

Building Your Case

A resource for anyone
creating performances for
young audiences



A collaboration between
Imagineate and The Ark

Imagineate



The Ark

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Building Your Case is designed to help artists and small companies who create performances for young audiences navigate the world of funding in Ireland and Scotland. This toolkit should give practitioners a grounding in key policies and an insight into some of the research that shows the benefits that performance and other artforms can bring to children. With this information, plus our other tips, tricks and resources, artists will be able to make a strong case for their work to be funded.

This project is a collaboration between Imagine, the national organisation in Scotland, which presents, develops and celebrates performance for children and young people, and The Ark, a children's cultural centre in Ireland. As well as team members in both organisations and a Research Assistant from Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, a number of artists in both countries consulted with us on the toolkit content and format.

This toolkit is not exhaustive: there are plenty more studies out there to dive into and there are limitations to what we have gathered. For instance, the studies currently included in this toolkit are largely from English-speaking, Western contexts and as a result do not include as diverse a set of experiences as they should. But this toolkit is not complete: we intend to adapt and update this toolkit in the coming years to include more research, as well as to make improvements based on any feedback artists have for us. We are also conscious of accessibility: this is the first version of the toolkit and future editions will be available to use in more ways, making it accessible for more practitioners. We will also look to incorporate feedback, so please do just drop us a line at development@ark.ie or ellen@imagine.org.uk.

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Credits

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Glossary

Advocacy: Giving a voice and supporting the rights of a certain group of people who are usually vulnerable.

Case study: An in-depth study on one person, group, or event (as opposed to studies which have lots of participants).

Causal: A “causal relationship” means that one variable has a direct influence on another. Usually a scientific experiment is needed to determine if one activity directly causes another. Example: Taking part in an educational art programme resulted in students reporting they enjoyed art museums more than their peers who did not receive the programme activity.

Control group: Studies might use a control group to provide a “baseline” so they can compare outcomes on different groups of people. For example, one group of people might take part in performing arts activities, and a control group would not. Researchers will compare the two groups to see if taking part in performing arts activities had an impact on the participants.

Correlation: a statistical term to describe how two variables are linked or associated with each other. Note this does not automatically mean that one variable causes the other. Example: There is a correlation between engaging with performing arts in a school setting, and physical and emotional wellbeing.

Didactic: Something didactic is instructive or used to teach.

Instrumentalism: This refers to the use of something as a tool for some practical purpose. When referring to the instrumentalising of art, we are referring to the use of art as a tool for education, community building etc.

Intrinsic value: This refers to the worth of something in and of itself, as opposed to extrinsic value which is the worth of something due to external factors. When referring to the intrinsic value of art, we are referring to the quality, value and effect of the art in its own right, and not necessarily the external benefits it brings (such as economic, educational etc).

Longitudinal: A long-term study which takes place over multiple years, where data is collected multiple times throughout the study.

Qualitative: Data in a language format, which usually can't be measured (e.g. interviews, open-ended questionnaires, focus groups). Typically answers “how?” or “why?” questions.

Quantitative: Data that is in numerical form and can be counted/measured (e.g. statistics, percentages, participation figures).

Tip: To remember the difference between quantitative and qualitative, think “quantity” for quantitative and “quality” or “lit” (literature) for qualitative.

Quantify: Assign a numeric value to something (e.g. calculating the financial benefit of arts projects).

Self-reporting: A type of survey, questionnaire, or poll where respondents read the question and select a response by themselves. Example: children independently reporting how much they enjoyed a performance (as opposed to a teacher or caregiver reporting on their behalf).

Treatment group: Where a control group provides the baseline for a study by not participating in the study's activity, the treatment group is the group who does participate.

Variable: A person, place, thing, activity, or phenomenon that you are trying to measure. Usually we are comparing two variables, e.g. wellbeing and engagement in performing arts activities.

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Study Summaries

Study name	Link to access	Availability*	Authors	Country	Year of Publication	Age	Art form	Key findings
Study 1 A Small Festival for Small People: The WeeFestival as Advocacy	www.utpjournals.press	<input type="radio"/>	Heather Fitzsimmons Frey	Canada	2019	0–5	Theatre, performing arts	The study demonstrates that a festival has the potential to be a space of social change and a site for advocacy for the early years audience, parents, artists, and policy makers alike. The WeeFestival has advocacy at every part of its programming, space, and creative discussion through the inclusion of child friendly spaces such as playgrounds and gardens and relaxed performances. Children are given freedom to engage in the performance in their own unique way. Additionally, babies and young children cannot make their own decisions about accessing art, so parents are essential to advocacy.
Study 2 An Evaluation of the Operation and Impact of The Ark Children’s Council Executive Summary	cora.ucc.ie	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dr. Deirdre Horgan, Dr. Shirley Martin, Dr. Annie Cummins-McNamara	Ireland	2019	9–14	Misc	The Ark run an initiative called the The Ark Children’s Council, which aims to influence The Ark’s artistic programming, policy and decision making. Participants noted positive impacts on their communication skills, awareness of social issues and heightened interest in the arts. Participants were also more likely to join extracurricular activities and gain an improved sense of confidence and self-esteem. The Ark staff reported the Council was successful in engaging children in The Ark, encouraging children to be active citizens and influence programming and decision making.
Study 3 Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study.	www.artscouncil.ie	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dr. Emer Smyth	Ireland	2016	3–9	Drama, reading, painting, music, gaming, TV	Children who are exposed to arts and culture within school are more likely to participate in it outside of the school environment. Children who engage with culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are more likely to have a wider range of vocabulary • are more likely to excel academically at maths and language • report higher levels of happiness, self esteem, and have reduced anxiety.
Study 4 Being and Becoming: Children as Audiences	www.cambridge.org	<input type="radio"/>	Katya Johanson and Hilary Glow	Australia	2011	N/A	Theatre, dance	Often, the approach to making theatre for young audiences is “instrumentalist” or “didactic”, meaning theatre is used for educational reasons or for the purpose of creating a future audience of adults. Case studies note a shift away from this approach, moving towards an “intrinsic” approach which emphasises the intrinsic value of theatre for young people, e.g. valuing children’s aesthetic choices, treating children as an audience within their own right. An intrinsic approach has a positive impact on nurturing a child’s imagination, helping them cope with life experiences they can relate to, and processing emotions.
Study 5 Children’s perceptions of live arts performances: a longitudinal study	www.tandfonline.com	<input type="radio"/>	Wendy Schiller	Australia	2005	4–12	Theatre, dance	Engagement with live arts performance stimulates children’s cognitive and emotional capacities to respond creatively both as individuals and collaboratively in groups, using imagination to plan, organise and create art-making back in school and home environments.
Study 6 Cultivating Interest in Art: Causal Effects of Arts Exposure During Early Childhood	www.rcpem.com	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Kisida, B., Bowen, D. H., & Greene, J. P.	USA	2017	5–8	Visual arts	Students provided with resources for a trip to an art museum reported that they found trips to art museums fun, incited joy and were likely to bring their family on a visit in the future. They were also less likely to find art boring. The benefits of early participation were improved critical thinking, academic, social and emotional skills, and more empathy.

- * Full study publicly available at link
 Full study not publicly available, contact info@imagine.org.uk to request

Study name	Link to access	Availability*	Authors	Country	Year of Publication	Age	Art form	Key findings
Study 7 Do the arts perform at school? The economic case for delivering a curriculum-based performing arts programme in primary schools	www.artisfoundation.org.uk	●	Artis Foundation in association with Amit Kara & Sadia Sheikh	UK (England)	2022	4–11	Drama	Exposure to a quality arts programme is linked to better pupil outcomes in creativity, academic attainment, social skills, and overcoming early life disadvantages. In particular, arts programmes improve wellbeing for pupils who are struggling at school. Quality arts programmes have a long-term economic benefit: the average predicted monetary benefit to each child was estimated to be £2300 based on a higher likelihood of a well-paying future job, and a decreased likelihood of crime and mental health issues.
Study 8 From Cradle to Stage: How Early Years Performing Arts Experiences Are Tailored to the Developmental Capabilities of Babies and Toddlers	www.tandfonline.com	○	Fletcher-Watson, B., Fletcher-Watson, S., McNaughton, M. J., & Birch, A.	UK (Scotland)	2014	0–3	Theatre, dance, visual arts	Early years performing arts experiences that modify the performance for the intended developmental stage of the young children often produce performances that are avant-garde, experimental and push boundaries. Performance is an intrinsic part of our human instinct from birth, newborns within hours of being born can imitate facial expressions, at six months old, they relish their caregiver’s attention, interact with sound, and enjoy games.
Study 9 Imagine Nation: The Value of Cultural Learning	www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk	●	The Cultural Learning Alliance	UK	2017	N/A	Theatre, dance, visual arts, film, museums, libraries, heritage	Engaging in arts and culture has social, educational, economic, and personal benefits for young people. Culture helps young people form connections and make sense of the world around us through imagination both individually and collectively. It nurtures children’s moral, emotional, social, and intellectual capacities and enhances leadership and teamwork skills. Arts and culture can be used in education and health to increase wellbeing, creative thinking, empathy, and resilience. Children who study the arts are more likely to study at university level and become employable. In the UK the creative industries contribute £8.4 billion per annum to the economy and create thousands of jobs and those who work in the industry report higher levels of fulfilment. The transferable skills that arts and culture offers are beneficial to young people when it comes to employment.
Study 10 National Partnership for Culture: independent report	www.gov.scot	●	National Partnership for Culture	UK (Scotland)	2022	N/A	Misc	The government should guarantee access to formal and informal ways of engaging young people with culture in educational settings and plan to involve more artists in schools in a way that fits the curriculum. The Current Programme for Government hopes to advocate for Article 31 of the UN Rights of the Child (to access culture and the arts) in law as well as acknowledging the role the arts play in helping children’s wellbeing and promoting citizenship. More resources and signposting should be available to teachers to promote children’s pathways to careers within the cultural industry.
Study 11 Research into Theatre, Dance and Drama Use in Schools	www.imaginate.org.uk	●	Imagine and Wellside Research Ltd, supported by Creative Scotland	UK (Scotland)	2022	4–12	Theatre, dance, drama	The identified benefits of performing arts for children in a school setting included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in physical and emotional wellbeing including confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, communication, vocabulary • Developing emotional resilience • Promoting inclusion and diversity especially among ASN, non-verbal and ESL students.

