

Young Audiences Group

Research Project Report

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culture Radar

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Introduction

The Young Audiences Group comprises freelancers, regular and non-regularly funded organisations working with young audiences across Scotland. Through consultation and research conducted by the Group in 2020 it identified that, long term, its aims will be to:

1. Build greater unity, collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the young audiences ecology to positively impact creative talent and skills development.
2. Raise awareness and increase understanding of the value of young audiences work with key stakeholders.
3. Increase engagement with and relevance for young audiences work with diverse communities across Scotland.
4. Increase funding and income generation for young audiences work, leading to more sustainable delivery and employment.

In June 2021 the Group commissioned Culture Radar to help the Group identify key needs and priorities for the Group's ongoing work, through some targeted desk research, sector mapping and consultation.

Background to the project

The Young Audiences Group was established as an informal group in 2018 in response to a specific funding crisis which saw two of Scotland's foremost theatre companies producing high quality work for young audiences lose their regular funding.

The Group's activities have been focused on advocacy and awareness raising to national agencies, lobbying groups and the Scottish Government. While regular funding was re-instated to the organisations concerned as a result, a number of stakeholders remained concerned about the artform's ongoing vulnerability. Research projects to help inform future direction were commissioned by the Group in 2020, including an anti-racism study (ongoing) and this research report.

Challenges

Since 2020, the marketplace for the Group has been changed significantly by global events. COVID-19 and Brexit have hit the culture and creative industries hard, disproportionately impacting women's employment, workers under the age of 25 years, those with disability, those from minority ethnic communities and freelance workers "who will struggle to find or maintain jobs in the post-crisis period".¹

¹ The Economic Advisory Group's Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland (June 2020)

Performance and live events have been particularly hard hit, with a high percentage of that workforce leaving the sector in search of work and 70% of organisations reporting a decrease in turnover (as of July 2021) compared to 31% of the economy overall.²

This means the Group needs to consider both pre-existing, current and ongoing challenges in its future planning:

1. Historically, there has been a lack of consistent funding for the delivery of work for young audiences which has led to sector fragmentation and disempowerment.
2. A lack of cohesion and resilience has led to a lack of understanding and confusion around the value of work for younger audiences generally, as well as who delivers and leads on it.
3. Recent global socio/political campaigns have highlighted significant gaps in diversity, representation and inclusion both in the workforce, and in its audiences.
4. Covid-19 has intensified existing economic pressures and sustainability issues for companies and freelancers working with young audiences.

Opportunities

While the situation is undoubtedly critical, stakeholders across the culture and creative industries have noted opportunities arising from the last 18 months which are relevant to the project, including:

1. The pandemic has underlined the precariousness of creative livelihoods. There is an opportunity for the Young Audiences Group to build on its recent experience and consider how it can enable greater collaboration, unity and knowledge-sharing in the future to empower and support practitioners and organisations in the sector.
2. The Scottish Government has a commitment to Fair Work and sets out its cultural ambitions in the Cultural Strategy for Scotland (published March 2020) which puts culture at the heart of social transformation and conditions for a wellbeing economy. With the Youth Arts Strategy and forthcoming incorporation of the United National Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law, there is now a strong national and international framework in which to present the value, benefit and impact of Scotland producing world-class work with young audiences.
3. There is an opportunity for the Group to build on this baseline research, and its anti-racism study, to develop partnerships and approaches to increase engagement with diverse communities across Scotland.

² Submission to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, 23-Sept-21, and to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, 15-Oct-21.

4. There is an opportunity to consider strategic partnerships across and outwith the sector (e.g., venues, national companies, education), as well as new public funding priorities, to make a new and bold investment case for work for and with young audiences.

In a broad sense then, there are opportunities for the Young Audiences Group to consider new perspectives for its ongoing work.

Project aims and methodology

In response to the challenges and opportunities above, the aims of this research project were to identify:

1. Strategic alignments and priorities that might usefully support a development framework for the Young Audiences Group.
2. Options for the Group to increase the visibility, sustainability, understanding and inclusiveness of young audiences work across Scotland.
3. Development opportunities across culture, education, health and third sector to increase the sustainability of young audiences work.

Desk research was undertaken by Jim Tough and Jeanie Scott between September and November 2021 with a focus on national policy and strategies of relevance to the Group's work.

A Mapping Survey was led by Ruth Stevenson in July–August 2021. Individuals and organisations/collectives that work in the young audiences sector were invited to complete mapping forms to provide information about their current work in the sector, with respondents able to 'opt in' to later stages of the project. The survey was promoted via the Young Audiences Group, Creative Scotland Opportunities website, and on relevant websites and social media. Mapping entries were cleaned and de-duped, and complete information about 42 organisations / collectives and 90 individual members of the sector workforce was analysed. The findings from the mapping exercise are summarised in this report.

