high quality.

In many ways, the most important benefit in taking part in arts activities is what this can do for the individual. This is not surprising. The arts are about expressing oneself in an individual way, and about communicating experiences and feelings.

The role of the Welsh Assembly Government is important in all of this too. As a nation with its own Assembly Government, we have an opportunity to improve the lives of each and every person living in Wales. This is why in January 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government agreed to mainstream the social model of disability into all its decision making processes. This is the first Government in Europe to take this important and far reaching step in order to ensure social inclusion for all its people. Inevitably the Assembly will look particularly to the Arts Council of Wales, because it is the role of the Council to distribute public funding for the arts in Wales. The Council is committed to ensuring that the community and voluntary sectors work together to offer opportunities to all arts sectors and all the people of Wales, and also that they are sustainable in the long term.

I am committed to creating a strong and vibrant arts sector in Wales and "Creative Future" is the means for delivering that. "Creative Future" describes the backdrop for the development of cultural policy in Wales today. It sets out those policies which I see as the key priorities for the Assembly and its partners.

I am sure you will all agree that there are a significant number of initiatives aimed at promoting equality of opportunity, diversity and encouraging participation in the arts by all communities in Wales. I am pleased to say that whilst there are a number of them, the approach is co-ordinated.

I very much hope that today's debate and workshops will be fruitful - I would very much welcome feedback on the issues raised. Participation is one of the fundamental ingredients of Creative Future - we must

continue to raise the profile of, and opportunities for, disabled artists and the disabled organisations to develop, practice and experience the arts.

Thank you, and I hope you will enjoy the rest of today.

Keynote Speech

Sybil Crouch, Chair, Arts Council for Wales

The word 'change' comes to mind as I look back over the past year at the Arts Council of Wales.

There have been changes in structure; there have been changes in personnel and most importantly I believe, there has been a significant change in approach.

In February 2002, ACW switched to its new organisational structure, one that has resulted in the devolution of strategic responsibilities to our offices in Carmarthen, Cardiff and Colwyn Bay here in North Wales.

This impetus, I am happy to say, has taken us firmly forward as an organisation. As an organisation, ACW has emerged reinvigorated, and we are looking forward with enthusiasm to working with individuals, arts organisations, and the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver our newly developed five-year arts development strategy, Supporting Creativity.

This strategy, drawn up in close consultation with the arts and voluntary sector in Wales, embodies the new Arts Council of Wales' enthusiasm for developing a creative future with our partner across the Country.

Supporting Creativity as a strategy, has strong links with the Welsh Assembly Government's Culture Strategy, Creative Future; Cymru Greadigol.

The latter provides the framework for Supporting Creativity, and includes many challenging targets for the Arts Council of Wales.

I will come to how Supporting Creativity will address the needs of the disability community shortly. But before doing so, I would just like to take an overview of how the Arts Council is already addressing these needs.

For a number of years, the Arts Council of Wales has taken seriously its responsibilities to ensure that disabled people have access to arts activities across Wales – as participants and as audiences.

For example, for some eight years, we have insisted that all our revenue funded clients submit annual action plans on this issue.

These plans must detail what steps have been taken, and how they plan to improve their facilities to ensure they are offering an equal standard of service to disabled people, including those who are visually impaired.

These requirements have now been further strengthened through having been incorporated into an equal opportunities actions plan. The solidity of this process will continue to be strengthened by a programme of training developed and delivered by Arts Disability Wales.

As a result of these initiatives, many arts organisations in Wales found that it was a relatively short step to comply with Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act, which came into force in October 1999.

This part of the Act is about Right of Access to Goods, Services and Premises and requires all service providers to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled people are not discriminated against or treated less favourably than other customers.

There are many arts organisations in Wales who have developed comprehensive policies and practices, who provide auxiliary aids and services and who are providing publicity and information in formats which are accessible to people with visual impairments.

Audio descriptions of exhibitions and performances have also been made available.

But ACW is not complacent. We recognise that there is still a way to go for the arts to become fully accessible to disabled people and specifically to visually impaired people. So what are the challenges?

In 2004 Stage II of Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force. This part of the Act will require providers of goods and services to make physical changes to their buildings.

Therefore, anything that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services must be removed, altered or avoided.

This naturally has enormous implications for theatres, galleries and arts centres in Wales, and the Arts Council is already taking steps to help venues to comply.