* ● Full study publicly available at link
○ Full study not publicly available, contact info@imagine.org.uk to request

Study name	Link to access	Availability*	Authors	Country	Year of Publication	Age	Art form	Key findings
Study 12 Seen and not heard: participation as tyranny in Theatre for Early Years	www.tandfonline.com	<input type="radio"/>	Ben Fletcher Watson	UK	2015	N/A	Theatre	This paper interprets the participation of young children in theatre as a form of tyranny (cruel and oppressive power). Watson argues that, within the structures of theatre, there is a power imbalance between adult creators and early years children in particular. Watson creates a Ladder of Arts Participation for the Very Young to establish a balance of power and create a blueprint for artists to engage in more democratic participatory practices with young audiences.
Study 13 Social Return on Investment Study: Helium Arts Creative Health Hub Programme	helium.ie	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	S3 Solutions and Helium Arts	Ireland	2021	N/A	Visual arts, sound design, film-making	Young participants' wellbeing was elevated, isolation decreased, and creativity was boosted. Family bonding was nurtured leading to more open communication, idea sharing as well as improved sibling relationships. The programme provided a strong sense of community and a medium for the children and young people to express their emotions through art. Helium Arts Creative Health Hub returned 1.98 times the initial investment in the outcomes that it delivered for its stakeholders. Artists, health professionals, volunteers and the arts sector also benefitted.
Study 14 Spark Change: The Impact of Performing Arts on Children.	www.newvictory.org	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	New Victory Theatre and Wolfbrown Consultancy	USA	2020	3-14	Theatre, dance, drama	Children exposed to performing arts in an education setting are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• more likely to develop long-term appreciation of the arts• more able to articulate/understand complex emotions, thus increasing empathy• more understanding of diversity and different cultures/perspectives. Early participation supported skills in teamwork, innovation, improvisation, and problem-solving.
Study 15 'The best day in my whole entire life' – Young Children, Wellbeing and the Arts	onlinelibrary.wiley.com	<input type="radio"/>	Barbara Piscitelli	Australia	2020	7-9	Theatre, dance, visual arts	While the quantitative research does not reveal a drastic change in the impact of children's wellbeing, the qualitative data shows that children had a greater sense of clarity, felt relaxed, more connected to others and more decisive after taking part in the festival. Overall, children felt a greater sense of freedom after the festival, enjoyed being creative and being part of the artistic process.
Study 16 The Impact of Theatre Performance in a School Setting on Children's Learning	ore.exeter.ac.uk	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Elaine Faull	UK (England)	2020	5-11	Theatre	A one-off performance without additional resources from teachers can have a positive impact in children's emotional wellbeing and overall sense of community in the school. Teacher intervention post-performance was beneficial, enhancing the children's experience of the performance. Children remembered the performance with more clarity and in greater detail three months to a year post-performance rather than immediately after. Children re-imagine and re-create the performance over time therefore becoming 'co-creators' of the performance.
Study 17 The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experience of Theatre.	books.google.co.uk	<input type="radio"/>	Matthew Reason	UK (Scotland)	2010	4-11	Theatre, dance, visual arts	'In the clamour of voices advocating the importance of theatre for young people, the voice and perspective of the children themselves is missing.' Children are capable of oscillating between the real and imagined during a performance and engage in the construction and decoding of theatre as much as the spectating. Children derive pleasure from being spectators. They are by no means passive – they are active participants forming their own unique experience through reflection and critical analysis. Post-show reflection and discussion is as important as the performance itself and integral to the pleasure of performance.

- * Full study publicly available at link
 Full study not publicly available, contact info@imagine.org.uk to request

Study 1

A Small Festival for Small People: The WeeFestival as Advocacy

Link to access: www.utpjournals.press

There is a paywall here, but Imagine can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Heather Fitzsimmons Frey

Country: Canada

Year of publication: 2019

What the study sought to find out:

- The study investigates the impact the WeeFestival had on advocacy for very young children through the structures of programming, space, and the exchanging of creative ideas between delegates.

Study characteristics:

- This research uses a variety of company archives including testimonial letters, artist interviews, and the writer's personal experiences.
- The festival is for children aged 0 to 5.

“ Helping children understand how to be spectators for a particular production while still ‘being themselves’ is an aspect of WeeFestival advocacy that celebrates inclusive theatrical experiences for children of all abilities and invites very young citizens to meet theatrical work on terms that work for them. ”

“ Events like the WeeFestival respond to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that children have the right ‘to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts.’ ”

Key Findings

- The study demonstrates that a festival has the potential to be a space of social change and a site for advocacy for the early years audience, parents, artists, and policy makers alike.
- Advocacy is woven into the programming, space, and creative/artistic exchange of the WeeFestival. One of the ways the festival is a vehicle for advocacy is through its child friendly spaces, such as playgrounds and gardens which inspire play and socialisation.
- Having a ‘relaxed performance’ policy allows children as audience members to navigate the festival in a way that is comfortable for their own needs, whether that is by wandering in and out of the tent, having a nap, or a snack during the performance. This also creates a safe space for all participants as many early years audience members may not yet have been assessed, if neurodiverse or have additional needs.
- As babies and young children cannot make their own decisions about accessing art, parents are essential to advocacy.
- The delegate’s programme acted as an advocacy space for the exchange of creative ideas through roundtable discussions and workshops, sharing practices and knowledge, expanding research and practice in the field, as well as inter-cultural exchanges to support the creation of more diverse work on a national and international level.
- The festival must appeal to parents/carers as well as the young audience as ultimately it is the caregiver’s decision to attend the festival. Marketing strategies and the performances’ ambitions need to take this into consideration.

Other Findings

- The WeeFestival recognises barriers to access by having donors cover free tickets for families from more deprived communities to attend the festival.
- The festival also brought positive attention and visibility to an age demographic that is often overshadowed in the cultural life of Toronto.
- It was observed that children engaging in performance has a direct impact on the adult’s experience of the performance, as a double performance occurs where adults are watching both the children and the performance.
- The festival creates visibility, inclusivity, and freedom of expression in an urban space where very young children are often not considered active participants in society.
- Festival staff use democratic communication with the early years audience, by listening and respecting their responses through verbal and often non-verbal language such as body language.

Study 2

An Evaluation of the Operation and Impact of The Ark Children's Council Executive Summary

Link to access: cora.ucc.ie

Authors: Dr. Deirdre Horgan, Dr. Shirley Martin, Dr. Annie Cummins-McNamara

Country: Ireland

Year of publication: 2019

What the study sought to find out:

- The Ark run an initiative called The Ark Children's Council, which aims to influence The Ark's artistic programming, policy and decision making. The Council amplifies children's voices in the creation of artistic work for children.
- The study analyses the impact of the Council through the themes of voice, audience, and influence.
- The study also gives an insight into child consultation and how it could be improved (within the context of The Ark's organisational strategy).

Study characteristics:

- 30 current and past members of the Children's Council (age 9–14 years) completed an online survey and attended focus groups.
- 8 parents took part in focus groups.
- The Director, a board member and 3 staff members also took part in a focus group and individual interviews.

“ Research on arts engagement by children across the domains of home, school and community has shown a positive impact on a number of academic and non-academic outcomes, including self-esteem and life satisfaction. ”

“ Children have a positive experience on The Ark Children's Council and are very positive about the activities and staff they engage with during their time on the Council. They feel they have an important role in art production and in representing children's voices in The Ark and are interested in having a broader voice in policy. ”

“ The Ark, it was felt, has become more visible in the advocacy space and the Director of The Ark currently represents arts on the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Advisory Council while also sitting on the Expert Advisory Group of Creative Ireland, Pillar One. ”

Key Statistics

- When asked what they felt their role was, 14% of children in the Council stated they were ensuring children had more rights and 76% stated they contributed ideas and opinions.
- 64% of children agree the Council made a positive impact on Ark policy.
- 93% of children found the Council meetings to be engaging, organised and enjoyed the experience.
- 90% of children deemed their time on the Council to be a 'worthwhile experience.'
- 90% of children felt respected by staff and empowered to make decisions.
- 100% of children made new friends.

Key Findings

- Children on the Council stated that it was a safe space where they felt listened to, respected, and empowered.
- The participants noted positive impacts on their personal life, for example making friendships, developing better communication with adults, having an increased awareness of social issues as well as a heightened interest in the arts. Participants were also more likely to join extracurricular activities and gain an improved sense of confidence and self-esteem.
- Parents reported the positive influence the Council had on their children's confidence, artistic skills, mental health, and wellbeing.
- Ark staff reported the Council was successful in engaging children in The Ark, encouraging children to be active citizens and influence programming and decision-making. The team reflected on the value of exposing children to high-class national as well as international performances.

Other Findings

- There is debate over making the Council a two-year programme as alumni and their parents noticed that most artistic programming decisions take a year, so many children did not get to see their ideas materialise. However, on the other hand a two-year programme would prevent other children experiencing the Council.

Study 3

Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study

Link to access: www.artscouncil.ie

Authors: Dr. Emer Smyth

Country: Ireland

Year of publication: 2016

What the study sought to find out:

This report commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland seeks to better understand the experience of children's participation in the arts and cultural landscape of Ireland. It employs a broad interpretation of cultural participation that includes structured and unstructured cultural activities. This ranges from play in early years to painting, drama, reading, listening to music, playing computer games, and watching television. This report asks three main research questions:

1. What groups of children are more likely to engage in (different forms of) cultural activities?
2. What schools and classrooms place greater emphasis on cultural activities, and how does this potentially influence children's engagement outside school?
3. How is participation in cultural activities related to other child outcomes, including academic skills and socio-emotional wellbeing?

Methods used / study characteristics:

- Longitudinal study (draws on data collected for 10 years)
- Data was not originally gathered specifically to analyse arts and culture
- Focusses on ages 3, 5, 9 and 13
- Data gathered through interviews with parents/caregivers, cognitive tests on children, and surveys/questionnaires with teachers and children

“ It is heartening that the research confirms that arts and cultural participation leads to a range of positive outcomes for children, both in terms of their cognitive development and their wellbeing. Building on earlier international research, the report clearly demonstrates these broader benefits to participation. There is every reason for us to make sure children and young people have opportunities to participate in cultural life and the arts. ”

Key Findings

- Children who are exposed to arts and culture within school are more likely to participate in it outside of the school environment, whether that be participation in structured cultural activities like drama classes or unstructured cultural activities such as reading for pleasure.
- Children who are read to and engage with culture in the early years are more likely to have a wider range of vocabulary by the time they reach primary school.
- 9-year-old students who participated in cultural activities were more likely to excel academically in mathematics and language.
- Overall, children who participated in structured cultural activities reported higher levels of happiness, self-esteem and improved self-image and reduced anxiety and are more likely to have a positive attitude towards learning.

“ Being involved in a structured cultural activity is associated with positive outcomes across all domains, with higher achievement levels, academic self-confidence and happiness, and lower levels of anxiety and socio-emotional difficulties where children are involved in after-school music or dance lessons/clubs. ”

Other Findings

- Access to arts and culture among children in Ireland is highly gendered with a higher proportion of girls accessing culture from the age of 3 years old.
- Language is a barrier to participating in the arts and cultural life of Ireland especially for the children of immigrant families.
- The cost of structured cultural activities such as after school music or drama classes is yet another barrier faced by the parents of low-income households.
- The type of cultural participation also varies according to class with middle class children participating in more outings, painting, drawing, and reading while children from low-income families and children of immigrants are more likely to watch more television and play computer games.
- Children with additional needs participate less in structured cultural activities but have increased family engagement in reading, singing and cultural daytrips.
- From an early age, children develop a pattern of how they will engage with cultural activities, underlining the importance of early years education.

Study 4

Being and Becoming: Children as Audiences

Link to access: www.cambridge.org

There is a paywall here, but Imagine can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Katya Johanson and Hilary Glow

Country: Australia

Year of publication: 2011

What the study sought to find out:

- The study was investigating the main motivation for performers and arts organisations who create theatre for young audiences.
- The study also looked at how companies/performers justified the need for children's theatre, such as the intrinsic value of children's theatre.