Consultations were undertaken in October 2021 and January 2022:

- 13th October 2021 with 12 members of the Young Audiences Advisory Group to consider findings from the Mapping Survey
- 11th January 2022 with 7 freelancers who had opted in for consultation through the Mapping Survey.
- 12th January 2022 with 12 freelancers and employed stakeholders who had opted in for consultation through the Mapping Survey.

Desk Research

Reference to national policy and sector strategies is useful for the Young Audiences Group in considering its future direction and activities.

This section will briefly review key alignments and priorities identified from the Culture Strategy for Scotland, Creative Scotland's Annual Plan, the Youth Arts Strategy and culture sector Covid-recovery planning.

National Culture Strategy for Scotland

The Scottish Government's Cultural Strategy for Scotland sets a national vision for the sector in its broadest sense, and an overarching direction of travel for all stakeholders. Its three Ambitions have relevance for this project:

"Ambition 1: Strengthening Culture: Sustaining and nurturing culture to flourish and to evolve as a diverse, positive force in society, across all of Scotland."

This is concerned with valuing and supporting creative people, encouraging greater openness and diversity, and fostering international collaboration.

Alignment with this Ambition will be important for strong, credible advocacy and case-making to attract investment and partnerships for long term sustainability. There is also an opportunity for the Group to frame its 'audiences' in relation to Ambition 1 for engagement and relevance.

"Ambition 2: Transforming through Culture: Demonstrating that culture is central to Scotland's wellbeing and cultural, social, economic and environmental prosperity."

The strategy underlines the commitment to the UNCRC and in particular Article 31 (children's right to the arts and cultural life) and empowering children and young people in cultural decision-making. Clear delivery partners and routes for work with children and young people are also identified in terms of schools and education, local authorities, out of school care, community settings and digital platforms.

There is strong alignment potential here for the Group's members in terms of the bespoke role they can play in supporting a generation of children and young people impacted in different ways by COVID-19, building greater relevance and increasing engagement.

"Ambition 3: Empowering through Culture: Celebrating culture as part of every community, essential to our lives and wellbeing."

The strategy emphasises the importance of access, participation and equity of cultural opportunity for all, including how and where participation is supported. It is also an aim of Ambition 3 that the National Companies contribute to the development of "a joined-up approach to strategic cultural planning and ensure

equity of access, participation and opportunity for all communities across Scotland.”

There is strong alignment for the Group in demonstrating how work made with and for children and young people celebrates culture, nurtures excellence and enables participation. To deliver this effectively requires national and regional partners, venues, touring agencies and freelancers to be working together.

There is an opportunity to consider how strategic partnerships and relationships (including with National Companies) could be enhanced and developed through the Group’s future activities to deliver more against Ambition 3.

Creative Scotland strategic aims and priorities

A key theme of Creative Scotland’s 10 Year Strategy, *Unlocking Potential Embracing Ambition* (2014/24) is that creative ideas are brought to life by a diverse, skilled and connected leadership and workforce.

Creative Scotland’s Annual Plan 2021/22 also sets (within the context of its Strategy) four strategic priorities for its work which “...reflect the fundamental changes which need to come in order to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and to address both the climate emergency and the unacceptable levels of inequality and discrimination that persist across society.”

These new priorities are:

“Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion: Supporting a diverse range of creative people, communities, and activity, promoting an equality of opportunity to create, participate and engage.

Sustainable Development: Helping tackle the climate emergency and supporting the growth of sustainable creative businesses across Scotland.

Fair Work: Promoting fair pay, conditions, and employment opportunities across the creative sector.

International: Developing innovative and sustainable ways of strengthening international collaboration and promoting artistic and cultural exchange.”

Of interest to the Group is that Creative Scotland states it is looking to:

- Work with organisations to develop shared leadership across sectors that is knowledgeable, confident and ambitious.
- Support the development of sustainable business models.
- Strengthen the talent and skills needed to develop sustainable careers through sectoral partnerships, including higher education.

National Youth Arts Strategy

The National Youth Arts Strategy (*Time to Shine*) is Scotland's arts strategy for young people aged 0–25, with a core purpose to enrich young people's lives through arts and creativity. Published in 2013, it was intended to have a ten-year scope and is therefore still current. The strategy identifies three core themes:

Participation – creating and sustaining engagement

Progression – nurturing creativity and talent

Provision – developing infrastructure and quality

The third theme clearly aligns to the interests of the Young Audiences Group with the stated aim "To create and develop infrastructure for the children and young people's arts sector and ensure continuous quality improvement".

The National Youth Arts Strategy's objectives include exploring the feasibility of establishing a national youth arts consortium or network to advocate for young people's arts in Scotland, and to coordinate collaborative working, sharing of information and good practice across sectors to enable the effective delivery of Time to Shine.