An audit of 57 venues is being carried out and a draft report is due towards the end of this month. The report will inform ACW spending on

Capital projects leading up to 2004. A bid for additional funding to support necessary refurbishment has been put to the Welsh Assembly Government.

We feel that it is critical that Arts organisations in Wales need to be reminded of the needs of specific sectors within the disabled community – of new initiatives and advances in the provision, for example, of information and publicity for visually impaired people.

That is one of the reasons why ACW is keen to support, through its programme of schemes, conferences such as this.

The real challenge however, in the context of today's conference, is in ensuring that visually impaired people have real opportunities to participate fully in the arts – as practitioners; on a voluntary, amateur and professional basis.

What evidence we have would suggest that this is where the arts in Wales are perhaps not succeeding as well as they could.

There are few professional visually impaired artists, writers or performers. We are therefore actively encouraging certain projects to apply for funding - projects which can provide community based opportunities for practical participative projects involving visually impaired people.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed and that maybe through discussion today we can begin to address.

ACW for its part is beginning the process at a national and strategic level.

A core part of our 5-year Arts Development Strategy is to revise ACW's Arts and Disability strategy. Work on this has already begun.

The revised strategy in turn will lead to the production of a comprehensive and workable action plan which will seek to improve, among other things, opportunities for visually impaired people to develop their skills as practising artists and performers.

The strategy and action plan will be consulted on widely over the coming months as ACW is keen to work in partnership with arts organisation, bodies such as Wales Council for the Blind and most importantly visually impaired and disabled people themselves.

This will allow us to precisely identify what steps need to be taken.

The impact of arts activities in the general education of people who have a visual impairment

John Everett

When Richard Bowers asked me to take part today my first reaction was, "No". It is six years since I left RNC and, although I still maintain a close contact with the college, things are so very different now. I wasn't sure if I had anything relevant or helpful to say.

We talked at some length and it became clear that I could say nothing about what I think we achieved at RNC without this qualification, that things are so very different now.

I began to wonder would it have been possible as things are now ? and alternatively would it now be necessary because ideas and attitudes have changed so much?

As we talked, those differences between then and now - and their effects - seemed in themselves to be worth examining more closely and my detachment from the day to day involvement in the front line of education might be helpful in doing that.

My first concern had been the six years since I left RNC, but I was soon preoccupied with the immensity of the changes in education that had occurred during the eighteen years I had worked at the college, 1978-96.

I am going to talk about that in a moment, but first, in case I should forget - and in case it doesn't become apparent as I speak - I want to say how grateful I am for the experience of working at RNC, for the opportunities and inspiration it offered me, for a meaningful job, and for contact with students, many of whose creativity, courage and endurance I came to admire enormously.

To many of us, that the arts have a value in the education of people who have a visual impairment, is patently obvious.

Perhaps it's not obvious to everyone, but put simply like that not many people would argue with it.

But quite what we understand by that statement, and to what extent we are really committed to it - and the ramifications of that commitment - are not so obvious. Not so long ago, values, or priorities at least, were clearly different. (When I started at RNC, the RNIB had no Arts Officer and I also believe that there was no one at the Arts Council specifically dedicated to access.)

It's amazing to think of it, but when I started at RNC, PC simply meant police constable. Since then it has gained two very significant new meanings. Then, there were no personal computers and visually handicapped was the current usage - two measures of the physical and value changes that have taken place in the world generally and within the world of visual impairment in particular.

I say "the world of" because back then, as a complete newcomer - I'm not sure that I had ever met a blind person - I did feel that I was entering very strange territory, where, as a visual artist my day to day currency would be novel perhaps but would have no real value.

The hard currency here was the QWERTY keyboard. We're all slaves of the QWERTY now, of course, but back then at RNC the big players were in audio typing - and Braille shorthand. There was also music and the academic subjects, as expected.

And I knew about physiotherapy and piano tuning, too, because I had the usual stereotypical ideas. My closest experience of blind people (men at least) was seeing them tuning the piano when I was at school. I'd like to think that people aren't not so ignorant these days.

Somebody in the business said to me enthusiastically, before I started, "It's all been done Mr Everett. It's all been done." I had done some research during the summer and I didn't think it had. There was very little to read, especially about art by people who had no vision, and there were very few places to visit to see work in practise.

