

PROFILE

Arts and disability' is a broad term we recognise as encompassing a range of arts activities involving people with disabilities both as practitioners and as audience members. Arts and disability practice can include art works by people with disabilities as well as arts activities involving people with disabilities.

We understand the terms 'people with disabilities' and 'disabled people' to include children and adults who experience a physical, sensory, learning, or mental health disability. It acknowledges the preference of some individuals and organisations for the use of one term in favour of the other. We will endeavour to keep informed of developments in terminology and to respond accordingly. In this paper the term Arts and Disability refers to the whole field of activity.

We recognise disability arts as a specific arts activity which involves work done by artists with disabilities as an expression of their identity as disabled people. Artwork created by disability arts practitioners contributes to the expression of a disability culture. The arts practice of artists with disabilities continues to add richness to the vocabulary of their art forms.

In the past, we have aimed to address the needs of people with disabilities across the entire spectrum of our activities, within our own policy and practice, by influencing arts organisations through incentives and funding, by working with other agencies and by providing support and funding for new and existing organisations and practitioners in the area of arts and disability and disability arts.

Our perspective is that of a social model of disability, while we acknowledge a preference for impairment focus by some people.

In 2005 the Arts Council funded seven companies to work in the area of arts and disability.

STRENGTHS

- There is now a track record of interest, experience, growth and achievement on which to build - many recent developments in the field of Arts and Health could be used as models
- We wholly endorse Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'.
- We appreciate that the arts and disability community shows a continued willingness to engage with us.
- We are committed to the area of arts and disability.
- We have undertaken research in the past, from which actions will follow
- The Arts and Disability Awards (jointly funded with The Arts Council of Northern Ireland) administered by the Arts and Disability Forum, Northern Ireland

CHALLENGES

- We wish to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged as artists, arts workers or audience members
- We wish to increase our disability competence

- The lack of training and educational opportunities in the arts for people with disabilities in Ireland
- We recognise that the current needs of the arts and disability community have not been adequately reflected in past policy or actions
- We wish form further links with Arts Council Northern Ireland, Scottish Arts Council and Arts Council England and other EU organisations to benefit from their evolved and excellent practice.
- We aim to create disability equality awareness, from an equality perspective, amongst the arts community in general. Disability Equality Training should be delivered by people with a disability and could be a condition of certain funding
- We recognise that we need to make focused interventions to ensure maximum impact.

PROPOSED RESPONSES TO THOSE CHALLENGES

- A. Establish a mandated network run by, and for, artists with disabilities which has a base in the Republic of Ireland. This could form part of the remit of an existing organisation.
- B. Draw in expertise from the arts and disability community (i.e. secondment of an individual) to enable the Arts Council to become disability competent and to assist us in implementing our policy.
- C. Provide, as far as possible, universal access to our premises, publications and procedures. Stipulate in our literature for individual artists that, where an artist with a disability needs to engage a personal assistant for a project, that this can form part of their budget submission. Undertake Disability Equality Training, carried out by a person with a disability and encourage our funded organisations to follow our lead.
- D. Develop a new approach to building capacity in the arts and disability community over a five year period. This may include: specific funding streams, for example to facilitate artists with disabilities to purchase digital and other equipment/ technologies; an increased budget for Arts and Disability development; and ways of open dialogue to ensure that funding continues to be underpinned by policy which addresses relevant needs.
- E. With the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, update the Arts and Disability Handbook, 1999.
- F. Develop and/or instigate partnerships with others in the arts and disability community.
- G. Develop an Arts and Equality policy which embraces all areas of anti-discrimination policy (i.e. each of the nine grounds for discrimination), to ensure inclusion and equitable artistic and social engagement.