Drilling down into the theme however (and reviewing the investment that followed) suggests that the focus to date has been primarily related to opportunities for participation for young people, rather than provision in the sense of support for the artists and arts organisations that produce work for young audiences. It does, however, acknowledge that:

"Scotland has a pool of highly talented, dedicated and passionate artists, practitioners and organisations, working hard to deliver high quality arts activities which cover the twin ambitions of engaging as many young people as possible; and supporting the on-going development of those with a particular talent."

The Young Audiences Group may wish to consider how it can build on its experience as an informal advocacy group (and its research) to engage with development of the next Youth Arts Strategy as a formalised consortium or network.

Review of Touring Theatre and Dance

The Review of Touring Theatre and Dance (Creative Scotland, 2017) makes two mentions of children and young people:

- A key strategic intervention with the *Theatre in Schools Touring Programme* led by Imagine to support and develop the provision of theatre in Scotland's schools, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that every child in Scotland receives (at nursery or school) a minimum of one performing arts production per year as a core part of their education.

- That venues programme a wide range of arts genres, with work for children and young people featuring very highly across all venues. Larger venues had a far broader range of programming opportunities.

This highlights the importance of touring opportunities as income for those making work for young people, and the necessity and importance of being able to manage and develop business relationships across education as well as community, local authority and commercial venues across Scotland for sector sustainability and audience development.

International

Scotland enjoys a strong and dynamic theatre and dance sector for young audiences and is regularly seen on the international stage.

Children's Rights

At an international level children's rights are a key priority for members of the Young Audiences Group, particularly in relation to changing law post-Brexit. In an article authored by the Group on the Children in Scotland website:

“Their right to participate freely in arts and culture is protected in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. However, participating in the arts can help ensure other rights are fulfilled including the right to good mental health (Article 24); the right to an education that develops their mind, body and talents and helps them be the best they can be (Article 29) and the right to be listened to and have a voice (Article 12).”

Networks

ASSITEJ International unites theatres, organisations and individuals throughout the world who make theatre for children and young people. ASSITEJ is dedicated to the artistic, cultural and educational rights of children and young people across the globe and advocates on behalf of all children. The members of ASSITEJ are national centres, professional networks, and individuals from around 100 countries across the world. Scottish representation and involvement with ASSITEJ is varied however with two Scottish organisations sitting on the UK Board, and one engaging in a network of ASSITEJ International.³

An understanding of the full reach of the young audiences ecology into international settings, touring and productions (in terms of both organisations and freelancers)

³ ASSITEJ UK includes three Scottish members (Imagine, Starcatchers and Catherine Wheels) with two of these (Imagine and Catherine Wheels) sitting on the ASSITEJ UK Board, but neither Imagine nor Catherine Wheels sit on the Executive Committee of ASSITEJ International. Starcatchers, although not a UK Board member, does contribute to SmallSize, an Early Years global network of ASSITEJ International.

would help to inform the potential for growth in this area, and corresponding practitioner and organisation needs to effectively deliver international work.⁴

COVID-19 Recovery

Sector impacts

The arts, culture and heritage sectors suffered "catastrophically" during the pandemic, a study by the University of Sheffield has found. It revealed the industry suffered a 60% decline in output because of restrictions. About 55% of jobs – 450,000 people – were furloughed in the sector, second only to hospitality, and well above the national average of 16%. The pandemic has also had the greatest effect on the mental health of freelancers, with 76.5% reporting a worsening in their mental wellbeing.

Submissions by sector leaders and representatives from Creative Scotland to *Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee*⁵ and the *Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee*⁶ highlighted strategic challenges for Scotland's sector from the impact of COVID-19 including:

- A high percentage of people leaving the sector in search of work, resulting in knowledge drain and skills shortages.
- 70% of arts and entertainment sector had reported a decrease in turnover (as of July 2021) compared to 31% of the economy overall.
- A need for organisations to be supported through "radical restructure" to rethink business models in order to meet fair pay standards.

Recovery funding

The Arts in Education Recovery Group was set up in response to the pandemic to consider how best to support children and young people's access to artistic, cultural and creative opportunities during COVID-19 recovery, but is also focused on advocacy beyond recovery and into the longer term. This group (representing all artforms) has been involved in advocacy and recovery guidance, has published case studies and learning regarding safe working in face-to-face settings promoting best practice and has developed a strategic partnership with Education Scotland. The work of the group will be ongoing into 2022, but its life expectancy beyond that is unknown.

The Youth Arts Fund was also launched in 2021 as a direct response to COVID-19 with £691,000 in funding awarded to agencies and organisations to manage distribution

⁴ International is a priority under the Cultural Strategy for Scotland, and for Creative Scotland funding.

⁵ Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, 23-Sept-21

⁶ Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee, 15-Oct-21

of awards for local projects. There are examples where the funds are being used to employ freelance artists to deliver work and benefit from the investment.

Workforce

Across the UK surveys have been undertaken by a number of groups, organisations and agencies to chart and assess the impact of COVID-19. Where these relate to children and young people they are mostly focused on the experience of the Arts in Education sector.

