

Good morning, and welcome. As chair of Arts Development UK I am delighted to be able to give the first keynote of this year's conference. My intention this morning is to set the scene, and hopefully the tone for the next two days of conference, and introduce some key areas for conversation.

I'm going to begin with a quick step back to ask what we mean by arts development. This might be obvious to us, and is writ large across the content of this conference, but the reason I wanted to start this morning by stating it, is that I am not sure it is always obvious in the wider world, and we have a responsibility to advocate and make the space for the principles of high quality arts development if we want to see it flourish.

Definitions in the arts are always tricky, but at the same time we do need to understand and agree on what makes arts development distinctive and worth pursuing.

For me, arts development is the space where, arts, people and place intersect. It isn't just about the arts or the artist, or just the people and the communities in which they live, or just the physical places and local context. Arts development is where they come together, with equal importance – arts and people and place, to address shared needs and opportunities, and there is a specific set of skills, knowledge and experience which can enable that collaboration to work well. From their very outset, arts and culture have been an intrinsic part of the way people, both individuals and communities, navigate their way in the world, and we are enabling that to happen in a modern context.

As part of that modern context I think it is also worth mentioning some more recent history. I'm only going to touch on a specific element this morning, although I do think there is a need to recognize and value the wider history of arts development. In the same way as there is value in definition, we know the importance of stories, and there is value in recognizing and marking the stories and history of arts development.

The part I'm going to talk about here is our own history: a fair number of you will know that Arts Development UK used to be called the national association of local government arts officers, nalgaio (in the best tradition of public sector acronyms), and itself came about through an amalgamation of two groups, one for district authority arts officers and one for county arts officers. The proliferation of local authority arts officers that led to nalgaio was supported by a number of factors, including the community arts movement and its role in community development, the support of the Arts Council for arts development posts in local authorities, and a recognition of the role the arts can play in addressing key issues around economic development and community well being. Arts Development Officers, embedded in local authorities, were able to really get inside the relationship between arts, people and place, and start to define the territory. So, our history really does define who we are. As political priorities have shifted, so has the language, more of which later, but the core principles for arts development have remained remarkably stable.

What has changed in recent times is local authority finances. The pressure of austerity is immense, and the argument about discretionary versus statutory which used to exercise us becomes almost irrelevant as many authorities, particularly unitary and county, struggle to maintain their statutory responsibilities. As one of the later arrivals within the local authority world, local authority arts services have been a significant casualty (with establishment posts down two thirds in the past seven years). But, the genie was out of the bottle, and running in parallel to the local authority narrative, is another, far more positive story of the development of independent specialist arts development organisations working in arts and health, arts and young people, arts and offenders, and much more, working alongside a whole number of ex local authority officers who have struck out independently, recognizing the value and importance of the work they do and finding new ways to resource it.

When we changed our constitution and name to Arts Development UK it was in recognition of this change. Arts development had outgrown its purely local authority role, and the growing sector now consists of a plurality of organisations and individuals. Outside of local authorities, our sector, alongside the rest of the arts sector, is dominated by micro-enterprises, often sole-traders, small social enterprises or charities.

We needed to focus on the arts development and ensure that everyone, not just local authority employees, working in the field had access to a professional network and support, so that is what we did.

So far, so good. But, so long as we have a public sector, with a role in health, social care, communities, education, planning and the economy, there is an inextricable link between it and arts development. This wider public sector is also changing, and rapidly. Pretty much every area where arts development intersects with public policy has undergone radical change since 2010. A whole new landscape and associated lexicon has developed: shared services, local enterprise partnerships, clinical commissioning groups, academies, national planning policy framework and more; public health has moved into local authorities, the delivery of state education has largely moved out. Keeping up with the pace of change is challenging even when you work in the public sector.

Those remaining local authority arts development officers have been keeping up with the changing landscape, often starting through necessity when looking for alternative ways to fund activity, but then maintaining and developing mutually effective relationships across local authority departments, acting as brokers and facilitators to ensure that the arts are fully engaged, with their particular focus depending on what issues are uppermost in their local area.