Study characteristics:

- Case study with three internationally leading theatre companies making/programming work for young audiences:
 - The Windmill Theatre in Adelaide, Australia
 - Gruppe 38 Theatre Company in Aarhus, Denmark
 - Australia's Sydney Opera House
- Information was collected using interviews.

“ Arts and cultural activities may be provided to children to encourage adult audiences for the future; to provide or supplement curriculum-based education through a different route; to enhance creative potential; to provide a form of civic engagement or education for the citizens and voters of the future; or to enhance children's social and psychological wellbeing. ”

“ The development of such work has meant moving away from 'the conventions of didactic educational theatre' and instead creating work which 'places children and young people at its centre – as intelligent, creative and critical audiences and co-creators.' ”

Key Findings

- Often, the approach to making theatre for young audiences is “instrumentalist” or “didactic”, meaning theatre is used for educational reasons or for the purpose of creating a future audience of adults.
- However, these case studies note a shift away from this approach, moving towards an “intrinsic” approach instead, which emphasises the intrinsic value of theatre for young people, e.g. valuing children's aesthetic choices, treating children as an audience within their own right.
- All three theatre companies note the positive impact an intrinsic approach had on nurturing a child's imagination, helping them cope with life experience they can relate to, and processing emotions.
- An intrinsic approach also opens lines of communication between adults and children, dissolving any hierarchy.
- Interviewees also noted the advantages of performing to a school audience as it diversified the audience, exposing children to theatre who may never have experience it before, making it more accessible.
- Children are a high demographic of the population and so they need to be respected as an audience.

Other Findings

- Cultural policy influences the decisions of funding bodies which in turn impacts audience development. The main debate within cultural policy is the instrumentalist versus the intrinsic agenda which this study applies to the context of creating children's theatre. Instrumentalism is supporting the arts with the intention it will benefit other policy areas such as health or, in this instance, education. While intrinsic cultural policy is art for art's sake and has less of an ulterior motive, it is about experiencing the art as an individual emotionally, intellectually, and/or spiritually.
- Whether artists adopt an instrumentalist or intrinsic approach is a choice and there are risks that come with both. To instrumentalise children's theatre for education could mean that performances become part of lessons/curriculum, become didactic and leave less space for creative thinking. On the other hand, an intrinsic approach can come across as nebulous or intangible because it cannot be easily quantified or measured.

Study 5

Children's perceptions of live arts performances: a longitudinal study

Link to access: www.tandfonline.com

There is a paywall here, but Imagine can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Wendy Schiller

Country: Australia

Year of publication: 2005

What the study sought to find out:

This study investigated school children's responses to performances they attend by Windmill Theatre over a period of three years. The two central research questions were:

- What is the impact of attending live arts performances on school-aged children in public schools in South Australia?
- What is the relationship between schools, their communities, and these live arts performances?

Study characteristics:

- This was a 3 year study (2002–2005).
- It used a mix of individual interviews and focus groups with primary school children to gain their perspective before and after they attended performances.
- Case studies, teachers' journals and interviews with teachers and parents were carried out.

“Engagement with live arts performance stimulates [children's] cognitive and emotional capacities to respond creatively both as individuals and collaboratively in groups, using imagination to plan, organise and create art-making back in school and home environments.”

“Children were consciously thinking through the arts as they critiqued performances and the interpretations of stories. They were learning about different roles, the skills involved in performance and their own responses as art makers.”

“Through the arts, they are actively and thoughtfully considering solutions to tough issues which do not have simple solutions, and which relate to their everyday lives, demonstrating that they are competent, social beings who construct and interpret their world.”

Key Findings

- Children's responses show how engaging with the arts can foster cultural diversity.
- Children grasped the complexities of narratives and how this mirrored real life, thus making a connection with the concept of art reflecting life and/or life reflecting art.
- Parents, teachers, students, and artists affirmed children's desire to participate in art projects which explored themes of identity and the intricacies of the world.
- The study argues that children were 'producers of their own culture' as they interpreted and moulded the performance and its narrative for their own purpose.
- Children perceived the potential of the arts to be a problem-solving tool.
- Children were unafraid to critique the performances and were aware of the collaboration, skills and behind the scenes work that makes it happen.
- Children valued humour as an essential element of a successful performance.
- Children valued different opinions on the performance, promoting respect among the pupils.
- Children were honest in their feedback of performances and did not filter their opinion.

Other Findings

- In past studies, adults were consulted about performances for children, as children were perceived as being unable to think abstractly about the arts and their voice was obscured: they were observed rather than consulted. More recent studies value and respect the children's point of view and their right to culture.

Study 6

Cultivating interest in art: Causal effects of arts exposure during early childhood

Link to access: www.rcpem.com

Authors: Kisida, B., Bowen, D. H., & Greene, J. P.

Country: USA

Year of publication: 2017

What the study sought to find out:

This study sought to show the impact of early exposure to art on children's attitudes and perception of art.

Study characteristics:

- Schools applied to be part of the Education Youth Programme at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas.
- Pupils were split into two groups:
 - The treatment group's teachers went on a field trip to the art museum where museum educators provided engaging tours encouraging questions and identifying themes. The teachers were given resources to help stimulate engagement prior to their visit.
 - The control group did not participate, however they were offered a place on the programme the following semester as an incentive to provide feedback.
- Surveys asking questions about grades, gender and attitude towards art and cultural participation were given to both groups.

“ There are important implications from this research. A large body of evidence suggests that arts experiences generate positive benefits in early childhood, ranging from academic skills to social-emotional development. ”

“ Yet, childhood arts exposure has experienced declines, and much of this decline has been a result of less exposure through school-facilitated arts educational activities. This decline has been particularly true for historically under-served students, who are especially reliant on schools for arts exposure. ”

“ Our research has shown that exposure in early childhood is an important catalyst that sparks an interest in students to engage with the arts, which could lead to compounded downstream effects. ”

Key Findings

- The treatment group resulted in students reporting they found trips to art museums fun, incited joy and were likely to bring their family on a visit in the future. They were also less likely to find art boring.
- Both males and females in the control group had a more positive attitude towards art. However, females drove the statistic of finding art less boring. Boys were more interested in the facts behind the art while girls were more interested in the interpretation of the art.
- The benefits of early participation among the treatment group were improved critical thinking, academic, social and emotional skills, and more empathy.
- Students were surveyed three weeks after their initial art museum visit and again two months later and their responses remained uniform, highlighting the ongoing benefit arts exposure had on children's relationship to culture.

Key Statistics

- Over half of the participants conflated all museums with an art museum.
- In 2008, African American children were 49% less likely to be recipients of arts education than they were in 1982.
- In 2008 Hispanic children were 40% less likely to receive arts education than they were in 1982.
- The children of parents who did not finish their high school education were 77% less likely to have been exposed arts education in 2008 than they were in 1982, following the trend of a reduction in access to arts education in school.

Other Findings

- Early exposure to the arts is often dependent on the parents of the children, and it is usually the education system which fills this lacuna if parents do not foster cultural participation.
- Race, gender, and class are all factors that affect the ability of the child to engage in the arts from an early age.
- In the US, school visits to cultural institutions and arts programmes within the school curriculum are in decline.
- Academic research has shown that arts participation at a young age can lead to better grades and a higher rate of school attendance and graduation, as well as this it heightens empathy and cultural capital. It is also proven to stimulate critical thinking about art.

Study 7

Do the arts perform at school? The economic case for delivering a curriculum-based performing arts programme in primary schools

Link to access: www.artisfoundation.org.uk

Authors: Artis Foundation in association with Amit Kara & Sadia Sheikh

Country: UK (England)

Year of publication: 2022

What the study sought to find out:

Artis aims to deliver high-quality curriculum-linked arts education to some of England's most deprived primary schools. This study sought to find out the long-term benefits of the 36-week Artis programme.

Study characteristics:

- 128 pupils across 8 schools completed a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ).
- The results of the questionnaire were compared between the start and end of the programme to track any potential improvement in wellbeing.
- The focus of the SDQ was solely on the socio-economic outcomes for each child although the study recognises there is a variety of positive impacts that it beyond the scope of this study such as improved academic achievement, social skills and creativity.

“Despite these limitations, our study adds to wider evidence demonstrating a positive relationship between high-quality arts education and a wide range of children's outcomes such as: cognitive skills, creativity, IQ, self-esteem, reading, language, writing, subject learning outcomes, child behaviour, aesthetic appreciation, truancy and income in later life. This range of benefits linked to programmes such as the one offered by Artis suggests that the arts should be seen as an essential part of the curriculum and not a competitor for space in the school day.”

“A recent study on the quantity and quality of an arts education in English primary schools shows that of 350 primary school teachers surveyed, two-thirds felt there was now less arts provision than there had been in 2010 and half felt that the quality of the remaining offer had worsened.”

Key Findings

- Exposure to a quality arts programme is linked to better pupil outcomes in creativity, academic attainment, social skills, and overcoming early life disadvantages.
- Quality arts programmes have a long-term economic benefit: the average predicted monetary benefit to each child was estimated to be £2300 based on a higher likelihood of a well-paying future job, and a decreased likelihood of crime and mental health issues.
- When the entire sample size was reviewed the positive trajectory in wellbeing was small, but individual pupils who had initial struggles experienced a significant positive impact on their wellbeing.
- Overall, the Artis programme was deemed good value for money in relation to the long-term benefits it produces.

“We link improvements in these scores to better outcomes in later life, specifically around truancy, exclusion, youth crime, smoking, crime, depression, future employment and earnings, and calculate a monetary value associated with these outcomes.”

Key Statistics

- For every £1 invested in the Artis programme, the long-term economic benefit of the programme for each child came to £4.
- The researchers calculated that for every £1 pound invested in the programme there was an earning of £32 for the pupil, government, and society.
- It was predicted if the Artis programme was rolled out in 20% of the most deprived areas in England, the monetary future benefit would come to £3.3 million.
- For each child in the programme the future monetary value is estimated to be £2300.
- In 2021, governments statistics revealed that the number of drama and music students were decreased by a fifth and the overall government investment for arts and cultural programmes amounted to £9.40 per pupil.
- 100% of schools that participated in the programme stated it improved the teacher's teaching style as well as benefiting pupil's confidence, communication, and teamwork skills.

Other Findings

- High quality arts programmes in schools are proven to lead to better social outcomes, yet the reality of restricted school budgets and a testing-centred school curriculum that revolves around maths and literacy often means the arts fall to the bottom of the priority list in schools.
- The SDQ scores for children from an ethnic minority showed no change by the end of the programme while females in the study showed better social outcomes compared to the male pupils.

Study 8

From Cradle to Stage: How Early Years Performing Arts Experiences Are Tailored to the Developmental Capabilities of Babies and Toddlers

Link to access: www.tandfonline.com

There is a paywall here, but *Imagine* can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Fletcher-Watson, B., Fletcher-Watson, S., McNaughton, M. J., & Birch, A.

Country: UK

Year of publication: 2014

What the study sought to find out:

This research sets out to explore the ways in which artists adapt their performance in accordance with the developmental stages and abilities of the early years audience.

Study characteristics:

- Case study analysing six productions for children aged 0–3. The six productions were aimed at six different age groups (birth to 3 months, 3 to 6 months, 6 months to 1 year, 1 year to 18 months, 18 months to 2 years, and 2 to 3 years).
- Productions were available virtually, modern, age-specific, had scholarly research conducted on them and had active artists and production companies involved.

