

Culture South East's response to the Regional Assembly Select Committee Examination of Social Exclusion

Introduction

Culture South East is one of nine Regional Cultural Consortia established by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in order to champion cultural and creative interests at a regional level.

Culture South East under the then Chairmanship of Sir David Watson published a regional cultural strategy, the Cultural Cornerstone, in 2000 and the Cultural Strategy Action Plan in 2002. The Consortium plans to revise the cultural strategy in the light of the new Integrated Regional Framework, the South East Plan and RES in 2007. The Cultural Cornerstone identified the challenge of inclusion as one of the key priorities for the cultural sector in the region. The Consortium was therefore delighted to be engaged in the development of the regional social inclusion statement and is pleased to be represented on the Social Inclusion Partnership South East (SIPSE)

General comments on the Context and Issues Paper

Culture South East welcomes the Assembly's scrutiny enquiry into the effectiveness of social inclusion policies in the South East. The format of this enquiry, which looks at the contributions all key stakeholders make to the progression of the social inclusion agenda in the South East, is particularly welcome. Culture South East also welcomes the comprehensive nature of the Context and Issues Paper and we are delighted to note the recognition the Paper gives to the contribution that the cultural sector can make to the inclusion agenda.

We note the desire in the South East Plan to align the regeneration effort with national programmes such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. In general we welcome this approach and acknowledge the need to focus resources. We are however concerned that there are centres in the north of the region, including Reading, Slough, Oxford, Milton Keynes, Woking and Wycombe, which despite benefiting from buoyant economies, face significant challenges in meeting the inclusion agenda and either currently or in the recent past include priority wards as identified by the IMD. Similarly some pockets of rural deprivation exist outside the areas identified in the SE plan. This should not be ignored in framing a regional policy.

Paragraphs 3.25 to 3.27

Culture South East strongly welcomes the reference to the regional cultural strategy within the Issues and Context Paper.

Paragraph 3.38

The list of core definitions and drivers of exclusion, page 3 of the Issues and Context Paper, draws attention to the problematic concept of **social capital**. Social capital does however play an important role in breaking the cycle of decline described in paragraph 3.38. In particular, community engagement in cultural provision can provide a key means of building community confidence and capacity. The DCMS publication 'Culture at the heart of regeneration' draws attention to the fact that many of the most successful regeneration projects contain considerable cultural elements. Furthermore it is also increasingly recognised that many of the best cultural projects are initiated through community engagement.

SEEDA and Culture South East have recently published a guide the Cultural Social Enterprise (www.culturesoutheast.org) The cultural social enterprise sector is growing rapidly in response to community need and many of these organisation have focus on either providing to communities which otherwise might not have access to cultural provision or engaging priority groups in cultural activity or training.

The report also rightly draws attention to employment as a key economic driver for inclusion. The Cultural and Creative Industries Economic Impact Study 2002 (SEEDA and CSE/SEEC) draws attention to the significance of the cultural sector as an employer in the region. Sport, Tourism, the Arts, Museum Libraries Archives, Film and Creative Industries employ in total more than 500,000 people in the region. The cultural sector also offers pathways to employment for people at a wide range of skill levels, the tourism and hospitality sector is a significant employer of people with relatively low levels of education and training and therefore can play an important role in providing pathways into the labour market for potentially excluded communities.

The table on page 3 rightly identifies poor education attainment and lack of skills as drivers for exclusion. In our view the importance of the education and skills agenda should be given more prominence in the discussion Para 3.38 and highlighted in the model described on page 17. Within in the region innovative partnerships and projects are emerging which use culture to engage hard to reach groups in learning and skills development. Furthermore skills acquired through engagement in cultural participation eg team work communication skills and creativity skills are increasingly recognised as being of value to other sectors.

Culture South East is working with the Learning and Skills Council South to articulate the social engagement powers of Culture Media and Sport when harnessed to Learning and Skills Opportunities.

This work is being led by the Culture South East Learning Task Group, which includes representation from SEEDA GOSE the LSC, and The Regional Cultural Agencies . The Task Group has Identified the following opportunities

- The development of a consensus as to the kind of 14-19 'alternative curriculum'(in the spirit of the Tomlinson report that could be developed by cross cultural agency and local authority working in the new Children's Service authority Arrangements.
- The exploitation of the potential of capital investment in community facilities on FE an HE sites, so that these facilities can be used to engage potentially excluded communities in cultural activity and possibly provide pathways to learning. This Work will require support from LSPs and AIFs
- The Development of a consensus on the workforce skills development needs of low skilled low qualified often Casulised workforces in sections of the cultural industries (Eg Tourism and Hospitality and Sections of The Sport and Recreation industry.)