But, as I have already mentioned, local authority arts development officers are reducing in numbers and coverage. Our annual investment survey shows the level of change: with fully one third of authorities having no dedicated arts post or arts service at all, over 40% of remaining services have been restructured in the past two years, and one in four is expecting major cuts.

What does this mean and does it matter? The division we first identified some time ago between authorities that were able to maintain an arts service and those who were not is becoming more marked. All of the good practice, knowledge, and networks to support high quality public sector delivery through the arts can only be transformative where there are knowledgeable, passionate advocates able to make the arguments and drive forward change.

There are now significant areas of the UK, particularly in England, with no local authority focus on the arts, where it is up to often small individual arts organisations to take the message to key individuals in planning, public health, education, and economic development. Larger arts organisations with the time and resource to take on strategic conversations are largely concentrated in the same metropolitan areas where local authorities still have internal staff with a remit for arts and culture. The Arts Council England Creative People and Places programme is supporting structural change in some of those areas, but even though the programme is a real and genuine attempt to change the goal posts, the overall level and relatively short term nature of the funding, means that it can only do so much. And when I say short term, bear in mind I work in a city where our University Library is celebrating its 600th anniversary. If you need another example for the positive impact of a long-term commitment to culture, Cambridge is a pretty good one.

The loss of internal advocacy for the arts within local authorities affects every point at which arts and culture interacts with local government. These are wide ranging and although this loss often does not have a visible and immediate impact, the longer term consequences are very significant. We can see the areas of risk (and, conversely, opportunity) by tracking key themes for our

remaining local authority members, including: growth and place-making, health and well-being, children and young people.

I'm going to delve a little further into place-making and planning: this is a great example as it can be the driest of the subject matter, and provides a complete lack of any immediate benefit to individuals and organisations who involve themselves with the process; in stark contrast to the long term negative impact of not engaging in planning.

Despite the inclusion of cultural well-being within the National Planning Policy Framework, without specialist internal knowledge, there remain significant barriers before local plans sufficiently address the local authority responsibility for cultural well being. This matters because Local Plans effectively define the development parameters of a locality over the long term and whether or not for example, arts facilities are included within the range of local infrastructure identified as fundable through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Local authorities also have other areas of place making responsibility that relate to arts and culture, including but not limited to licensing, environmental health, community safety, and transport; all of which have an impact on the potential for arts and culture to contribute effectively, and where relatively minor adjustments can make it either much easier or much harder to make that contribution. Without coherent voices holding these areas to account, there is a real risk that we inadvertently lose ground.

A similar issue is developing in relation to public health: this is an area where the burgeoning arts and health sector should be able to make a significant difference, however without a combination of national and local guidance, and particularly in those areas without specialist cultural leads within local authorities, the opportunity is at risk. The work of the Cultural Commissioning programme is very helpful, but again to what extent it will be able to become embedded without effective local leadership is difficult to gauge.

The position for children and young people is now somewhat different, with the strongly positive lead given by Arts Council England through the Cultural Education Challenge and the developing Cultural Education Partnerships. Although new, these are providing a strong sense of direction, backed up with a high level national framework and support from the Bridge organisations, to develop effective local action.

We can no longer talk about the lack of evidence to support the case for arts development: the arts and cultural sector has responded very well to calls to demonstrate its relevance and value to the wider needs of our communities. The evidence for the important role arts and cultural engagement plays in formal and lifelong education, in health, in social and community cohesion, is much better documented, and where there are gaps, these have been identified and are the subject of meaningful interventions (see for example the recent paper on Cultural and Creative Spillovers in Europe which very clearly articulates the current state of the evidence, and what the sector's next moves should be to build a fuller understanding of that phenomenon).

However changing public policy is not just a process of producing valid evidence, but also bringing both the evidence and a supporting narrative to the attention of policy makers. As I outlined above, the arts and cultural sector as a whole (not just arts development) is dominated by small organisations. Even though they very often keep themselves up to date with the latest research in their field, in order to inform their own practice, they do not then have the additional time and resources to take that message through to policy makers clearly and consistently. Where there are local authority officers tasked with place making and familiar with the arts and cultural sector, good progress is being made, as it is also in the relatively small number of locations with cultural organisations of sufficient scale able and willing to develop their own high level strategic partnerships (notably within our largest cities), but again, in large areas of the country, this work is

not taking place, and the opportunity to place culture and creativity as a cost effective and multi-faceted route to effective communities risks being lost.