“ Knowledge of developmental milestones is a powerful tool when creating work for the very young; a readiness to experiment, allied with inductive exploration of the latest research or the assistance of infant specialists, uses these milestones not as prescriptive formulae, but as springboards toward ever more engaging and exciting theatrical forms. ”

“ Where once there was a belief that theatre should be edifying, spurring on constant advancement in each child, or goal-oriented, tutoring them in the traditions of the stage to create the perfect “theatrically literate spectator” and audience member of the future (Schonmann 2002), now the aspiration is often engagement on their own terms: celebrating a familiar present rather than striving toward an unknowable future. ”

Key Findings

- Early years performing arts experiences that modify the performance for the intended developmental stage of the young children often produce performances that are avant-garde, experimental and push boundaries.
- Performance is an intrinsic part of our human instinct from birth, new-borns within hours of being born can imitate facial expressions, at six months old, they relish their caregiver’s attention, interact with sound, and enjoy games.
- By two years old their imagination and ability to role play are peaked, these are all elements that are the essential to performance and theatre.
- The TEY (Theatre for Early Years) artistic process tends to be either inductive, meaning collaborating with specialists to create the work for early years or deductive, creating work based on the observation of trial audiences and their responses. Testing seems to be a common thread in both the inductive and deductive process, this is akin to scholarly research and is inherent to audience studies. All the case studies reveal audiences are by no means passive observers but are actively engaged.

Other Findings

- Developing performance for an early years audience is constrained by factors such as funding and time as much as the choice of praxis.
- To legitimize TEY a new dramaturgy must be developed and an over-reliance on psychology for theories and models should be avoided.

“ It may be time for theatre theory to recognise and study the emergence of theatre for babies—whether theatrical installation or performance—and the accompanying new practices required for its production. ”

Summary of Each Production’s Case Study

0–3 months: *Babychill* – Promotes bonding between parent and child in a calm art-installation space with no actors, plot or pre-rehearsed movement, as the parent mediates the experience for the infant in a cosy space, culminating in an intimate theatre experience.

3–6 months: *Bebé Babá* – Described as a ‘communication game’, a series of workshops lead to a theatre experience where babies, parents and actors are all participants and performers with babies having control of movement and noise making, asserting their curiosity, and creating and sharing a narrative with others.

6–12 months: *Baby drama* – The audience of babies are sitting in bouncers suspended as they watch adults perform the miracle of birth in a text-heavy performance. Children of this age though cannot hold conversations; they can grasp the call and response of dialogue and different tones and cadences in speech.

12–18 months: *Oogly Boogly* – In a sensory tent, toddlers participate in an experience where the performers mirror and imitate the toddlers, creating a spontaneous piece of work, where the toddlers have the power to control the performers. It allows the child more freedom from their caregiver while still respecting the child’s vulnerability by having the caregiver close at hand but taking more of a back-seat role.

18 months – 2 years: *Le jardin du possible* – A single actor with no script interacts with natural materials from sticks to stones and encourages the audience of toddlers to do so, an experience that is exploratory. Sound and sight as the primary senses in theatre are inverted with touch and smell being prioritised. The performance nurtures independence, exploration, and the opportunity to collaborate with fellow toddlers.

2–3 years: *Glouglou* – In this piece, the actor who pretends to be a baby engages with a myriad of ‘first times’ it is a more traditional piece that bridges early years theatre with children’s theatre and has a linear narrative with an arc and script as well as abstract thinking through props and imaginative thinking through more structured role-play.

Study 9

Imagine Nation: The Value of Cultural Learning

Link to access:

www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk

Authors: The Cultural Learning Alliance

Country: UK

Year of publication: 2017

What the study sought to find out:

This research looked at the value of cultural learning for young people through the four themes of social, educational, economic, and personal benefits.

Study characteristics:

- The study used quantitative data from the Cultural Learning Alliance's Key Research Findings paper published in 2011 and updated in 2017.
- A steering group regularly met and provided a qualitative perspective.

“ Arts and culture are a life-enhancing and essential part of our existence. They bring pleasure, participation, self-expression and essential skills into children's lives. ”

“ Arts education contributes to the development of all aspects of a child's powers and personality. It is as essential as numeracy and literacy in equipping children with the skills for life and the creativity to build a successful nation. ”

“ Through cultural learning young people learn to co-operate with each other, to work towards a common goal, and celebrate collective achievement. The process nurtures individual talent and encourages independence, teamwork and leadership. Through it, children are able to test their skills and gain confidence and self-knowledge through the challenges of performance or self-expression. They learn to think and to question. ”

Key Findings

Social: Arts and culture are essential for young people becoming active citizens and acquiring cultural capital and for cultural democracy to thrive. It nurtures communities and creates a strong sense of identity that unites people. As well as this, arts and culture can be used in education and health to increase wellbeing. If young people are deprived of these social benefits, they will be emotionally stunted, more isolated and intellectually limited and overall, it would be detrimental to their quality of life and future potential.

Educational: Schools are one of the key places for a diverse range of young people to access culture. Schools that invest in teachers specifically trained in the arts subjects and which partner with artists and cultural organisations are offering young people the best possible chance in terms of opportunity and creative thinking, empathy, and resilience. It also offers parents a chance to celebrate in their children's creative achievements. From art galleries to schools, education offers teachers, parents, the community, cultural organisations, and the children themselves an abundance of possibilities.

Economic: Children who study the arts are more likely to study at university level and become employable. In the UK the creative industries contribute £8.4 billion per annum to the economy and create thousands of jobs and those who work in the industry report higher levels of fulfilment. The transferable skills that the arts offer are beneficial to young people when it comes to employment. There are a multitude of pathways available for young people to enter the creative economy from apprenticeships to degrees as well as an array of different opportunities from performance to more technical skills to arts management and administration.

Personal: Culture helps young people form connections and make sense of the world around us through imagination both individually and collectively. It nurtures children's moral, emotional, social, and intellectual connection with people and the world and enhances leadership and teamwork skills. Parents who encourage art and cultural activities with their children break down social barriers with them.

Key Statistics

- Young people who take part in structured arts activities experience improved cognitive skills by 17%.
- Young people from low-income households who experience arts and culture at school are 20% more likely to vote when they reach adulthood.
- Young people who have broken the law who engage in arts are 18% more likely to not re-offend.
- Young people who participate in the arts are 38% more likely of a chance to report a higher standard of health and wellbeing.

Other Findings

- Students who study art subjects have higher rates of employment and are more likely to maintain employment.
- Exposure to arts and culture improves literacy and maths and overall better academic achievement.
- Students from low-income households are more likely to volunteer if they partake in arts and culture.

Study 10

National Partnership for Culture: independent report

Link to access: www.gov.scot

Authors: National Partnership for Culture

Country: UK (Scotland)

Year of publication: 2022

What the study sought to find out:

- This report is based on A Cultural Strategy for Scotland which was published in 2020 and sparked a national conversation about the value and future of culture.
- The National Partnership for Culture (NPFC) was commissioned to support the cultural strategy by making recommendations to Scottish ministers to help them achieve the aims of the strategy.
- This report aimed to firstly contextualise the main aims of the cultural strategy and secondly to make recommendations on how to achieve the ambitions under the following headings: Education and Learning; Health and Wellbeing; Community and Place; Fair Work; Data and Evidence.

Study characteristics:

- The action research was gathered through a series of workshops with professionals across multiple sectors within the industry.

“ On the basis that the National Performance Framework is due to be reviewed in 2023, we propose that an updated set of indicators should have a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, which seek to evidence tangible and meaningful change related to the National Outcome for Culture. The indicators should be focussed not only on the sector but should also include the perceptions of the public: what they value about culture, how culture brings meaning to their lives, and the cultural activities they find meaningful. The cultural values of children and young people should also be considered alongside those of adults. ”

“ Artists helped – and continue to help – us make sense of the experience we’ve all been through whilst the lockdown has given us a glimpse of a Scotland without live music, clubs, plays, and festivals. In short, the potential of mass participation in culture as a building block towards the Wellbeing Economy was clear to see. ”

Key Findings

■ Education and Learning:

- The government should guarantee access to formal and informal ways of engaging young people with culture in educational settings and plan to involve more artists in schools in a way that fits the curriculum.
- Funding that connects artists to schools such as The Arts Alive Programme or The Place Programme should be scaled up and resourced to help more artists reach schools in Scotland.
- The Current Programme for Government hopes to advocate for Article 31 of the UN Rights of the Child (to access culture and the arts) in law as well as acknowledging the role the arts play in helping children’s wellbeing and promoting citizenship.
- The Scottish Government should work to merge communities with cultural education.
- More resources should be available to teachers to promote children’s pathways to careers within the cultural industry. The government should collaborate with Skills Development Scotland to establish occupational learning paths in educational settings and signpost cultural skills and entry level jobs in the industry.

“ The Culture Counts manifesto highlights that access to cultural experiences will spark ambition in children influencing life-long professional goals. ”

Key Statistics

- Participation in structured arts activities boosts transferrable skills such as confidence and communication by between 10–17%.
- 98% of primary school teachers feel culture is integral for pupils, however 73% feel they do not have the adequate resources and support to deliver culture as part of their curriculum.

Other Findings

Health and Wellbeing: Culture should be used as another vehicle to deliver health care priorities, and a separate funding stream should be available for artists working in the field of health and wellbeing.

Community and Place: National and local initiatives should work together to promote culture, and local councils should use culture as part of wider delivery of their projects.

Fair Work: A national support service should be established for freelance artists offering training, development, and advice. The Scottish Government must ensure Fair Work practices are being adhered to by any organisation receiving public funds.

Data and Evidence: The National Performance Framework indicators should be reviewed and altered to better align with the cultural strategy. Cultural data should be more readily available and up to date to prevent duplication of data among cultural organisations when applying for funds. There should be specific research in place to see how the cultural strategy will shape culture in Scotland in years to come.

Study 11

Research into Theatre, Dance and Drama Use in Schools

Link to access: www.imaginate.org.uk

Authors: Commissioned and funded by Creative Scotland, managed by Imagine, research conducted by Wellside Research Ltd

Country: UK (Scotland)

Year of publication: 2022

What the study sought to find out:

- To map a national (Scotland-wide) picture of the ways primary schools are engaging with theatre, dance and drama.
- To assess primary schools' satisfaction with the level and types of theatre, dance and drama offerings.
- To assess and compare the impact of these different offerings on delivering the curriculum and supporting children's health and wellbeing, especially post-pandemic.
- To identify barriers to increased engagement from both primary schools and arts organisations' point of view.
- To develop case studies of successful and innovative interventions.

Study characteristics:

- Short study (three months in 2021).
- Surveys of nurseries, schools, artists and arts organisations.
- Interviews with teachers.
- Questionnaires with artists/companies.
- Produced qualitative and quantitative results.

“The main benefits are the rich cultural experiences, where our learners develop a respect for the values and traditions of others around them. The listening skills that they gain through working closely with their peers. The empathy they develop from taking on the role of another. Their use of language as they learn and take on board the contributions from those around them. Finally, the level of enjoyment that they experience from engaging in fun and exciting learning experiences that provide hope and prospective careers for the future.”