Paragraph 3.9

We note the recognition in paragraph 3.9 that the Integrated Regional Framework indicator relating to social and cultural engagement is a significant contributor to social inclusion. We would however stress that this indicator, once operational, will relate to the whole cultural sector, not just sport and active recreation. It is likely that the indicator will be based on the findings of the DCMS Cultural Participation Survey. It is expected that these will be available in 2006 and that they will subsequently be regularly updated.

Question 1

Are the identified priorities of the region's social inclusion statement relevant and correctly identified?

The publication of the social inclusion statement and the development of SIPSE (Social Inclusion Partnership South East) are significant examples of innovation in the South East. The statement has been successful in giving social inclusion a high level of prominence within regional policy making. It also acts as a agent to encourage cross-sector partnership working in relation to the inclusion agenda. Culture South East would therefore welcome the development of a renewed social inclusion statement and looks forward to the continued development of SIPSE.

The 8 areas of policy significance identified in the social inclusion statement still appear to be valid. Culture South East continues to welcome priority given to the need to increase access to cultural activities in the social inclusion statement.

Question 2

What has changed since the social inclusion statement was agreed in 2002 and have there been significant adjustments in the institutional structure? Are there any major economic social environmental grounds that have emerged recently?

The priority given to inclusion and access in the cultural sector has received prominence since the publication of the social inclusion statement. This prominence is reflected in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's PSA targets 2005- 2008.

DCMS PSA Target 3

By 2008 increase the take up of cultural and sporting opportunities by adults and young people aged 16 and above from priority groups by:

- Increasing the number who participate in active sport at least 12 a year by 3% and increasing the number who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity level of sport at least 3 times a week by 3%.
- Increasing the number who participate in arts activity at least twice a year by 2%, increasing the number who attend arts events at least twice a year by 3%.
- Increasing the number accessing museums and galleries' collections by 2%.
- Increasing the number visiting designated historic environment sites by 3%.

Priority groups are defined as:

- people with a mental or physical disability
- people from black or ethnic minority groups
- people from socio-economic groups C2, D and E

Question 3

The social inclusion statement commits partners to agreed methodology to measure whether social inclusion in the region is improving. This mainly uses the deprivation index 2004. Is this a satisfactory measure? What other measures might be used?

Culture South East welcomes the inclusion within the social inclusion statement of an agreed methodology to measure whether social inclusion in the region is improving. In our view it is important that this measure is consistent with measures used by national programmes. We would therefore wish this indicator to be consistent with the indicator used by other key stakeholders in the inclusion agenda.

Question 4

Has SIPSE been an effective organising champion in helping co-ordinate strategies, influence resource decision or get greater integration of services by encouraging agencies to work closely together? Are there structural changes which might enhance SIPSE's role in the region as a champion of social inclusion?

Culture South East has found SIPSE to be a useful organisation, which has both generally championed the inclusion agenda in the region and helped the Consortium to articulate the contribution culture can make to the social inclusion agenda.

The SIPSE task groups have proved effective in progressing focused areas of work. The 'Don't leave me out' resource pack is a particularly powerful example of the effectiveness of this way of working.

SIPSE on occasions has possibly lacked capacity and tools to have as an effective influence on some key regional policy documents as might be desirable. It also appears to have only limited engagement with the local authority sector. The absence of a regional branch of the LGA covering the whole region makes this engagement hard to sustain. The lack of engagement with local government is however a weakness within the SIPSE structure.

It may also be desirable to streamline regional partnership organisations working on similar agendas; for example SIPSE and the regional regeneration network appear to have several members in common. The relationship between these bodies might therefore be usefully formalised. This would be particularly helpful to small organisations such as Culture South East which has limited human resource to attend meetings.

Question 5

Does the RES contain a robust commitment to social inclusion and do the operational priorities and investment decisions of the agencies support RES intentions?

Culture South East benefits from a healthy partnership relationship with SEEDA, one element of which has involved joint work on the inclusion agenda . We have expressed a concern to Assembly Select Committees investigating culture and regeneration, and moves from SRB to AIFS that SEEDA's focus on hard economic outputs runs against some of its objectives in relation to social and community policy including its engagement with culture. The specific concerns relating to culture are being addressed in the current SEEDA corporate plan through the application of the concept of strategic added value. In this context SEEDA has challenged the cultural sector to show how it adds value to SEEDA's work in relation to each of the RES objectives. Culture South East is therefore committed to work with SEEDA to develop an evidence base to show how engagement supports SEEDA's work in relation to inclusion. This will be one element of work explored through the regional cultural observatory which will be launched Autumn 2005.

Our contribution to previous Select Committees has expressed concerns that SEEDA's delegation of the inclusion and regeneration policy to area investment frameworks can lead to a confusion of the roles between AIFs LSPs and other partnerships. This is discussed later in our response.