Exhall Grange was a notable exception, but this was mostly working with students with some vision. The impression I gained was that there was some antipathy - later there was some active opposition - to the idea of teaching art in a further education college to people with a visual impairment.

The introduction of art at RNC had been a pretty imaginative decision.

The great thing about it was that you really had to think why you were doing this and where the value of it lay.

In spite of the term special education (I don't remember if it was current then) it seemed that the aim should be to make the teaching as ordinary, i.e., normal, as possible, that what other students were offered should be what students with a visual impairment should be offered.

No doubt some modifications would be necessary, but to prejudge these would be to create imaginary, perhaps unnecessary obstacles to the opening of opportunity and the development of ideas.

This basic principle I retained throughout my time at RNC. If this seems unremarkable and hardly worth a mention, I can only say that it contrasts with much of my experience - and the countless times I have been approached by people wanting to know what special modifications and differences I employed in teaching at RNC.

The emphasis being placed on teaching per se rather than on Art.

But...art itself will provide where art itself can receive. Otherwise it won't be art. I think this is immensely important. It indicates an essential feature of art, that involvement in it, to be meaningful, is essentially reciprocal and - as we generally understand it - essentially individual. This doesn't mean that making art is an enclosed or self-contained activity - ultimately it seeks to communicate.

Therefore any modifications that were made, were made on the same principle that they would be made in any educational context, i.e. to the needs, as necessary, of an individual student.

Art was to focus on its special strength, the exploration and development of the individual - as long as I got it right, what could be more appropriate or beneficial?

Initially art would be in part diagnostic. It could help me to begin to understand different individual's ways of working, their perception and their operational strengths. Clay seemed the obvious choice - something familiar, heads - simple form and a change of scale, large coil pots.

I approached my first session in a state of near terror - it could be a struggle.

But something had worked. After about a week, I started to get other staff coming in at break time. They had been sent by students to see what they had done. Did So and So really do this? A quick description. Yes, that's the one. They had known some of these students for two or three years.

Soon people were becoming convinced that a particular someone could really see quite well, at least better than previously believed - in some cases better than a another someone appreciated themselves or perhaps wanted to admit. Or that someone who couldn't see at all was

extraordinarily perceptive or able with their hands. Perhaps rather more physical than expected.

Art had introduced a wholly different angle on perception, operational - actual, active and optimistic - in contrast to the established one, clinical - predictive, largely passive and largely pessimistic.

Better still, so many students seemed to like it. The demand was a shock, in fact. Why this demand? First and perhaps most significantly, curiosity.

Second, as I say, that the perceptual and operational ambience was essentially optimistic was especially important - there was an expectation to succeed and a recognition of success, personal success set against personal goals. Not, as I've heard and seen, "Good for a blind person". That is simply not a valid judgement in art. Parking a car in the garage maybe, but not art.

Third, given the rationale, it was an arena where, in spite of their "impairment", these students could be equals with those supposed models of perfection outside. In many respects, from my experience, they were better, more interesting and more exciting to work with.

Fourth, and at times overwhelmingly the desire to express ideas or simply to achieve in an area of challenge. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish these two or to identify the motivation.

This was the situation at the end of year one. Art had established certain roles for itself purely in response to the needs and demands of students and the functions of the college. Visits to art galleries and museums were new and popular events - you could almost empty the college on these occasions. But it was still the beginning of a long process of development and for me a quite humbling journey into discovering what the students and art really could offer one another.

What happened in the succeeding years is a measure of just how necessary an arts education is for people who have a visual impairment. I should like to pick on certain moments and issues that arose during that time to illustrate this.

Today, and most importantly perhaps, most of the younger students arrive at RNC with some arts education behind them. This is in part a result of the National Curriculum, although many special schools had already started to broaden their curriculum before its introduction.

Most of the students arriving at RNC when I started there had very little, if any, structured education in the arts, except music and literature.

It shouldn't be surprising then that so many of them were keen to take it on. Their simple curiosity for it was conspicuous and was no doubt symptomatic of their exclusion from a major and essential component of our culture, visual communication. I think people generally are much more aware now of the enormous importance of visual artists and designers in our commercial - and dare I say political - life - something like the position of pop music. Shouldn't young people with a visual impairment have as much knowledge and understanding of this and our cultural history as anyone else? Why shouldn't they be able to contribute to it, too? They certainly appeared eager to have a way into it. Even those who weren't signed up for art would often wander in to see what was going on.