School Survey – class teacher, primary school, Glasgow City

“Being supported by a national organisation, such as Creative Scotland or Theatre in Schools Scotland (or a large and well-known company), was also considered to be helpful in engaging with schools. It was felt there was an element of quality control built into this which was easily communicated to schools, and that existing relationships were already in place to facilitate access.”

Key Statistics

- 75% of respondents strongly agreed performances had led to 'a positive increase in a child's mental health (e.g. less anxious, more curious and engaged, calmer)'.
- 76% of respondents valued the impact performances had on children's creativity and self-expression, communication, and innovation.
- 70% of respondents addressed the effect performances had on enhancing children's ability to collaborate.
- 85% of respondents agreed that the greatest barrier to engagement with culture in schools was cost.
- 85% of respondents who had not engaged in performance in the last 5 years stated that a more defined outline of benefits to the children would encourage them to attend in the future.
- 90% of respondents indicated that they would do more dance, theatre and drama in school if they had access to more funding.

“Benefits, outlined by 79 respondents, included many of the areas outlined in the section above, as well as academic and cultural engagement; accessing the arts and/or new opportunities; enjoyment; the development of personal and inter-personal skills; and providing inspiration and widening horizons, both in terms of aspects which they might enjoy and for future career options.”

Key Findings

The identified benefits of performing arts for children in a school setting included:

- Boosting confidence.
- Enhancing skills in teamwork, communication and listening as well as vocabulary expansion.
- Developing emotional resilience in a safe, relaxed space which is more relevant than ever during a time of a global pandemic.
- An increased likelihood of pupils joining an extra-curricular activity.
- Promoting inclusion and diversity especially among Additional Support Needs (ASN), non-verbal and English as a Second Language (ESL) students.
- Increased engagement of children who are shy, improving their self-esteem and participation.
- Enhanced wellbeing both mentally and physically as performances can encourage children to move and be active.
- Diversifying career opportunities by introducing children to potential careers within the creative industry.

Other Findings

- Benefits to teachers: it provided them with new skills and techniques on how to engage pupils with the curriculum.
- Benefits to parents: they were satisfied that their child found an activity they enjoyed, and this conjured a sense of pride.
- Benefits to artists: the programme improved their confidence, developed their work, and built long-term positive relationships with schools.
- Barriers to engagement that were identified included cost, COVID-19, awareness of opportunities, geography, competing priorities in schools, the size of the school as well as finding age-appropriate opportunities.

Study 12

Seen and not heard: participation as tyranny in Theatre for Early Years

Link to access: www.tandfonline.com

There is a paywall here, but Imagine can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Ben Fletcher-Watson

Country: UK

Year of publication: 2015

What the study sought to find out:

- This paper interprets the participation of young children in theatre as a form of tyranny (cruel and oppressive power). Watson argues that, within the structures of theatre, there is a power imbalance between adult creators and early years children in particular.
- Watson creates a Ladder of Arts Participation for the Very Young, based on Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, to establish a balance of power and create a blueprint for artists to engage in more democratic participatory practices with young audiences.

Study characteristics:

- Case studies of previous performances are used as a foundation for creating a Ladder of Arts Participation for the Very Young.

“ In all cases, participation serves several purposes: aiding children's comprehension of perceived action (by combining active physical or kinaesthetic discovery with more typical, passive forms of visual, verbal and aural presentation); empowering young spectators (by allowing them to take a degree of control over the performance or space); responding to children's natural urge to join in with play scenarios. ”

“ Article 31 is perhaps only achievable if children are recognised as artists in their own right, capable of creating art and curating culture on their terms. This may mean challenging not only the hegemonic status of the theatre-maker as an elite possessor of skill but also the traditional mode of narrative drama as the supremely valid aesthetic. If it can be argued that children's play, unmediated by adults, can exhibit dramaturgical and theatrical legitimacy as coherently as professional theatre, then a new hierarchy of participatory practice can be posited. ”

Key Findings

Watson's Ladder of Arts Participation for the Very Young is as follows:

- Playing is referred to as 'children's culture' and the only form of pure participation and citizen control. This is a performance where children are accepted as creators and participation is child-designed and child-led.
- Reinterpreting is delegated power where the child is free to interact and explore a performance that has been designed by adults, despite being child-led.
- Interacting is when children, as audiences, are invited to physically participate. However, usually a select few are chosen or are willing to participate, such as in magic shows, leaving the remainder disengaged or excluded.
- Testing involves trialling the performance during the rehearsal process. While it involves some participation, ultimately the live performance is not actively participatory even though citizens are partially contributing for a set period in a controlled environment where feedback can be interpreted in different ways.
- Educating refers to productions at schools which are accompanied by resource packs and/or workshops. Here, participation is drip-fed through another adult.
- Therapizing is where adults facilitate play with children rather than free-play and so this form of participation is adult-led.
- Spectating is passive participation where the child is manipulated into conforming to adult audience behaviour such as sitting still and staying quiet during a performance.
- Playing, reinterpreting, and interacting are child-led practices, while testing and educating are adult-led practices and lastly therapizing and spectating are non-participation.

Other Findings

- The last decade has seen a surge in 'non-judgmental' performances where the usual etiquette and conventions of audiences are removed: this includes relaxed, autism friendly, and mother-baby performances.
- Access to participation is controlled by adults in the child's life whether it be a parent, teacher, or artist.
- The right of the child to 'participate freely in cultural life and arts' should also include the right of the child not to participate, to grant the child more agency through choice.

Study 13

Social Return on Investment Study: Helium Arts Creative Health Hub Programme

Link to access: helium.ie

Authors: S3 Solutions and Helium Arts

Country: Ireland

Year of publication: 2021

What the study sought to find out:

- Helium Arts Creative Health Hub is a programme that aims to engage children and young people that have long-term health conditions in creative activities in both hospital and community settings across the country.
- This study aims to identify and analyse the impact that programme had on the key stakeholders as well as calculating the economic value of the programmes.

Study characteristics:

- The study analysed Helium Arts Creative Hub programme that operated in Cork, Limerick and Dublin as well as its remote programme over the period between 2019–2020.
- Quantitative and qualitative data: surveys and interviews were carried out with key stakeholders and researchers calculated the “Social Return on Investment” (SROI) to quantify the social and economic value of the programmes.

“ While the caring for children’s physical needs is essential, literature argues that without access to creative self-expression, children may not have the tools to develop problem-solving skills or create healthy emotional responses. It is suggested that nurturing creativity through arts can enhance coping skills that are necessary in difficult and stressful times. ”

“ When signposted to the six-week programme in the community, 90% children experienced reduced isolation and improved wellbeing with 100% benefiting from improved creativity and 68% enhancing their capacity to cope with their condition. For those that participated in the Distance Creates Remote Programme, 41% experienced reduced isolation, 44% had improved wellbeing, 29% showed greater creativity while 24% demonstrated an improved capacity to cope with their condition. Cumulatively the Creative Health Hub participants accrued in excess of €434,208 of social value accounting for over 64% of the total value calculated. ”

Key Statistics

- 90% of parents stated their child made friends throughout the programme.
- 90% of parents reported their child had improved confidence, self-esteem and could relax more.
- 100% of parents responded that their child had heightened creativity.
- 68% of parents found their child was better equipped to deal with their health condition due to the programme.
- 41% of Distance Creates Remote participants’ parents reported their children were less isolated and better able to connect to others.
- 50% of families said their family unit was more resilient after the programme.
- 80% of volunteers had improved mental health.
- 100% of health professionals agreed the programme enhanced collaboration across healthcare and the community.
- 90% of artists gained confidence and skills to work with young people who have long-term illnesses.
- 100% of arts organisations involved in the programme responded that they had a greater reach to more marginalised participants.
- In terms of SROI, the outcomes this programme delivered are worth 1.98 times the initial investment.

Key Findings

- Young participants’ wellbeing was elevated, isolation decreased, and creativity was boosted.
- Family bonding was nurtured leading to more open communication, idea sharing as well as improved sibling relationships.
- The programme helped artists with their career development through building relationships, managing volunteers, improving communication skills, and gaining confidence doing participatory arts with children and young people with long-term illnesses.
- Health professionals reported a more relaxed and positive work environment.
- Support group workers found the programme provided a strong sense of community and a medium for the children and young people to express their emotions through art.
- Schools are key in terms of accessing arts and culture, and yet chronically ill children may not be able to access the school environment. As a result, community and alternative forms of engagement, such as this programme, are essential.
- Remote programme participants experienced slightly less positive impacts compared to the in-person programme.

Study 14

Spark Change: The Impact of Performing Arts on Children

Link to access: www.newvictory.org

Authors: New Victory Theatre and Wolfbrown Consultancy

Country: New York, USA

Year of publication: 2020

What the study sought to find out:

- The impact of performing arts experiences on school children, in order to promote greater access to performing arts within the education system.
- The study looked at the impact of New Victory Theatre's SPARK programme (Schools with the Performing Arts Reach Kids). SPARK was a 3-year programme which aimed to implement a robust performing arts programme in schools which previously had little access to this.

“As our research shows, a strong affinity can be built through early and consistent exposure and reinforced through subsequent programming. Right now, there are future directors, producers, patrons and stars in classrooms across the country. It's up to us to engage and empower them.”

Study characteristics:

- Study length: 3 years (2015–2019).
- 9 schools in areas of economic deprivation which had no formal arts education programme.
- 2 groups of children:
 - SPARK cohort, who attended nine live performances at New Victory Theatre and engaged in 45 workshops over the period.
 - Control group, who saw three performances and attended no workshops.
- Impact was analysed using classroom observation, post-show surveys, and performance tasks.
- Children also completed surveys about their own social and emotional learning (which includes five core skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision making).

Key Statistics

Engaging in performing arts activities:

- Nurtures a love of performing arts – a 20% increase in interest in the arts among SPARK participants after 2 years.
- Widens perspectives and enhances interpersonal and teamwork skills – a 55% increase in these amongst SPARK participants versus control group.
- Enhances creative thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills – 50% increase in problem-solving skills among SPARK participants after 2 years.
- Greater sense of hope which boosts self-confidence and increases resilience – 10% increase in hope for the future among SPARK participants after 1 year.
- 8% increase in curiosity and understanding of different cultures and experiences after 1 year.

Key Findings

By exposing children to the performing arts within an education setting:

- Children are more likely to develop a long-term love and appreciation of the arts.
- Children enhance their ability to articulate and understand more complex emotions, thus increasing empathy
- Children better understand diversity and different perspectives and cultures.

The study also demonstrated that early participation in the arts had the following benefits:

- Children feel more included, improving access and diversifying future audiences and artists.
- Supported skills in teamwork, innovation, improvisation, and problem-solving: all skills needed for the modern workforce.

Lastly, children engaged in the performing arts over the three-year period had a more optimistic and resilient outlook on life, and increased levels of hope, than those in the control group.

Other Findings

- In the US, access varies depending on the school, meaning arts programming is often an addition rather than a core part of the curriculum.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted children socially and emotionally, adding to the necessity of performing arts in education to equip children with the ability to process this global trauma and move beyond it. This study shows that repeated experiences of the performing arts over three years helps to build children's sense of hope for themselves and their futures.