Significant data has emerged around the impact on creative freelancers however, which is relevant for the young audiences ecology which relies heavily on freelance resource.

The recent *Big Freelancers Report*⁷ provides a thorough and detailed review of key concerns and challenges for freelance theatre workers post pandemic. Findings highlight many issues including fair pay, talent development and training, working conditions, the 'inclusivity emergency' and the need to acknowledge that "The pandemic has further shifted the balance of sector power in favour of cultural organisations and away from freelancers".

Creative United's *Mind the Understanding Gap: The Value of Creative Freelancers*⁸ report examines the wider role of freelancers in the creative sector. It makes visible the range of roles and the value that creative freelancers generate for the economy and society and makes recommendations to "enable the full and sustainable support of creative freelancers." These include "...place-based policy to recognise, fully value and fully invest against the value generation of creative freelancers in support of place-based outcomes."⁹

The Federation of Scottish Theatre's research, *The State of Play*, is due for publication in 2022 which will profile and inform the picture for the Scottish performing arts sector.

There is a strong need therefore for the Young Audiences Group to factor in recovery, and the capacity, needs and wellbeing of its workforce, as part of its future planning.

What the literature tells us about practitioners and audiences

Taking as a starting point that the 'audience' for arts can mean both people engaging with the arts as a participant, and people engaging with the arts as a member of an audience at an arts production – both involve artists. In the participant context the artist may be the facilitator, enabler and teacher.

⁷ Big Freelancers Report, 2021, Freelancers Make Theatre

⁸ Mind the Understanding Gap: The Value of Creative Freelancers, 2021, Creative United

⁹ Mind the Understanding Gap: The Value of Creative Freelancers, p.27.

Continuing the argument that *'the arts and artists must be brought into the mainstream fold of every child's support network'* addresses a fundamental of the Children's Rights agenda. It is possible that part of the children and young audiences case is being heard. In most of the strategies noted above, there are opportunities for companies and freelancers to contribute to the positive experience for children and young people as participants.

What seems to be less in evidence, in a strategic sense, is a policy commitment to ensuring the creation and production of high-quality new work for young people simply as members of an audience.

A few key companies (members of the Young Audiences Group) produce and present work of recognised quality but are dependent on open and competitive funding. Similarly, there is a network of freelancers (writers, actors, musicians, dancers, technicians, producers) with proven expertise in creating work for children but who have precarious and unpredictable livelihoods. The work of companies like Imagine and Starcatchers in supporting and developing their work is all the more important in this context.

Leadership and representation for young audiences in Scotland

In scanning sector strategies, a mixed picture emerges for leadership and representation for those working with young audiences in Scotland. A number of agencies and development bodies are mentioned by name in the *Culture Strategy for Scotland* as working with children and young people, for example National Theatre Scotland, Scottish Book Trust and Engage Scotland.

A number of sector support and regularly funded organisations are referenced in the Youth Arts Strategy (*Time to Shine*) which states:

“Theatre for young people in Scotland is an acknowledged strength both at home and abroad. Imagine is an internationally renowned festival for ages 0–18 yrs and it has a magnetic draw for some of the best theatre companies from around the world. Scotland's youth theatre sector is well networked and, through the work of Promote YT, is proactive in its self-development, while Scotland's production of children's theatre has received international recognition for its quality and inventiveness.”

Along with Imagine and Promote YT, *Time to Shine* references Scottish Youth Theatre, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, ProjectAbility, The Scottish Book Trust, The Scottish Storytelling Centre as well as Glasgow Film Theatre and Filmhouse as delivering work for children and young people.

Some organisations are engaged and have a presence in networks beyond Scotland (such as ASSITEJ UK and SmallSize/ASSITEJ International, see page 9), but they are engaged for their own work, rather than as representatives of 'Young Audiences in Scotland'.

In response to the pandemic, leadership is also in evidence through the work of the Arts in Education Recovery Group which includes members of the Young Audiences Group but comprises representatives across all artforms.

Collectively, this presents a very broad scope of organisations delivering cultural activity of varying kinds at different levels for children and young people. This is a key challenge for the Young Audiences Group in delivering on its aims to increase understanding of the value of young audiences work with key stakeholders.

There are successful examples of networks which successfully drive understanding, advocacy and activities for other artforms (two are illustrated below) which could be considered as part of the Young Audiences Group's future planning.

Literature Alliance Scotland (LAS)

Their vision is that LAS is a trusted, strong collective voice for Scotland's literature and languages, which are celebrated locally, nationally and internationally.

LAS was formed in spring 2015 as successor to the Literature Forum for Scotland, which was first set up in 2001, at the invitation of the then Literature Committee of the Scottish Arts Council. In 2006, following a review of its remit by the Scottish Arts Council, the Literature Forum was formally recognised as a national Advisory Council for Literature, and acted in this capacity. In mid-2014, Literature Forum members decided to review the organisation's future role and to consider how it should develop to become a stronger and more inclusive voice for literature and languages in Scotland and abroad, leading to the transition in spring 2015 to Literature Alliance Scotland.