Visual communication - for example, fashion. Something I first noticed was that many students in those days "dressed old" - particularly those with very little or no vision - setting them apart from their peers. They wore the clothes approved of by their parents. This illustrates the degree to which young people may become victims of perhaps less than reliable opinions and advice. I remember a conversation in which a blind student refused adamantly to discuss using red alongside green in the weaving she was making. Her mother had told her never to wear red with green - and for her, it was an issue of fundamental security - not negotiable. So, complementary colours or not - she wasn't impressed - I had to accept it. The rules were changing - and why not?

While this particular difference of opinion may have been of no significance for her weaving - another solution would be as good or better - as an example of her reliance on another's set of visual values in a world dominated by visual communication, the social implications were far greater.

For many students, consciously or unconsciously, the nature of visual perception itself was in question. Exchanges of this kind were very revealing.

Can you see me when my back is turned to you? What is perspective actually like? Why are some colours called warm and others cold? Just what can you see with 20/20 vision at 100 metres? Discussing these things and finding ways to describe visual phenomena could be fun. They often came at unexpected moments, but they were serious questions.

Because you can't see, it doesn't necessarily mean that the nature of vision is not important for you - if you want to know, it is important.

The presence of one, and later a number visual artists, and the activities we undertook, would continue highlight aspects of this "interface of cultures". It was a great adventure for the students and for me. Here we were engaged in various activities we called art and in which we were all busy examining among other things our individual ways of perceiving and relating to things around us. Little personal discoveries were being made all the time, sometimes things weren't what they appeared to be and sometimes things were as deceptive as they appeared. Perplexing phenomena were explained. Even little anomalies in vocabulary were discovered, pointing to gaps in previous experience.

The students' understanding and their confidence in their perceptual and operational abilities - visual, tactual and spatial - were growing.

The important thing was that in these activities they could employ their own individual ways of working. Art valued and favoured their individuality. Students with some vision had previously been measured against the severe and unbending test of reading print and some rather arbitrary line drawings of cars and other things (which, without the practised knowledge of a particular representational convention, might look more like an insect trail). Students without sight generally had experience of more predictable, convergent tactual and manual skills - reading Braille, mobility training and certain sports activities, for example.

Now they were able to exercise their perception more freely in their own individual ways. It wasn't always easy, but what they were producing was the only validation needed. Their perceptions hit the spot. They were true and they produced art. Not a shadow of someone else's art, but their own art. Once you'd seen it you had to believe it. The whole thing had a momentum to it, which I think just about the whole of the college, staff and students, embraced.

I don't think it would have been possible to produce such diversity if the students themselves had not been so ambitious and individually committed to their ideas. Frequently they were ahead of me as the range of activities and media grew.

People encountering the students' work for the first time were usually surprised by its expressive energy and power, its colour, its conviction, its diversity.

It's expressive force must surely have derived in part from deeper emotional needs. Of the many problems which accompany a visual impairment the underlying one is that once categorised as such you are often very often in the hands of other people. As one of my students said so passionately, "My visual impairment, it isn't my problem, it's everyone else's problem".

Art is an activity in which, ultimately, you are in control. Provided, of course, you have an understanding of your materials, you can employ this power to produce a new entity, a thing in its own right, something personal to yourself, notable and unique. Watching a group blind people at work made me for the first time truly aware of this most basic fact of what it is to make something.

I particularly want to stress this aspect, the fulfilment of emotional needs and imagination, because I think of all the reasons for doing art it is the ultimate and sufficient reason. It is what, in the broadest terms, makes art happen. In the end, it is I am sure what drove and sustained the development of art at RNC.

It is why, in many ways, it was the work produced "purely" for recreation that was the department's greatest justification.

The LOOK touring exhibition, which opened at the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea, was very much a celebration of work produced for the enjoyment of doing it, to recognise the artistic potential of all our students, as much as those who by this time 1992 - 94, were taking it up vocationally.

LOOK was a joint project with Sue Blagden, who ran the art department at Queen Alexandra College, Birmingham. The project arose from the response to an exhibition accompanying the ICEVH conference at Warwick two years previously. The exhibition featured the work of a number of schools as well as our two colleges. The delegates from other countries seemed particularly amazed at the quality of the work and there was a general call for it to be seen more widely. It fell to Sue and I to do it. It was a great pleasure to work with Sue and I should like to acknowledge her work and what she has achieved at QAC.