So, what can we do? The title for this key-note talks about local leadership, and leadership is at the heart of this issue. Leadership that is not about a single organisation, or a particular sub-sector, but which addresses the relationships between arts, people, and place, rooted in local collaboration and co-operation, and drawing on the immense opportunities provided by new mechanisms for connectivity and communication.

This is not news - we are already seeing some remarkable examples taking shape: tomorrow Stella Duffy is running a session on Fun Palaces, a movement that has grown from an idea and the power of social media into a meaningful force for change, connecting people across the country. STEAM Co is taking a similar route, promoting the relationship between the arts and STEM subjects in and beyond schools, through engaging activists on the ground across the country.

The newest example is the local cultural education partnerships, starting off with 50 back in October last year, and already up to 90 plus, this is very much an idea whose time has come.

What all these quite different examples have in common (apart from their interest in education and learning) is a shared high level aspiration and clear goals, combined with locally relevant action, and connections that allow ideas developed in one part of the country to be shared in others. They draw on high quality evidence and link into national policy, but don't presume to set local targets. The cultural education partnerships in particular are supported by the network of Bridge organisations and Arts Council England's high level advocacy for the role of cultural education at a national level.

We need to learn from these early adopters and actively explore how this approach can be used in the other key areas such as planning and health.

We know already from the cultural education partnerships that the combination of a relatively light touch high level aspiration combined with the permission just to get on with it on the ground is effective at getting new partnerships to start. What we don't quite know yet is what are the local conditions that make the difference to their effectiveness and sustainability, or what level of national advocacy and guidance will work best. There is a real opportunity to follow the partnerships as they develop to see if we can identify a consistent combination of national and local factors that have the most effective results.

The examples so far, although very exciting, don't yet stray into the territory I discussed earlier, of long term infrastructure planning. Here there is little or no even enlightened self-interest to encourage organisations and individuals: engaging with planning policy certainly won't have a positive effect on the balance sheet in the near to mid term (a situation which, especially for charitable organisations, means effective engagement can be genuinely difficult to justify).

The larger Arts Council National Portfolio organisations and Major Partner Museums could play a significant role where they exist, and although this is a purely personal view, given that there hasn't yet been time to have an internal discussion about the Arts Council England consultation on their future investment strategy published last week, the proposal for different tiers of portfolio organisations is very encouraging, not only because of the entry level, which could open the way for a more diverse and geographically spread portfolio, but also for the clear leadership role suggested for the larger organisations, which I very much hope will include engagement with strategic planning. There is also a role for other major institutions such as Universities, and even some major employers as they recognize the importance of quality of life to their bottom line.

However, it will also be essential to consider how partnerships work on a broader base, recognizing that much of the most pertinent local knowledge is held by those smaller organisations without the resources to lead engagement. There will always be a tension between the need to do the day job and taking time out to address the bigger picture, but the will to contribute is definitely there.

At the same time, local authorities need to be encouraged to recognize and respond to their responsibility for cultural well-being. Some, and I expect many of those are represented here, already get this and are working extremely hard to meet the challenges presented by reducing funds, but others have walked away, and we need to find a way to get them back. Sometimes, and this is a tricky one for me, this will not mean re-instating a specialist post, but rather recognizing and engaging with these developing local partnerships as they bring together a broad base of interested players.

The work to re-engage with local authorities has to happen at all levels: a strong national message has to be backed up with action on the ground and vice versa. I met with Darren Henley just last week and am confident that he and his staff at Arts Council England are working hard to get that national message out (I know that many of you will have already had a visit) and have plans in train to provide much more easily accessible resources and information to back up your work.

The Arts Development UK role in all of this will continue to be a combination of advocacy and profile raising for the principles of arts development, supporting your professional development, and crucially providing an easily accessible route for identifying useful models and connecting with potential partners. We can only do this with your active engagement, so please take the opportunity of the next two days to have in depth conversations, learn more about what works (and what doesn't), make new connections, and develop your capacity to be part of the answer to local leadership.

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23 February 2016, St Andrews Halls, Norwich.**