LAS is a membership organisation, a registered charity and with funding from Creative Scotland has offered a number of opportunities for example in professional development. It has recently undertaken surveys into how the sector is perceived from a BAME perspective.

Contemporary Visual Arts Network

The Contemporary Visual Arts Network represents a diverse visual arts ecology in England, including a broad range of artistic and curatorial practice, freelance artists and directors, producers and funded organisations. Its activities (supported by Arts Council England) cover localised programmes across nine regions. While priorities and delivery differ at a regional level, all regional networks subscribe to CVAN's collective mission, vision and values.

A key part of the network's mission is advocacy to support and promote the visibility and resilience of the contemporary visual arts ecology in England and drive positive change for livelihoods and sustainability.

CVAN is one of many 'representative' networks for the visual arts in the UK, each following a slightly different model or leading on a different mission / agenda.

Historically this has led to competitiveness rather than collaboration, but interestingly, as a result of Covid-19, CVAN and some of its members have proposed the formation of a new, overarching Alliance for the visual arts, drawing together the disparate representative groups under one roof to effect stronger advocacy, clarity of vision, and partnership building to benefit the visual arts ecology.

Key findings from the desk research

- There is potential for the Young Audiences Group to develop strong alignment with national and sector strategies to help attract investment to fulfil its aims.
- Sustaining delivery of young audiences work, which is delivered across a diverse range of performance settings, require varied stakeholder partnerships and relationships to be managed and developed if income and security is to increase, and access and participation are to be sustained.
- Young audiences work relies heavily on the creativity, output and flexibility of freelance practitioners. Research stresses the impact COVID-19 has had on the resource and wellbeing of the sector, and the importance of best practice in how organisations employ, engage and work with freelancers through recovery and long-term.
- There is currently little research evidence or policy commitment to ensuring the creation and production of high-quality new work for children and young people simply as members of an audience.¹⁰
- Scotland's young audiences ecology is regularly seen on the international stage with some interaction in existing networks. International could be a future area of strength for young audiences in terms of talent development, knowledge exchange, digital and live export.
- Leadership and representation for young audiences work in Scotland is not clear. National Companies, the Arts in Education Recovery Advisory Group and regularly funded organisations have roles, but there is currently a gap for dedicated representation and activity around work with children and young audiences.

¹⁰ [Imaginate announced support of PhD research in Oct 2021: "Valuing Young Audience: how children experience and value live theatre and dance, and why it matters". Sian Mitchel MacGregor, University of Aberdeen](#)

Young Audiences Mapping

The mapping exercise identified 42 organisations and 90 individuals working in the young audiences sector in Scotland, and their responses give us a snapshot of the sector as it currently stands.

A summary of key findings is included below (based on a full report, also submitted to the Young Audiences Advisory Group), followed by broad conclusions and considerations for consultation.

Location

95% of the responding organisations and individuals provided a postcode, which enables us to map their location. The following map overlays where the young audiences sector individuals are based (in red) with where the young audiences sector organisations are based (in blue).

The vast majority of the organisations based in the Central Belt and in Scotland's cities.