“To make sense of their COVID-19 experience and continue their healthy development, they must be equipped to not only emotionally process the pandemic, but also move beyond it. As our research shows, the performing arts are uniquely situated to fill that need.”

“All kids deserve to dream. And that's why they deserve the performing arts.”

Study 15

‘The best day in my whole entire life’ – Young Children, Wellbeing and the Arts

Link to access: onlinelibrary.wiley.com

There is a paywall here, but Imagine can send you the full study for free. Please contact info@imagine.org.uk to request.

Authors: Barbara Piscitelli

Country: Australia

Year of publication: 2020

What the study sought to find out:

- This study investigated the effect the Out of The Box children’s festival setting had on children’s sense of wellbeing as both cultural participants and cultural consumers.
- In this study, wellbeing is categorised under the following seven terms: ‘usefulness, positive future, relaxation, dealing with problems, thinking clearly, closeness to others and capacity to make up one’s mind.’

Study characteristics:

- A mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative research. The case study included 105 children aged between 7 and 9 years old.
- Quantitative questionnaires, qualitative focus groups and participant observation were conducted at three stages before during and after the festival.

“ They found the day was fun, happy and relaxing; one child remarked that it was ‘the best day in my whole entire life’. The children liked the informal environment where they could ‘hold a teacher’s hand’ and play with their classmates and teachers. They enjoyed getting out of school, taking a trip on the train and being able to explore the cultural centre. ”

“ We saw young children engaged deeply as creators and consumers of arts experiences in both active and reflective ways—participating as artists and storytellers, as audience, as dancers and as sensory learners. We heard them talk about their experiences with enthusiasm and watched them open their eyes and their minds to new ideas. ”

Key Findings

- From a quantitative perspective, the study did not reveal a drastic change in the impact of a children’s wellbeing as prior to the festival the children had a good knowledge of wellbeing and how to support themselves and others. This is due to the schools’ curriculum which equipped children with an understanding of wellbeing.
- However, the qualitative data painted a different picture as the focus groups during the festival demonstrated children had a greater sense of clarity, felt relaxed, more connected to others and more decisive.
- It was also noted by a researcher shadowing the children during the festival that the participants displayed a sense of excitement and wonder while soaking up the festival atmosphere.
- Overall, children felt a greater sense of freedom after the festival, enjoyed being creative and being part of the artistic process and the emotions this evokes.

Key Statistics

- 98% of children found their time at the festival enjoyable.
- In the year 2012 the average number of times children visited a public library was fifteen, a museum or art gallery was three, and number of times they attended a performance was three times.

Other Findings

- While festivals can improve a child’s sense of wellbeing, this is often a one-off event and there needs to be a more regular and systemic framework in place for children to engage with the arts for a longer period.
- Most festivals tend to be urban centric, if arts are for all as government policy claims, then arts and culture needs to be accessible and diverse and reach all children from all backgrounds in all places.

Study 16

The Impact of Theatre Performance in a School Setting on Children's Learning

Link to access: ore.exeter.ac.uk

Authors: Elaine Faull

Country: UK (England)

Year of publication: 2020

What the study sought to find out:

The research question was three-fold:

1. What impact did Theatre Alibi's school-based performances have on children's learning?
2. How did teacher intervention affect this process?
3. What were the long-term effects of the performance and how did children remember it?

Study characteristics:

- A mixed methods child-centred approach using both quantitative and qualitative data.
- A case study of three performances created by Theatre Alibi between 2016 and 2018 and their impact on 900 school children aged between 5–11 years old were studied.

“ The emotional aspects of the performance, performed in a school setting, provide an opportunity for children to experience and understand intense and conflicting emotions in a 'safe' space where teachers or friends are available to help process and further interpret the performance so supporting their emotional development and, in some cases, resilience. ”

“ Discussion helps the children's understanding, improves enjoyment and enhanced memory of the performance, resulting in recall of not only plot and characterisation but all production elements and emotional understanding. If teacher-time is limited, this is an efficient and effective intervention to follow-up the performance. ”

“ The memory of a theatre performance in children's minds is enduring and often recreated, not transient or forgotten, but living on in the imagination and offering opportunities for creativity. ”

Key Findings

- A one-off performance without additional resources from teachers can have a positive impact in children's emotional wellbeing and overall sense of community in the school.
- Teacher intervention post-performance was beneficial, enhancing the children's experience of the performance. Children enjoyed post-show discussion rather than a written review and a type of post-show reflection that granted autonomy and creativity to the children which was different than the usual schoolwork.
- Post-show work guided by teachers was shown to boost the motivation of the students to learn and improved their ability to critically think and recall the performance. Children who discussed the show with a teacher were twice as likely to remember it long-term.
- Children remembered the performance with more clarity and in greater detail three months to a year post-performance rather than immediately after, highlighting how children need time to process it.
- Children re-imagine and re-create the performance over time therefore becoming 'co-creators' of the performance.

“ Whilst a 'one-off' performance might not seem to be worth the expense for a school, in fact it can be much more significant than it might seem. Evidence with children suggests the memory of performance is organic and malleable, changing in tiny details every time it is revisited. This offers the children a deep and rich experience across time. ”

Key Statistics

- The emotional memory of a particular performance showed a 29% increase in improved emotional wellbeing three months post-performance.
- Teacher observation during another performance reported a 79% increase in student concentration and an 85% increase in engagement and enjoyment and 0% fidgeting.

Other Findings

- Children with additional needs and from lower socio-economic backgrounds reported a more dramatic positive emotional response to the one-off performance.
- Female participants could handle more abstract and conflicting emotions better than their male counterparts.
- When it came to memory and performance, older children recalled the more emotional moments of the performance while younger children retrieved the more comedic moments of the show.
- Over time the emotional impact of the performance grew stronger among the children.

Study 17

The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experience of Theatre

Link to access: books.google.co.uk

A copy of this is available at The Ark and Imagine offices.

Authors: Matthew Reason

Country: UK

Year of publication: 2010

What the study sought to find out:

- This book is intended to act as a guide for practitioners. It aims to investigate young audiences from their own experience of live theatre.
- The first section 'Contexts and Questions' outlines the argument of why theatre is good for young audiences incorporating instrumental and aesthetic perspectives.
- The second section 'The Theatrical Experience' examines children's reaction, memory and experiences of live performance through drawing.
- The final section 'Enhancing Engagement' offers guidance for practitioners to improve children's experience of theatre.

Study characteristics:

- The author draws from visual arts practice research, interviews, contextual analysis and a study he completed with primary school children in 2007.
- 98 Primary school aged children from three schools in Edinburgh and West Lothian participated in the research through 'projective techniques' by drawing and painting responses to theatre experiences after attending shows at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival and using this process to ignite memory and conversation about the performances.

“ In the clamour of voices advocating the importance of theatre for young people, the voice and perspective of the children themselves is missing. ”

“ And if we are not interested in how children engage with theatre, then how seriously are we taking our audience in theatre that we make for them? The implications of the preposition for are interesting and worth dwelling on. ”

Key Findings

- Children were capable of oscillating between the real and imagined during a performance and engaged in the construction and decoding of theatre as much as the spectating.
- Children derive pleasure from being spectators. They are by no means passive – they are active participants forming their own unique experience through reflection and critical analysis.
- Pre-show resource packs for teachers might destroy the surprise of the performance or direct children to look at it from a certain angle that skews their own personal interpretation.
- Rather, post-show reflection and discussion can be as important as the performance itself and integral to the pleasure of performance. Drawing can be a way for children to reflect through the four-stage process of memory, observation, interpretation, and invention.

“ It is however easy to show the association of theatre with schools and education has the potential to leave some certain enduring negative associations in the minds of some children, particularly as they grow older. If theatre is heavily subsumed into an educational agenda this can mitigate against other aspects of the experience. ”

Other Findings

- Children are often referred to as a 'captive audience'. There is a power imbalance where adults hold the power, which can be equalised by studying children's experiences of live performance. While many researchers interpret the young audience as the future adult audience, this study focuses on children as the audience of the present and the now.
- Theatre is often deemed 'healthy', but more often than not this moral narrative does not take into account the quality of theatre. Children's theatre should be of the same aesthetic standard of adult theatre and quality is measured through engagement.
- There is a potential risk of cultural experiences becoming another part of the curriculum which could disengage children's own personal experience and ownership.
- Children's theatre is often sidelined in the wider world of adult theatre. This reflects the marginalisation of children as a vulnerable group in our society.
- In the chapter on audience development and cultural rights where the teenage audience is discussed, the research revealed that this young audience felt disconnected and isolated from theatrical experience and that as cultural consumers they lacked ownership in a world where adults make the decisions and where theatre is often perceived as 'other' in their daily lives.

Policy Summaries Overview

Document name	Link to access	Availability	Authors	Country	Year of Publication	Key findings
Policy 1 Making Great Art Work, Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025)	www.artscouncil.ie	●	The Arts Council	Ireland	2015	Within the Public Engagement priority area, Objective 8 focuses on arts provision for children and young people. It emphasises arts in formal education, investment in artists and organisations dedicated to making work for children and young people, collaborating with local authorities, and having a commitment to children and young people that affects the Arts Council's decision-making across the board.
Policy 2 Arts Council Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy	www.artscouncil.ie	●	The Arts Council	Ireland	2019	The policy commits the Arts Council to gathering increased data on the artists they engage with, and from the organisations it funds, particularly in relation to the nine protected characteristics as identified in Irish legislation plus an additional tenth characteristic: socio-economic background. The policy also commits the Arts Council to establishing a forum for continued conversation with representative groups for those at risk of discrimination or exclusion.
Policy 3 A Culture Strategy for Scotland	www.gov.scot	●	The Scottish Government	Scotland	2020	The strategy wants children's voices to continue to be heard and to be involved in decision-making processes when it comes to culture in Scotland. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy outlines the value of culture to citizens' wellbeing. • The government is committed to working to improve creative learning and removing barriers to engagement for children in Scotland. • Creative learning can benefit teaching and learning in other non-creative subjects.

- * ● Full study publicly available at link
○ Full study not publicly available, contact info@imagine.org.uk to request

Policy 1

Making Great Art Work, Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025)

Link to access: www.artscouncil.ie

Authors: The Arts Council

Country: Ireland

Year of publication: 2015

About the document:

This Arts Council strategy outlines a strategy for Ireland's arts sector across five priority areas; the first two of which are policy areas and the latter three of which are areas of the Arts Council's planning and decision-making:

- The Artist
- Public Engagement
- Investment Strategy
- Spatial and Demographic Planning
- Developing Capacity

At the heart of the strategy is a vision for the arts in Ireland grounded in a sense of people and place, where the arts are truly valued as a vital feature of our daily lives and where ambitious and innovative artists are supported to make work of excellence. It is broken down into three-year plans, the last of which will run from 2023–2025.

“The more people who engage in the arts and the greater their social diversity, the more significant are the societal benefits deriving from Arts Council investment.”

Summary of elements relating to performance for young audiences

Within the Public Engagement priority area, one objective, Objective 8, focuses on arts provision for children and young people, emphasising arts in formal education, investment in artists and organisations dedicated to making work for children and young people, collaborating with local authorities and having a commitment to children and young people affect the Arts Council's decision-making across the board. It reads as follows:

Objective 8: Plan and provide for children and young people.