In the book, "What colour is the wind?", which we wrote together to accompany LOOK, you will find illustrated the quality and diversity of work produced by non specialist students. We felt it would be well understood by the artists who created new forms in the 20th century; the natural cubism produced by students whose vision is so myopic that they do naturally look at things from many positions in order to understand them; the expressionistic, sometimes surreal form, produced by students

working by touch; pure, saturated colour: abstraction of different forms in paint and sculpture.

As well as this, LOOK and What colour... were an attempt to demonstrate the value of art for our students, it's essential value in helping them to understand and interact with the physical world around them, making their discoveries in their own way and at their own pace.

I've tried above to explain why art is such a good vehicle for this.

While LOOK was in progress, Amanda Hemmer was also developing Dance and Drama at RNC. Like art, dance and drama were immediately seized on by quite large numbers of students. Both have also generated a lot of interest among non-participating students and other staff.

Like art, their educational value rests precisely in the distinctive features which make them so attractive to students; physical activity - engagement with space; improvisation and free exploration of ideas; individuality of expression; communication - and, a crucial feature, the discipline of interaction and reliance on others in devising, rehearsal and performance. And like art, their inclusion in the curriculum as vocational subjects was also a result of student demand.

But the much greater speed of their transition into vocational subjects is a sign of the changing times and the new pressures in education and the popular word today - training.

Today Dance and Drama are well established together with Music as units of BTEC First and National diploma courses in Performing Arts. There is a BTEC National diploma in Music Technology, and A level in Media Studies. Like Art, these are all seen as vocational options.

I think this situation would have been truly unimaginable some eighteen years ago, when the first RNC students went on to art college. Then, there were misgivings and even some opposition. As an employment prospect the arts were seen as unreliable and insecure, definitely not suitable for someone with a visual impairment.

But the world of employment has changed considerably. The typewriter has been replaced by the PC and, just as significantly, DOS has been replaced by Windows.

The arts and media are now recognised as financially serious business. There is also an awareness, based on their achievements, of the potential contribution that people with a visual impairment can make in these fields.

They are popular areas of study in further and higher education and consequently it should be expected that students with a visual impairment want into them, too. But they are also notoriously competitive areas of employment.

Unlike the funding bodies, I tend to think that in vocational education we should not be over concerned with specific areas of employment - job specific training, that is - because specific jobs come and go very quickly these days. The keys to success are such qualities as ambition, initiative, self-confidence, reliability, flexibility, and good inter-personal skills.

Many students are enabled to develop these same qualities in the activities I have been describing. Many find subjects which rely continuously on a tiresome reading medium and being fixed in a seat for long periods particularly onerous - and without intrinsic merit. There are better, more fulfilling and as I have suggested more educationally valuable things for them to do - things that build a sense of personal achievement and self-worth.

The important thing about the arts is that they help students to discover and build upon their strengths. I have stressed individuality. From experience I believe individuality itself to be a particular strength among students who have a visual impairment. In a sense, individuality is thrust upon them by the very fact of their visual impairment - they have their own ways of seeing things and a fund of experience based upon their being - especially in the eyes of society - different. This shows in their creativity. I think their individuality should be developed. Now that the typing pool has been replaced by the call centre, individuality and inter-personal skills are at a premium.

Times have certainly changed.

But among the positive changes there lurk some dangers too. The liberalising of opportunities I have described, is beginning to experience a reverse. The competitive market place which education now is, particularly in the funding of further education, the focus on tick box training and the increasingly prescriptive modular, disjointed syllabuses, even in creative arts, all militate against the individual personal development which so many students require post 16. Many, particularly those with additional difficulties, must follow unrealistically specialised vocational courses.

Once we were able to interpret the curriculum to meet the needs of the student. A number of students, were enabled solely by such individually

devised courses to progress into higher education, with considerable success.

Now we are having to force the student to fit the system. The creeping conformity which threatens opportunity for our students is symptomatic, I think, of the grip of commercial interests - the commercial ethic - on the arts generally and on the minds of government.