Key findings from the mapping

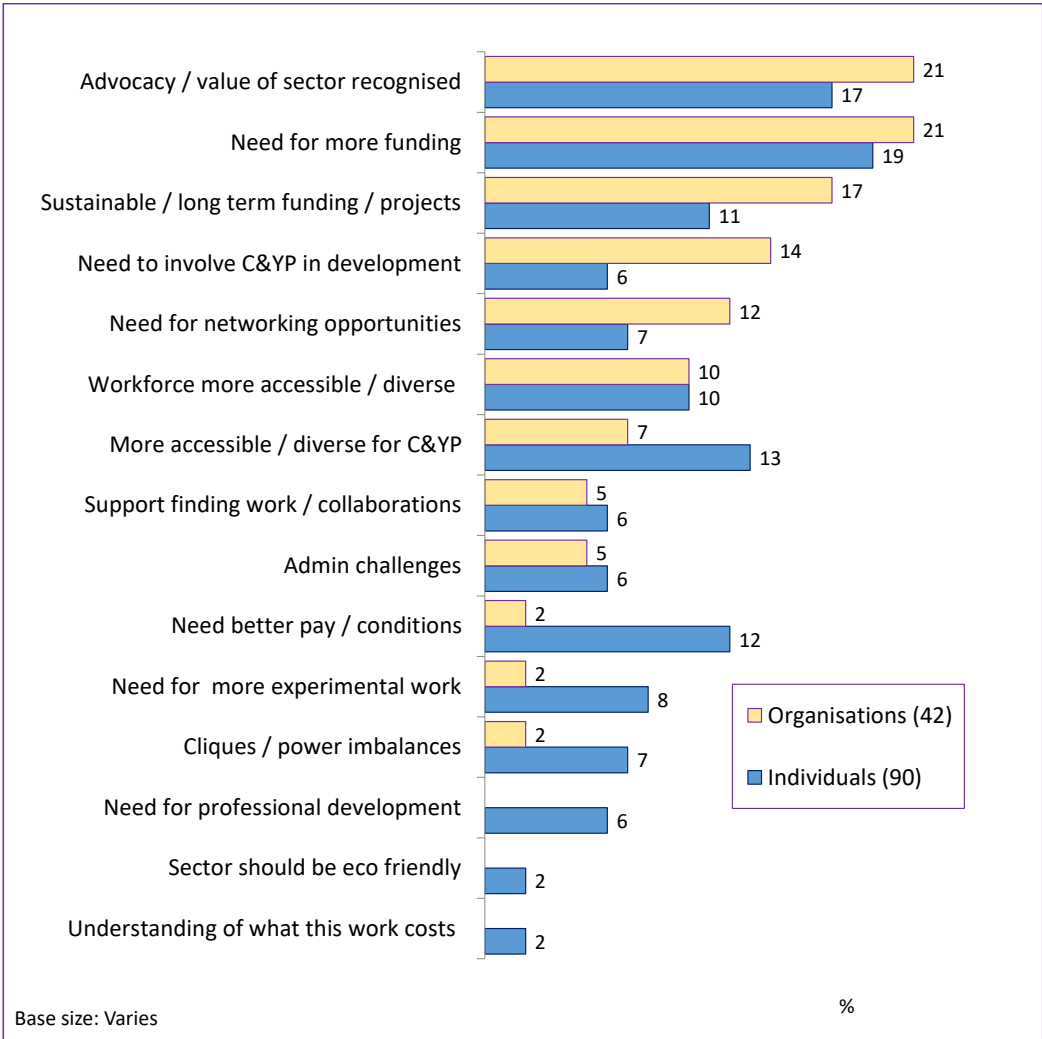
29% of the organisations and 58% of the individuals told us that working with young audiences was their primary focus.

Organisations working in the sector are most often small-scale multi-artform performing arts companies or venues operating as charities and located in the Central Belt. Organisations typically work across the age groups, focused on delivery in education settings and community spaces, with touring being an important part of the organisational business model.

Individuals working in the sector are most often freelancers and creatives, with few holding strategic/influencing roles. They are typically based close to the organisations and are more likely than the organisations themselves to undertake participatory arts activities, work with festivals, and work internationally.

There is a reasonable degree of diversity within the sector's workforce, although this does not necessarily translate into individuals working on projects relating to their personal characteristics.

The following chart outlines priority areas for change:



*C&YP = Children and Young People

The need for sector leadership

The attributes of the sector and their priorities for change point to a desire from both organisations and freelancers that someone / a group should take the lead in advocating for the sector.

Other priorities

Other key priorities for the organisations focused around funding and the need for this to be longer term and sustainable, and a desire to involve children and young people in development activities to a greater degree.

Other key priorities for the freelancers related to diversity within the sector, and better pay and conditions for those that work in the sector.

Young Audiences Consultations

Following the mapping exercise, a number of consultation sessions were held to discuss emerging issues, priorities and actions in more detail.

Young Audiences Advisory Group Consultation - October 2021

There was an identified need to explore the implications of the Mapping Report as an additional step in the process before engaging other stakeholders in a wider discussion. In total 12 members of the Young Audiences Advisory Group attended this session.

Key themes arising during the session are summarised below.

Relationships with Freelance Workforce

The survey work showed the significant extent to which this sector is underpinned by the freelance workers. Of the 90 individual respondents to the survey 86% identified as having a freelance role. The job roles most often held by individuals in the young audiences sector were artist / creative practitioner (67%), performer (44%), Director (28%) and Producer (26%).

The relationship between the organisations committed to the work and the individual freelancers is key and has the potential to be clarified and developed. There is a recognition of a power imbalance that needs to be addressed. This can include:

- How to establish an effective voice for the freelance workers in the future development of YAG including the next stage of the consultation and future work on advocacy.
- The potential to look at models such as the ARC in Stockton where individual organisations commit to clear policies that define their relationships with the freelancers they employ.
- Furthermore, details research regarding the freelance community – who and where – and noting Creative Scotland may be interested in supporting this.

Relationships with the wider Youth Arts sector and the Education sector

The voice of the YAG group and the children that they work with and for needs to be established on the wider, national strategic framework. This could be a specific action for the next stage of the project – to formally approach the key representatives of these sectors to offer to play a part in the wider strategic thinking. The involvement of Creative Scotland would be important in this conversation.

Young Audiences open consultations - January 2022

Two further consultation sessions were held in January 2022, and those that 'opted in' through the mapping exercise were invited to attend.