Question 6

The Social Inclusion Statement sees community engagement, local leadership and joint working as key drivers in achieving its aims at a local level. Are Local Strategic Partnerships effective vehicles for managing this?

Culture South East is concerned that many Local Strategic Partnerships within the region do not include representatives from the cultural sector. Consequently, in 2004 we published 'Making life better' as a guide to embedding culture in the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and Area Investment Frameworks (AIFS).

(www.culturesoutheast.org)

In this publication we argue that the cultural sector should both be influenced by the work of Local Strategic Partnerships and seek to influence the work of LSPs so that the contribution culture can make to the inclusion policy and other policy priorities can be fully exploited. To achieve this aim we believe every LSP Board should include a cultural sector champion.

The narrow focus of many Local Strategic Partnerships on stakeholders perceived to relate to core policy priorities has meant that the cultural sector is often excluded. It should also be noted that in some instances LSPs justify this approach by grouping culture and community organisations together. In reality, cultural and non-cultural community sectors are rarely able to represent each other effectively on an LSP.

Question 7

Is the complexity and number of partnership arrangements at local and sub-regional and regional level becoming an obstacle to providing clear delivery of social inclusion goals? Is there any simplification that might help?

The complexity of local partnership arrangements makes it difficult for small organisations within the cultural sector to provide adequate support to the wide range of local partnership organisations across the region. The cultural sector therefore faces a significant challenge in communicating the contribution culture can make to the inclusion agenda, to the partnership responsible for developing this agenda at a local level. Some organisations within the sector also find it difficult to understand the differing roles of the various partnership bodies.

At a regional level it would be helpful if closer integration existed between organisations with similar remits e.g. SIPSE and the regeneration network.

Question 8

The social inclusion statement commits partners to standards about the way in which organisations work together. Do you think that the different agencies support and integrate each other's services? Are there good examples of this, particularly in local delivery?

The social inclusion statement has been helpful as a tool for brokering cross sector partnership working. At the regional level, Culture South East has been able to work in close partnership with SEEDA on the regional social enterprise strategy. This led to the publication of the joint Cultural Social Enterprise Guide.

At the local level, local commitment to culture and creative business initiatives is frequently a more powerful driver than the regional commitment to implement the social inclusion statement. Examples of good practice do however exist. The John Pound Healthy Living Centre in Portsmouth has been developed, as a collaboration between the City Council, SEEDA, Sport England and Arts Council England, amongst others and will deliver a range of community and cultural facilities in a priority ward.

In the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area, Culture South East has worked with a range of organisations including the regional cultural agencies and Government Offices to develop guidance on how culture can contribute to the development of sustainable communities within the growth areas. This guidance emphasises the contribution culture can make to the inclusion agenda. The recognition that culture has got as a key stakeholder in the regional inclusion agenda through Culture South East's engagement in the development of the social inclusion statement and participation in SIPSE has made brokering these types of partnerships far easier.

Question 9

How can national agencies that are tasked with meeting Government targets fine tune their services to meet local needs to work with partners? Are there good examples of this?

Culture South East is not a delivery agency. Our key role is to embed culture within regional policy frameworks. Culture South East, did however use the social inclusion statement as a tool to influence SEEDA during the drafting of the current RES. This in turn has had a local impact as many of the Area Investment Frameworks are engaged in supporting cultural projects aimed at promoting social inclusion and regeneration.

Question 10

The social inclusion statement commits agencies to work with the voluntary and community sector to deliver. However, is this being practically achieved?

A large proportion of the voluntary and community sector is engaged in the development of cultural activity. This includes a wide range of sports clubs, museums, arts and heritage organisations. The mechanisms employed by Local Strategic Partnerships to engage the voluntary and community sector however rarely

draw upon these organisations. This is unfortunate. Many community cultural organisations and social enterprises are committed to the promotion of the inclusion agenda. Culture South East would therefore strongly advocate that at a local level partnership bodies such as LSPs, AIFs and the Boards supporting the development of the Children's Trusts and Local Areas Agreements engage directly with the cultural sector so that the contribution culture can make to engaging hard to reach groups can be fully exploited.

Question 11

Is the planning and funding structure sufficiently flexible for voluntary and community organisations to deliver social inclusion services in partnership?

Core funding for the cultural sector from Local Authorities has come under increased pressure in recent years. Furthermore, national funding formulas related to population and deprivation has meant that the regional cultural agencies in the South East need to service a region with one of the largest geographic areas and the highest populations with the same staff resource as many much smaller regions. Capacity to engage in partnership working is therefore acutely limited. The cultural sector therefore needs continued support from the Government Office, SEEDA and the Regional Assembly so that the contribution that culture can make to the inclusion agenda can be fully exploited.