Supporting actions:

- We will advocate for the centrality of the arts in formal education at all levels and for the provision of quality vocational training in the arts.
- We will work with the Departments of Arts and of Education to achieve full implementation of the Arts in Education Charter.
- We will invest in artists, arts organisations and key programmes dedicated to developing high quality work in arts-in-education and youth arts, and we will support the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people in the public domain.
- We will make provision for children and young people a key focus of our relationship with local government.
- We will incorporate our commitment to young people into the mainstream of our decision-making and, where appropriate, into our funding agreements with arts organisations.



Policy 2

Arts Council Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy

Link to access: www.artscouncil.ie

Authors: The Arts Council

Country: Ireland

Year of publication: 2019

About the document:

The Arts Council, as a development agency for the arts in Ireland, created a policy to focus their efforts to ensure that everyone who lives in Ireland has the opportunity to engage with, and participate in the arts and that art in Ireland is truly of, for and about everyone who lives here. It builds on previous policy documents including an Arts and Disability policy, a Cultural Diversity and the Arts policy and a Dignity at Work policy. This policy also speaks to the values in Making Great Art Work, the Arts Council's overarching strategy, of 'respect for diversity: of artistic practice, of public engagement, and of social and cultural traditions.'

Methods used:

The Arts Council consulted with civil society groups and representative bodies to create this policy. The policy has led to a 2023–2028 Implementation Plan which maps out the actions the Arts Council will take to address areas requiring development in their organisation and activities.

“As the agency tasked with the development of the arts in Ireland, it is crucial that the Arts Council takes a proactive and focused approach to guaranteeing a basic human right: ensuring that everyone who lives in Ireland has the opportunity to engage with, and participate in the arts.”

Summary of elements relating to performance for young audiences

This policy makes no explicit reference to children or young people. However, the principles of the policy are as relevant to this area of artmaking as any other. The policy commits the Arts Council to gathering increased data on the artists they engage with, and from the organisations it funds, particularly in relation to the nine protected characteristics as identified in Irish legislation (gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community) plus an additional tenth characteristic: socio-economic background; and the Arts Council commits to reporting on this.

The policy also commits the Arts Council to establishing a forum for continued conversation with representative groups for those at risk of discrimination or exclusion, and to working in partnership with representative groups to increase opportunities and supports for long-term engagement in the arts by individuals and groups experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation. It commits to developing and incorporating specific criteria regarding equality and diversity into future investment strategies and to drawing on Census 2016 data and other relevant sources, to select and develop realistic targets for reflecting demographic realities in future work programmes.

Useful findings for advocacy

From the policy:

"We are deeply aware that, within the arts in Ireland, many inequities still exist and that there is a substantial number of people who continue to experience barriers to engaging with and participating in the arts because of their identity, background, or through lack of accommodation of a disability."

"Further, as evidenced by movements such as *Waking the Feminists*, *Sounding the Feminists* and *Fair Plé*, women artists across a range of artistic disciplines continue to encounter serious impediments to advancing their careers and repertoire in a way that equates with their male peers."

"Harnessing diversity provides unparalleled opportunity for creative collaboration, innovation and learning. We also believe that through promoting equality, human rights and diversity in the arts in Ireland, we can benefit from rich artistic outcomes and contemporary practice that is challenging, relevant and more accurately reflective of our society today."

Note

In 2022 the Arts Council published an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit to guide organisations through the creation of their own EDI policy. This may be useful background for individual artists but is particularly relevant for organisations, companies, festivals etc. as a way of shaping their approach to EDI.

Policy 3

A Culture Strategy for Scotland

Link to access: www.gov.scot

Authors: The Scottish Government

Country: UK (Scotland)

Year of publication: 2020

About the document:

This government document outlines a strategy for Scotland's culture categorised into three ambitions:

- Ambition 1: Strengthening culture,
- Ambition 2: Transforming through culture,
- Ambition 3: Empowering through culture.

It highlights how culture enriches society in Scotland and outlines a plan for how to support it into the future.

This strategy is in synergy with other government strategies to coalesce cultural strategy across all government departments in Scotland.

Methods used:

- The strategy is based on the themes raised in the National Culture Conversation which took place between 2017 and 2018.
- Case studies are used as examples to bolster the three ambitions of the strategy. Case studies include the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Scottish Ballet's & Dance Base's Dance for Parkinson's programme; and The Stove Network Dumfries.

“ Culture and creativity help young people grow confidently as citizens and can play an important role in helping children cope with any stress and adversity they may be experiencing in their lives. ”

“ Cultural experiences should be embedded from the very start of children's formal learning but need not be restricted to formal environments. ”

Summary of elements relating to performance for young audiences

- The strategy outlines the value of culture to citizens' wellbeing: it benefits mental health, builds a sense of community and social networks, reduces isolation and boosts confidence and resilience in people of all ages.
- Educational settings such as pre-schools and schools are deemed essential for helping children engage with and access culture.
- Skills for the 21st century can be gained through cultural activities and engagement. Creative learning is part of the Curriculum for Excellence and it can benefit teaching and learning in other non-creative subjects.
- The Scottish Attainment Challenge strives to ensure all children can reach their full potential, including those facing disadvantage due to poverty etc. Culture plays a key part in this challenge.
- The government is committed to working to improve creative learning and removing barriers to engagement for children in Scotland.
- The strategy aims to collaborate with organisations such as Royal Scottish Conservatoire, and stakeholder groups, such as the Music Education Partnership Group, to improve music education across schools in Scotland.
- The strategy wants children's voices to continue to be heard and to be involved in decision-making processes when it comes to culture in Scotland as evidenced in the Time to Shine Youth Arts Strategy programme.

Useful findings for advocacy

- The Scottish Government values culture 'in and of itself' and welcomes both established and informal types of culture.
- Scotland's Cultural Strategy aims to foster culture within small communities as well as on an international stage.
- Culture and access to it is a fundamental human right.
- Culture positively impacts other elements of Scottish Government priorities such as health, education, the economy, the environment, and tourism.
- Those working within the cultural industry need to be supported.
- A National Outcome for culture will be implemented in the National Performance Network.
- Overall, the findings of this strategy in relation to children and young people highlight that cultural engagement for this age range is mainly school- and curriculum-centric.

Evaluation

The study summaries are designed to help artists draw on existing research into the impact and benefits of experiencing performance for children; but how can you measure and communicate the impact of your own work?

Why evaluate?

You may need to measure your audience or demonstrate the outcomes of your project for a funder; often at least some of this information is needed for a final report. But aside from funder requirements, by engaging in evaluation you can begin to build your own evidence base for the impact of your work. Combined with evidence from other sources (such as the studies included in this guide), this can make a really strong case for organisations to fund your future projects.

Who evaluates?

When beginning a project, consider evaluation and measurement right away. Is it something you need to prioritise in this project? Is it something a collaborator can help with, or even lead on (for example, could this be led by the venue you are working in)? Is it something you could dedicate some of your budget to, therefore affording you the help of someone more experienced in this area? If you decide this is something you want to do yourself, we have included some ways to go about this here.

Activity	Components and characteristics	Outcomes	Impact
<i>This is the project itself. While of course you have something in mind from the outset, leave room for this to adapt based on the other sections.</i>	<i>These are the aspects of the project that make it work well and result in the outcomes you've identified.</i>	<i>These are the changes in circumstances, behaviour, capacity or attitude for the audience you're targeting</i>	<i>This is the change in your audience's lives which is caused by your activity</i>
e.g. <i>Live From The Ark, a project where we film performances in The Ark and make them available on demand, free of charge in schools across Ireland.</i>	e.g. Free films remove geographic, financial and access barriers. Films are accompanied by classroom activity packs, giving teachers ways of connecting the film to the curriculum.	e.g. Children enjoy themselves. Children increase their likelihood of participating in arts activities in the future. Teaching is enhanced for teachers. Teachers increase their likelihood to engage with The Ark in the future.	e.g. More children in more places have their right to art and culture fulfilled.

How to evaluate

The first thing you need to do when planning an evaluation is actually the first thing you need to do when planning a project: you must decide what you want to achieve and how best you believe you will achieve it. This is how you design your projects and at the same time determine how you will evaluate your success. In Imagine and The Ark we use the Theory of Change to do this.

The Theory of Change is a method of planning, evaluating and communicating effective projects, increasingly used in charities, social enterprises and arts organisations. It is a way of thinking through your work, refining your approach and communicating your effectiveness. You start by determining the impact you wish to have and then you work back to the outcomes that contribute to that impact, then the characteristics your project should have to ensure those outcomes, and then you shape your project accordingly. The Theory of Change is probably best explained using a diagram and an example. The example we are using on the left-hand side is The Ark's *Live From The Ark* programme of filmed performances.

Once you have worked through this process (from impact backwards!) and honed your project, you now need to consider what information and feedback you can gather during your project and how you can measure your success. Things you might be able to gather include:

- Audience/participant figures
- Audience/participant age, gender, location
- If engaging with schools, what kind of schools (e.g. predominantly single sex or mixed, designated disadvantaged...)?
- Have these participants engaged with you before, or is this their first time?

This data above is quantitative, i.e. it can be easily added up and presented in numerical format. You might also want to gather qualitative data, which is less easily added up but gives another dimension to your understanding of your project and how it has been received. This is what you might learn from surveys, observation by you and your colleagues or in conversation with participants, their parents and their teachers. You might try to find out:

- Did participants enjoy themselves?
- Have they done something like this before?
- Would they do something like this again?
- Did they learn anything new?
- What words would they use to describe what they experienced?
- What do they think might make something like this better?

While planning a survey or other means to gather feedback like that listed above, remember to map this back to your proposed outcomes: can the feedback or data you gather prove that your outcomes have been achieved? If not, you may need to reconsider what you gather, or consider outcomes that can be better measured. And aside from gathering audience data and asking for feedback from children, parents and teachers, do also give space to what you and your collaborators can observe: your experience during a project, and how you perceive your audience's experience, can also help others to understand the impact it is having.

Sample survey

This survey is based on a survey recently used by The Ark when asking the public what they thought of an arts festival they were attending. It was designed to be answered by groups of adults and children as they were leaving a festival performance or spending time at a drop-in activity.

How many events have you attended/are you planning to attend as part of the festival? <hr/>	How did you hear about this event? <input type="checkbox"/> The Ark e-zine <input type="checkbox"/> The Ark website <input type="checkbox"/> The Ark social media <input type="checkbox"/> Irish Rail advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Radio advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Press <input type="checkbox"/> Event venue <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Internet search <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) <hr/>
Have you enjoyed the events you've attended? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a lot! <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If you've attended more than one event, which (if any) was your favourite? <hr/>	
If you could, would you do something like this again? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely! <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	How many grown-ups are in this group? <hr/>
While attending, did you learn anything new about children's rights? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, we've learned lots <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, we've learned a little <input type="checkbox"/> No, we haven't learned anything new	How many children are in the group and what are their ages? <hr/>
What three words would you use to describe the event(s) you attended? <hr/>	How many girls, boys and non-binary children are in this group? Or would you prefer not to say? <hr/>
What, if anything, would make the event(s) better? <hr/>	Where has this group come from? <input type="checkbox"/> Dublin <input type="checkbox"/> Rest of Leinster <input type="checkbox"/> Munster <input type="checkbox"/> Connacht <input type="checkbox"/> Ulster (RoI) <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Ireland <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas
Have you been to an event by The Ark before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, all of us have been before <input type="checkbox"/> Some of us have been before <input type="checkbox"/> No, none of us have been before	Anything else you would like to tell us? <hr/> <hr/>

Tips for researching and writing your funding application

Finding your funder

- Identify your objective and your needs before you start looking for a funder and be clear on what you specifically need the funds for.
- If you don't know of any relevant funders, look at websites of companies/artists who work in a similar way and see who funds them. Most people need to acknowledge their funding on their website.
- There are free grants databases you can search online, listed in our 'useful resources' sections.