In the specialist schools and colleges, which now serve many, many students with additional difficulties, the need for flexibility - and time - is ever greater. Often their students have underachieved in integrated settings, which are themselves under pressure. It is hard to see that such students could ever find themselves except in an environment where they can share common experiences with other like themselves.

Entering RNC today you will be assailed from all quarters by evidence of the students active participation in the arts, more so, I would venture than ordinary FE colleges. It is the same in other special schools and colleges.

I have suggested that the arts can have an important remedial function. In fact I regard it as essential. On a moment's reflection, it seems obvious. I frequently use this metaphor. When your broken arm has been mended, it remains weak. Physiotherapy - controlled and targeted exercise - helps to heal and make it strong again. The arm may not be as strong as it once was, but physiotherapy gives you confidence in using it. It is good to have confronted the weakness. Perhaps at the end of it, you discover that the arm is more useful than you had believed.

Some findings from research into arts provision for visually impaired people in Wales

Richard Bowers (Communications Officer, Wales Council for the Blind). This report is printed separately. If you require a copy, please contact Wales Council for the Blind on 029 20 473954 or email richard.bowers@wcbnet.freeserve.co.uk

Demonstrations and workshops:

A portfolio of work by Creative Arts students at RNC

John Everett and Amanda Hemmer.

John and Amanda illustrated John's earlier talk with concrete examples of students' work in the form of videos, slides and work which could be handled.

Making the visual arts accessible

Discussion led by Dr. Nich Pearson (former Welsh Arts Council; now Director, Welsh Consumer Council). It was suggested that information was the biggest barrier to making the arts accessible. The group discussed:

- the need for an holistic approach eg. not just thinking of the practical issues such as physical access to a building;
- being pro-active - not just 'adding on' services as the need arises;
- policy and practise should be inclusive;
- consider your audience;
- ensure guides receive visual awareness training (particularly in guiding);
- not being prescriptive/making assumptions;
- tailoring support to an individual where practicable;
- consulting the experts where necessary eg. producing tactile diagrams/audio guides.

They talked about audio description; the importance of touching objects; and balancing access with conservation.

Some practical questions were raised on making a particular exhibition accessible, which was totally in the dark. A comment was made regarding intellectual access: it is often assumed that visitors have a high level of knowledge about art.

Tailoring v.i. awareness training to the client's needs

Community Dance Wales and WCB Awareness Training Project.

This workshop focused on the development of a specialised awareness training package. The aim was to demonstrate how WCB builds upon Disability Equality Training by offering tailored sessions for its clients which focus on visual impairment. The outcome of this workshop will be a number of training sessions to be held around Wales for dance practitioners.

Audio description in the cinema - from script to screening

Carol Jones and Stephan Stockton - Chapter Arts, Cardiff.

Audio description provides a commentary over compact headphones for blind and visually impaired people allowing them to enjoy films alongside a sighted audience. A specially trained describer speaks during pauses in the dialogue and soundtrack providing essential visual information about the sets, characters and action. It can take up to an hour of listening, watching and writing to produce one minute of audio description material.

Carol Jones and Stephan Stockton took delegates through the process of audio describing cinema and demonstrated Chapter's mobile audio description unit. There was also a taster of audio description in action with a snippet of audio-described animation from Wallace and Gromit's "A Grand Day Out".

Review of forum theatre activity with WCB's Young View group

Theatr Fforwm Cymru.

The workshop first demonstrated how forum theatre was used within the WCB Young View project. This was followed by some forum theatre in action, tackling some negative experiences of blind and partially-sighted users of arts services.

Reminiscence work in Pembrokeshire

Elly Morgan and John Weston

This was a presentation of reminiscence work carried out in Pembrokeshire with visually impaired people. The work has culminated in a number of exhibitions and a CDROM.

Employment in the Arts

Andrew Hubbard led an exploration of disabling attitudes in the workplace. The talk's headings were as follows:

Barrier: Benefits

- Reliable information and guidance on whether taking up employment is going to cause a change in the level of benefits or result in a loss of certain benefits, especially disability benefits, is not easily found.
- Welfare benefits precludes further training.
- Welfare benefits impede transition from benefits into employment.
- Welfare benefits become part of a wider family income.
- Job related income may be too low to allow for moving into employment
- Benefits have become a socially acceptable reality.