- **Session 1** was attended by 7 freelancers, including performers, producers, directors, playwrights, academics, and participatory theatre specialists.
- **Session 2** was attended by a mixture of 12 freelancers and salaried staff, including Creative Directors, performers, theatre-makers, producers, Executive staff, film-makers, clown doctors, development staff and marketing staff.

Artforms, age groups and key focus of attenders varied, but all worked with young audiences in some capacity.

The context and brief findings from the mapping exercise were summarised, and then discussions focused around two key themes.

The key themes and outcomes arising during these sessions are summarised below:

Consultation theme 1: The relationship between organisations committed to young audiences work and the individual freelancers who produce and support it is critical, but there is a power imbalance that needs to be addressed if careers, livelihoods and creative content is to be sustainable and appropriately valued.

Key question: How to improve the relationships between organisations and freelance workforce?

Power dynamic

Attendees across all roles acknowledged that there was a power imbalance between salaried staff / organisations and freelancers.

"I think there definitely is a power imbalance"

"With freelancers you're just so aware of the power imbalance. We need to do a lot more."

Valuing freelancer time

Of highest concern, it was acknowledged that freelancer time is not always recognized or valued and that freelancers frequently undertake work in situations where some staff are salaried, but freelancers are working for free.

"Salaried people still have a wage coming in when there isn't work being produced."

"You go to meetings and the only person at the table that is not being paid is the artists. It requires lots of unpaid work to get to the stage where you get paid work."

This issue is particularly notable around freelancers undertaking admin, funding applications, and development tasks.

“I’ll be doing three months of unpaid work to get three months of paid work.
That’s how the current system works.”

“Even if you get on to the accelerator fund you have to have done a lot of work
just to get there.”

“I’ve never been offered money to talk about my idea. It’s like whoever is
listening to you is doing you a favour.”

Decision-making and representation

Additionally, it was felt that freelancers are not typically involved with decision-making in organisations that they work with which means their views are not valued or represented.

“The artists are not being invited to the table.”

“There is a lack of space for freelancers to be able to influence the sector.”

“Just including artists in the decision-making process would be hugely useful,
that would make me feel heard as an artist.”

Opportunities for progression

Some of the freelancers were also concerned that they have few opportunities for progression as engagements can be occasional, one-off and short-term.

“No matter how good these programmes are you maybe get one, so where is
the progression. There is definitely an end point.”

“We support them, but we have like two a year”.

Cliques

Many of the freelancers also felt that the young audiences sector could feel quite ‘cliquey’ and that it was difficult and time consuming to establish professional relationships.

“It is very cliquey, how do we get rid of that?”

“For an early career artist it is hard.”

“One person’s clique can be another person’s supportive network.”

Potential solutions suggested during the session included:

- Salaried staff to acknowledge and better understand the freelance role and how to treat freelancers fairly
- Established organisations to be generous with their resources, capacity and knowledge
- Commitment to best practice in working with freelancers as per ARC
- Freelancers to be involved in decision-making conversations

- Freelancers to be given decision-making roles including on Boards
- Paid residencies and Accelerators
- Salaried artist positions
- 'Regularly Funded' individuals
- Universal Basic Income
- Mentoring
- Organisations to value the time of freelancers and offering money for freelancers' time, including development time
- Advocating for funding levels that allows for the research and development times committed by freelancers
- Application processes to be as brief as possible
- Honest conversations

Examples of good practice proposed in the session included:

- Imagine's light touch support for ideas at an early stage

Consultation theme 2: There is a desire for, and a priority need for 'someone'/a group to take an active lead in strategic advocacy for young audiences work in Scotland helping to pave the way for funding, partnerships, further diversity, sustainability and recognition.

Key question: How to establish a strong voice for the sector?

An under-valued sector

The attenders agreed that cutting-edge high-quality work is being created for young audiences in Scotland.

"We are pushing the barriers of our practice."

"It has integrity."

However, it was strongly felt that this work is often undervalued by those in the arts sector and beyond.

"Really radical work for young people is not perceived as such"

"It resonates with me that work with children is not valued as much as work with adults. It is so true it is almost too obvious to say"

The value of the setting can be an issue, for example work on an international main stage is given more value than working in a local school.

"When you are making choices in work for young people or in the community it is sometimes perceived as if you failed to get into an 'actual' art space. A compromise. A sector-wide snobbery. A patronising tone."

The issue of value refers to how young people are seen in society as well as how work for young people is seen.

“The implication is that young people aren’t valued as much as adults.”

The need for cohesion, representation and advocacy

It was felt that the young audiences sector is currently quite disjointed, and that greater cohesion would be valuable.

“We don’t have a united joint thing.”

“Feeling connected to a community is really important.”

“We need to stick together.”

There was a clear demand for a body to represent and advocate for the young audiences sector. It was felt strongly that this body should be representative and equitable.