Tips for writing your funding application

- Read any guidelines carefully and refer back to them regularly.
- Check the application deadline and set a time to work on this: everything takes longer than you think it will. It needs decent, uninterrupted time (perhaps over the course of a number of days or weeks). But also set a limit and try to stick to it, so you don't spend weeks on end on an application for a small grant.
- Do you have questions? If so, contact the funder in good time and attend any information sessions they offer.
- Are you asked for supporting documents? Do you need letters of support? Start gathering them straightaway. If you can, draft a letter of support for your partner.
- Get advice from a range of sources at the beginning, ideas from outside the sector can offer a new perspective on your work/idea.
- Make sure you have the right partners in place, your collaborative team are important to ensure you can deliver your idea.

- Consider who is reading your application, don't presume they already know about you or your practice.
- Be consistent across your application when you are writing about the project. Use active not passive language and write positively.
- Tell a compelling story, find the hook and practice telling other people about your project/idea before you start to articulate on paper your idea.
- Of course, you need to explain the what and how of your project, so a funder understands what you propose to deliver. But don't forget about the WHY: why are you undertaking this work and why would a funder want to support it? What impact will this work have, and for whom?
- If you have part-funding from somewhere else, credit it. If you have in-kind support (rehearsal space, marketing help, a venue partner...) include that with that its monetary value.
- Get someone who is not from your sector or someone who doesn't know your idea to read the application, to see whether they understand what you are describing.
- Final check: proofread your application, check the sums in your budget, make sure you have added all your attachments.
- If you can, submit a day or two in advance of the deadline to avoid tech issues. Note when the funder is due to give you a result.
- Could you join another selection or assessment panel? This could give you insight into how funding decisions are made.

Keeping track of funding

It can be a challenge to keep track of the funding options you are researching, pursuing and managing. Here we have created three template tables for you to follow your own fundraising progress, which you can use as they are or customise for your own needs.

Possible and pending applications

Here is where you track the funders you are researching and the applications you are working on.

Funder name	Funder's area of interest	Funding range	Project applied for	Amount applied for	Deadline	Application submitted?	Decision expected by	Have they funded us previously?	Crediting requirements if successful	Reporting requirements if successful	Notes
The Funding Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested in all artforms, but particularly music and visual arts Interested in projects with a particular (though not exclusive) focus on activity, artists and orgs in Scotland Particularly interested in schools projects 	£5,000–£10,000	Summer youth programme	£5,800	31 January	Yes, 31 January	Late May	Yes, gave £5000 to 2021 artist residency programme	Logo placement online, logo or written credit of funding on any public materials	Nicely designed report on project, ideally within a month of delivery	We advised them on 7 February that project has shifted from June to late August/early September.
Grants 'r' Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting people entering or in the early stages of a career in the arts A strong educational element aimed at the 16+ age group Projects that extend access and support for those groups who have not traditionally engaged with the arts either as audience, performer or other creative team member. Doesn't fund production costs in any form. 	Up to £3,000	Assistant Production Manager placement	£3,000	31 March	Not yet	Hopefully before end June, or else we can't apply.	Gave £3,000 to core costs in 2020 and a £2,000 project grant in 2021	Logo placement online, logo or written credit of funding on any public materials	Report form to be filled in online within 3 months of delivery	Emailed on 10 February to ask about decision timeline
			Total possible:	£8,800							

Successful applications

Once you've received the good news that you are being funded, here's where you keep track of your income, reporting requirements etc.

Funder name	Project applied for	Amount granted	Feedback	Paid in yet?	Crediting requirements if successful	Reporting requirements if successful	Report deadline	Notes
The Funding Foundation	Artist in Residency programme	£5,000	We explained the programme really clearly and the funder liked how we communicated the likely impact of the work	£4,500 paid in on 4 Nov, remaining £500 will be paid after reporting	Logo on website pages about the project, and on any public communications regarding this. Acknowledgement in credits of any videos	Nicely designed report on the impact of their grant	Late May	Remember to invite Foundation staff to the launch event
			Total successful:	£5,000				

Unsuccessful applications

It's tempting to forget all about a funder who turned you down but instead, keep a note of what you applied for, any feedback you received and whether you think it's worth applying again in the future.

Funder name	Funder's area(s) of interest	Project applied for	Amount applied for	Any feedback received?	Will we approach again?	Notes
The Trapeze Trust	<p>The live performing arts, mainly circus. Previous areas for support include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice and mentoring to help with professional development of small and medium scale arts organisations • Providing advice on fundraising, recruiting development staff and preparing a case for support • Assisting with feasibility studies for capital projects and advice on project management • Funding elements of capital projects – including the less appealing items • Assisting live arts projects involving outreach and the disadvantaged • Encouraging the involvement of young people in the performing arts 	Fundraising support	£8K per year for 3 years	Our application was very strong but in this instance they were oversubscribed with asks of this nature	Yes, and they accept applications year-round	Consider a different kind of project: maybe our circus outreach programme?

Useful Resources – Ireland

Where this toolkit has been designed to help you make your case in funding applications/proposals, there are other places you can go to find that funding, as well as for help and advice as an independent artist. For those working in Ireland, take a look below.

The Arts Council

Search for available funding and sign up for their newsletter.

artsCouncil.ie

The Arts Council's Young People, Children and Education (YPCE) team

Offers funding and bursaries for artists working in this area, supports initiatives to reach and engage children, contributes to research and publications and advises artists.

artsCouncil.ie

Local authorities

Your local authority Arts Office may have funding and other artist opportunities (and you may find other avenues in other parts of the local authority such as community grants).

Creative Ireland

Adhoc funding plus opportunities for artists to engage with different audiences and communities.

creativeireland.gov.ie

Business to Arts

Opportunities and funding for artists as well as advice for members on fundraising and more.

businesstoarts.ie

Create

Their monthly newsletter includes a host of opportunities related to collaborative arts practice and beyond.

create-ireland.ie

Dance Ireland

The national development and resource organisation for the professional dance community, offering opportunities, advice clinics, training and residencies.

danceireland.ie

Gap Day

Gives professional freelance theatre practitioners across the island of Ireland paid time to think, dream and plan.

mermaidartscentre.ie

Improvised Music Company

A resource organisation for Irish-based jazz musicians, their website and newsletter contains training and opportunities for musicians.

improvisedmusic.ie

Irish Society for Stage and Screen Designers

A representative body run by and for designers, ISSSD offers knowledge sharing, opportunities and advocacy.

issd.ie

Irish Theatre Institute

Manages the searchable databases irishtheatre.ie and irishplayography.com, provides training and resources, bursaries and artist development opportunities and one-to-one information clinics.

irishtheatreinstitute.ie

Meitheal

A support initiative for artists creating work for young audiences run by Branar Téatar do Pháisti.

branar.ie

Music Network

Ireland's national music touring and development organisation, their website and newsletter contain training and opportunities for musicians.

musicnetwork.ie

National Concert Hall Learning & Engagement Department

Ireland's national cultural institution for music offers bursaries and opportunities for musicians, with its Learning & Engagement Department including a particular focus on music for young audiences.

nch.ie

Theatre Forum

Opportunities and jobs listings as well as training, events, knowledge-sharing and advocacy.

theatreforum.ie

Visual Artists Ireland

Opportunities and jobs listings in the visual arts and beyond, on their website and in their weekly newsletter.

visualartists.ie

Minding Creative Minds

A new initiative funded by the Department of Culture offering free mental health and wellbeing support for those working in the cultural and creative sectors, including counselling services, career guidance, advice on practical, day-to-day matters, legal and financial advice.

mindingcreativeminds.ie

The Ark Artists Club

The Ark's free membership scheme for artists. Join to get first access to artist opportunities, events and training as well as reduced ticket rates. We also run regular Artist Coffee Mornings for artists in the sector to get to know us and each other.

ark.ie

Useful Resources – Scotland

Where this toolkit has been designed to help you make your case in funding applications/proposals, there are other places you can go to find that funding, as well as for help and advice as an independent artist. For those working in Scotland, take a look below, this is not an exhaustive list but should be a good start.

Researching potential funders:

OSCR, Charities Commission and Companies House are your friends, they are very useful for looking up previous recipients of support.

Local authorities: your local authority Arts Office may have funding and other artist opportunities (and you may find other avenues in other parts of the local authority such as community grants).

Creative Scotland: funding plus opportunities for artists to engage with different audiences and communities.

Creative Scotland Opportunities

Register for regular updates on opportunities:

opportunities.creativescotland.com

Culture and Business Scotland

Offers training, resources and potential corporate match-funding for projects.

cultureandbusiness.scot

Charity Excellence Framework Funding Finder

This is a Funding Finder database, which gives you access to a huge range of funders, with the latest uploaded weekly into the Recent Additions search category.

www.charityexcellence.co.uk

Edinburgh 4 Community Search Engine

Focused on funding for organisations rather than individuals.

www.idoxopen4community.co.uk

Foundation Scotland

An organisation that supports philanthropists to help their personal giving make the most difference. We work with donors to invest in community action that enables people and places to flourish.

www.foundationscotland.org.uk

Paul Hamlyn Directory

Funding for visual artists and composers.

fundingforartists.org.uk

Shape Arts

Funding for artists.

www.shapearts.org.uk

SCVO

Funding Scotland search service.

funding.scot

A few funders who support individual artists as well as companies:

Dance Professionals Fund

For dance professionals across the UK in personal need. Grants ranging from £500 to £3000 to cover things like living costs, medical costs, help in a crisis etc.

www.dancefund.org.uk

Fidelio Charitable Trust

Provides funding for individual artists as long as they are supported by an arts organisation / institution with relevant expertise. Priority given to music including opera, lieder, composition and dance.

www.fideliocharitabletrust.org.uk

Jerwood Arts

Independent funding for emerging artists in the UK. New Work Fund and Live Work Fund are particularly relevant here.

jerwoodarts.org

The Elephant Trust

Independent funding which prioritises visual arts.

www.elephanttrust.org.uk

Other useful resources and support:

Creative Scotland Research Roundup

To help develop your general case for support.

www.creativescotland.com

Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST)

Scotland's development body for professional dance, opera and theatre. Members can avail of training, advice, mentoring and bursaries. In particular, take a look at funding and finance training.

www.scottishtheatre.org

SEN (Social Enterprise Network Scotland)

Associate membership, free and open to individuals.

sencot.net

Turn 2 Us

For guidance around accessing general emergency funding and benefits in a personal crisis.

www.turn2us.org.uk

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