Barrier: Transport

- Worries about being able to get to the workplace, at all and on time.
- Problem of getting to and from the railway station or the bus stop
- Not being able to travel is an additional isolating factor
- Using public transport can be dangerous
- Limit to training opportunities for people with disabilities
- Costs incurred by having to use public transport over longer distances
- Travelling without sight is exhausting

Barrier: Mobility

- Mobility is an important co-factor of being ready to enter or remain in employment.
- Job applicants with visual impairment require mobility assistance and training at crucial stages of job seeking.
- Mobility difficulties can affect performance at work and create added strain.
- Mobility problems cause loss of confidence and affect ability to go out.
- White stick is perceived as a social stigma.

Barrier: One to One Support

- Support is needed at the point of acquiring disability.

- Support is needed to bolster self esteem and confidence following the onset of disability.
- One-to-one support requires continuity
- Job seekers with disability need one-to one personal support to obtain employment.
- Job seekers suffer from lack of contact with the employment and training agencies.
- There is no single 'portal' for disabled people to access employment and training assistance.
- There is nowhere for employers to get advice on adjustments needed for disabled employees.
- Support is needed for positive image projection.

Barrier: Employers

- Employers are unwilling to give people with disabilities a chance.
- Job applicants with disabilities find it harder to get over the application and interview barriers.
- Employers perceive people with disabilities as health and safety risk and a liability.
- Attitudes in the workplace continue to cause discrimination
- Employers would rather recruit able-bodied employees.

Barrier: Job Centre

- Job centres are ill-adapted to the needs of visually impaired clients.
- Job centres are impersonal and un-supportive places for people with disabilities.
- Perceptions of the job centres are coloured by past experience
- Disability Employment Advisors in the job centres have a crucial role they struggle to fulfil.

Barrier: Access to Work

- Knowledge of Access to Work is insufficient.
- Access to Work does not always support its clients to their full potential.
- Access to Work is bureaucratic.
- The requirement that the employer contributes 20% of the Access to Work costs can be a barrier.

Barrier: Government Policies and Legislation

- Knowledge of the existing employment initiatives is scarce.

- New Deal for Disabled People has little to offer in terms of real jobs or prospects.
- New Deal for Disabled People has little to offer in terms of real jobs or prospects.
- People with disabilities do not trust the new employment initiatives.
- Government initiatives are regarded as subject to fashionable policies of the moment.
- Disability Discrimination Act has 'no teeth'.
- The Disability Discrimination Act may be counterproductive.

Discussion Groups

The delegates at the conference were split into four discussion groups (one of which conducted the discussion in the Welsh language). Each group was posed the same set of questions:

- What do you regard as the National Assembly's role in developing arts provision for visually impaired people?
- What about the Arts Council's role?
- Should there be a source of funding specifically for the development of arts and disability projects within the Arts Council?
- Which are the key services required to enable full participation in arts activities by people with a visual impairment?
- How can other sectors (such as health, social care, employment, housing etc.) contribute to the process of engaging visually impaired people in arts activities?

What do you regard as the National Assembly's role in developing arts provision for visually impaired people?

- It has a funding role.
- Its rôle is to lay out the structure.
- It is a facilitating rôle – policy should come from the bottom up and the Assembly should provide funding. The Minister should encourage the inclusion of visual impairment and ensure that provision is made realistically.
- The Assembly should be proactive.
- The money is there and they should be providing matching financial support as in Europe.
- It should set standards
- The Assembly should set-up "Best Practice" etc.

Local Government

- How will National Assembly funding impact on local government and local institutions?
- Should direct funding to them be accompanied by directives or guidelines?
- Assembly should provide appropriate finance. They must look at it from the perspective of local government – they issue a strategy but don't finance it.

- How much freedom should Councillors have to make policy decisions?
- The rôle of the Assembly is to explain priorities to local authorities.
- Perhaps members of local authorities should prioritise their own funding because priorities are different in different areas.
- But there is a danger of 22 separate policies emerging.
- The Assembly should give guidance but the local authorities should have some say.
- Local Councils need training and guidance to know what they should be providing and how to meet this need.

Funding

- There is a funding problem of temporary and project funding crowding out continuous revenue funding.
- It is easier to get money for short-term projects – the Assembly or the Arts Council need to fund long-term provision.
- Another funding issue is the comparative ease of funding projects with products and measurable outcomes against those where the emphasis is on the process.