“The representative of the sector. Completely on its own, its own entity.”

“It is not about leadership; it is about coming together.”

“The last thing we want to do is create another organisation that perpetuates the power imbalance, so freelancers are really crucial.”

A body such as this would be able to advocate for the sector.

“We need to get better at telling that story of the richness of what is out there already.”

It would also be able to set the agenda around sector priorities.

“Come together and have honest conversations and set the agenda.”

“We believe the work we do is important, but we have to decide what we are going to fight for as a sector.”

Potential solutions suggested in the session included:

- Celebrating the work of the sector
- Building community in the sector
- Developing a proposal for a practitioner-led model of a national network that represents the breadth of work serving young audiences and that acts as a recognised advocate for that work with key stakeholders
- An entity separate from existing organisations
- A solution with (paid) freelancers at its heart
- Bring as many people into the conversation as possible
- Further research to reach practitioners not yet on the radar

Examples of good practice proposed in the session included:

- The Single End
- The Playwrights Studio
- The Designers Collective
- Youth Scotland

Conclusions & recommendations

Conclusions

In many respects Scotland is served by a vibrant and talented group of organisations and practitioners committed to creating and presenting high quality creative experiences for young audiences. The work has a strong reputation internationally. Yet after several decades of innovation and success the sector is still battling to achieve the support and recognition at home that would allow them to achieve an ambition to have every young person able to access to the high-quality experiences that can inspire, transform and entertain. There are particular issues that have been highlighted in the research and consultation that require attention.

The policy context

As outlined in the report there is a strong fit between how the work for young audiences contributes to key national policy ambitions. Yet the strong fit isn't always reflected in sector collaboration or investment that would ensure the development and long-term viability of the work.

Value and status of the work

Consultations highlighted that there is a long-standing issue about how work for young audiences is seen artistically and how the artists who produce the work are recognised and valued. With notable exceptions it can be more difficult to gain knowledgeable and sensitive coverage from the media and critics. There is a sense that an artistic CV focused on work for young audiences is not felt to have the same weight compared to mainstream work for adult audiences.

This is echoed in perspectives on where the work is presented. Is work presented on a theatre main stage in the central belt any more intrinsically valuable than work presented in a classroom in Lerwick? This question of value and status may create a backdrop that influences funding decisions.

The role of freelancers

The success in the sector is born of the skills and commitment of the creative practitioners committed to working with and for young audiences. Yet their working lives are precarious - they are down the financial pecking order. In the consultation process this imbalance of power between funded organisations and the individual practitioners was recognised and acknowledged. It is a key issue that needs to be addressed in very practical ways.

The role of organisations

As noted, the relationship between the organisations presenting and producing work and the freelance community requires attention. Yet there are several good

examples of how that relationship can work well, in providing financial and other support, encouragement, and access to networks. This shouldn't be a 'nice to do', but intrinsically recognised as part of the role of those organisations in their work, and as such they in turn need to be funded to a level that allows them to fulfil that role.

There are also many organisations delivering world-class work for children and young people in Scotland. The impact of COVID-19 on their business models and capacity to continue to deliver this work, and commission freelancers, adds extra vulnerability to the current ecosystem. Increasing dialogue and collaboration across the sector will be an important recovery activity.

Leadership and representation

While noting and valuing the work of the *Time to Shine* strategy and the Arts in Education grouping, neither quite captures or represents the work for young audiences and those who are involved in creating and presenting that work. This gap demonstrates a need to establish a representative voice for the sector and to ensure that voice can be heard and respected by policy makers and decision makers.

Cultural Rights

The issues and concerns addressed in this report go beyond questions of funding, resources and strategy. There is a question of cultural rights. The right of every child in Scotland to have the opportunity to experience a rich and vibrant cultural life. This drives much of the commitment evident amongst the sector and should underpin the conversations with stakeholders as they take the work forward.

Recommendations

Considering the aims of the Young Audiences Group, and reflecting on the findings of the research, we recommend the following actions as next steps:

1. Develop a vision, values and strategy that defines the scope, impact and reach of work for young audiences in Scotland in relation to national objectives, Young Audiences Group member needs and priorities, and Children's Rights.
2. Negotiate with key funders and stakeholders the actions required to establish a formal network to represent young audiences organisations and practitioners to embody the values, vision and strategy prepared by the Group and deliver its aims.
3. Ensure that the freelance workforce is involved in progressing these recommendations (not just through consultation but by being invited to convene and organise aspects of the processes) and engage Young Audience Group members in defining a Policy for the Employment of

Freelancers working in the young audiences sector in Scotland as a founding document of a new representative network.

4. Seek funding for research to further evidence the resources, relationships and partnerships required to fulfil the vision, establish sustainable working patterns for young audiences companies and practitioners, and deliver regularly accessible high-quality cultural experiences for diverse young audiences across Scotland.

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