Funding for v.i.

- It shouldn't be a favour to visually impaired people – it should be there as a right.
- Is it more difficult for visually impaired people to access funding?
- This is important because funding is the main issue.
- Accessible information about funding needed.
- Priorities are too often set by numbers so we must be aware that there are many more visually impaired people than the registered number.
- The funders want to be seen funding disabled people because they need to meet performance targets.
- Accessible information should be a regular part.
- Provision includes funding, experience and training.

Access issues

- Travel is extremely expensive for visually impaired people living in rural areas. Provision of transport is the key to social inclusion.
- More support and communication is essential.

What about the Arts Council's role?

- A change to the Arts Council whole ethos is necessary.

- They should raise awareness throughout their whole organisation.
- Members of the Arts Council should have v.i. awareness training.
- A panel of V.I.P.s would be helpful so that we have valuable feedback from actual users.
- Get away from the tick box mentality – provided they have ticked all the relevant boxes they don't care.
- The Arts Council should set standards.
- The Arts Council should encourage groups to include visual impairment and provide the same facilities as for sighted people.
- Those who receive funding must have an inclusive policy providing for specialist groups and trainers.
- Sybil Crouch said that a condition of grant should provide for disability.
- It must also be included in their marketing strategy.
- They should be raising awareness with the Assembly, Service Providers etc.
- Other sectors are involved in funding the arts.
- The Arts Council must encourage and be more proactive.
- They should encourage organisations to lobby the Assembly.
- An Access Officer is required for each County who could check out venues overseen by the Arts Council (cf Disability Sports Cymru).
- Form filling is off-putting and horrendous – they should make an easier process because the current one is too bureaucratic.
- Organisations need to link together and each to lend their experience.
- V.I.Ps need to feel involved – everyone needs to work together and move in the same direction.
- Commitment and lobbying.

Should there be a source of funding specifically for the development of arts and disability projects within the Arts Council?

- Partnership means including everyone in the package i.e. disabled and non-disabled.
- Why must we split everything up? Why can't we have one pot?
- Equal opportunities – no segregation or special cases for funding.
- Shouldn't separate disabled people from the general public – should be intrinsic in the existing budgets.
- Arts and disability projects example Year of Disability.
- 'Separate funding for disabled people (to help separate development) from Art Form Units.'
- Need to look at attitudes not just at ramps.
- Can't just go in with a checklist.

Which are the key services required to enable full participation in arts activities by people with a visual impairment?

- All the services mentioned in Richard's survey – this list is the most useful one.
- Information – accessible formats and study methods of dissemination e.g. local radio, local association etc.
- Support agencies need to be effective – this has resource implications.

Transport

- Especially at night.
- Major problem in the North and Mid Wales but not in Cardiff (it's even a problem for non-disabled people!)
- Transport effectively funded and an adequate service.
- Awareness of transport needs by grant-aid schemes.

Training

- It is important that we gather information about how many people require a service.
- The Sports Council funds disability officers.

Accessible information

- Creative approach to accessible information – this should be a positive thing not a chore.
- Intellectual access – material should be written in understandable words.
- This is something that we should consult about.
- Guidance could bring down the barriers.
- Inform venues of “good practice” – Art's Council could do this.
- More use should be made of Talking Newspapers and getting information out to people.
- More networking required.
- Website for all of this information should be accessible through local library service.
- Planning ahead and marketing essential.
- Knowledge of grant schemes to be made available.
- Networking by arts providers.
- Communication – the gate keepers have a duty to pass on information which they don't always carry out.

How can other sectors (such as health, social care, employment, housing etc.) contribute to the process of engaging visually impaired people in arts activities?

- Health – the arts as therapy.
- The benefits of the arts in improving people's lives.
- Health and well-being plan gives support to this.
- Open their eyes to what is going on, listen and work hand-in-hand.
- They question what we are doing and they are often too egocentric / power-hungry themselves to listen properly.
- Pockets of good practice don't mean parity.
- Everyone needs to be involved in discussion to promote integration.
- Ask if arts is on their agenda?
- Local government – resource implications.
- Set-up good neighbour schemes – co-ordinating the dissemination of information.
- Local authorities need to develop and create opportunities.
- The Arts are very stratified – disability arts are on a lower level.
- This must be done at a high level of planning.
- What about the Commercial Sector?