

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

RESEARCH INTO THE ACTUAL AND PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO PUBLICLY FUNDED ARTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

FINAL REPORT

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PREFACE

The Arts Council is the lead agency for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland. Sponsored by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, it provides support for artists and arts organisations, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through Exchequer and National Lottery funds.

The Five Year Plan 'Creative Connections' sets out the Arts Council's vision for the arts by placing them at the heart of our social, economic and creative life. A series of objectives have been designed to support this vision, underpinned by the four broad themes of: promoting the value of the arts; strengthening the arts; increasing audiences and improving organisation performance.

The key driver behind the Arts Council's research and evaluation programme is to support the objectives identified in the Five Year Plan. Research conducted independently or in partnership with others, provides the Arts Council with the evidence base needed to inform thinking at all levels within the decision making process and to help inform policy development.

This report identifies barriers experienced by individuals engaging with the arts in Northern Ireland. It draws on a baseline of existing research conducted within the wider research community, employing data on participation and attendance patterns generated through an Omnibus Survey carried out by NISRA. The findings have been used to inform actions laid out in the current Five Year Plan and form an important component in a broader and longer-term programme of research examining engagement in the arts.

Nick Livingston
Director, Strategic Development

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Deloitte was appointed by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) to carry out research into the actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland. The terms of reference for the assignment were:

- recognising the broader social, cultural and political context to identify and describe actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland. This included consideration of financial, social, physical, cultural and practical barriers. Publicly funded arts covered the artforms of music, drama, dance, literature, visual arts and crafts and traditional arts (Ulster Scots/Irish);
- to identify and describe actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland as faced by minority groups;
- to identify approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome perceived and actual barriers to the arts at a policy, programme and project level;
- to review best practice in increasing access to the arts adopted by arts organisations in the United Kingdom; and
- to consider the impact of findings on ACNI objectives.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology we used to complete this research involved four distinct elements that aimed to address different aspects of the terms of reference. This involved undertaking:

- a review of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey Results (September 2004);
- a literature review of research that had been carried out in Northern Ireland and other parts of Great Britain;
- a consultation exercise with the arts sector and organisations that represent or assist specific sub-groups of the population; and
- a review of best practice.

We also examined the broader social, cultural and political context in which the research was being undertaken through considering ACNI strategies and policies and the wider strategic context of government policy in Northern Ireland.

1.3 Findings and Conclusions

Our main findings and conclusions arising from the research are outlined below.

1.3.1 Attendance at Arts Events

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey indicated that 73 per cent of those interviewed had attended an event in the last 12 months. However there were significant variances in the types of events attended and the profile of those that were attending. The most popular type of event attended was film (53 per cent) however attendance at other events was significantly lower: 22 per cent had been to a play or drama but only two per cent had been to a contemporary dance performance, opera or jazz concert. In relation to the demographic profile of those attending events, our analysis indicated that:

- women are slightly more likely to attend events than men;
- attendance is related to age and young people are more likely to attend than the elderly;
- those with children were more likely to attend events;
- disabled people were less likely to attend;
- community background and living in an urban or rural area only slightly affects attendance levels;
- attendance was closely related to the level of educational attainment and income; and
- students and those in employment are more likely to attend events, whereas retired people are least likely to attend.

When broad comparisons are made with other regions of the UK, the information shows that in general attendance levels are lower in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK.

1.3.2 Barriers to Attendance

A significant amount of research has already been carried out in the UK (particularly in England) in relation to barriers faced in attending the arts. This research has showed that the common barriers faced by the public include cost, lack of time, location, lack of public transport, lack of information, unsuitable events and feeling uncomfortable or out of place. For others barriers are more specific, such as lack of disabled access, language, lack of facilities for children and relevance to culture.

Through the consultations we found that, in general, the barriers that had we had identified through the literature review were acknowledged as being relevant to Northern Ireland. The only significant variance was in relation to the cost of attending the arts, where opinion was split on whether this was an actual barrier. A number of additional barriers were also identified, namely, a lack of understanding of or an awareness of the arts, lack of participation, lack of choice and poor quality customer service.

1.3.3 Approaches to Overcoming Barriers

As part of the terms of reference for this research we were asked to identify approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome perceived and actual barriers to the arts. Our consultations with the arts sector identified that a variety of approaches have been undertaken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland that have tried to deal with barriers faced by both the general public and specific sub-groups of the population. However many of these approaches were one-off or short term in nature and not part of a longer term or co-ordinated strategy.

1.3.4 Best Practice

Our review of best practice involved examining a selection of studies that had been carried out in the UK which had specifically set out to identify best practice or which aimed to provide arts organisations with guidelines on how best to approach audience development. The literature reviewed highlighted some key areas that need to be considered in order to assist in achieving this, namely:

- the importance of good project management of events - including allowing sufficient time to plan, organise, implement and evaluate the event;
- ensuring that organisations model internally what they wish to achieve externally and that any audience development work must be rooted within the wider organisational commitment to access and inclusion;
- understanding that audience development is a continuing process and lasting audiences can generally not be achieved through one off or short-term projects;
- customer service and the 'whole' experience are important, not just the artistic element;
- partnership working is important;
- undertaking quality evaluations are key to determining the success of projects and in sharing and disseminating best practice with other organisations; and
- that for specific groups of the population different approaches to audience development are needed.

1.4 Recommendations

Outlined below are our recommendations in relation to developing audiences for the arts and addressing actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland in the future:

- given the findings in relation to the persistence of particular barriers to attendance we recommend that ACNI should continue to prioritise their work in this area, through setting relevant objectives in future strategic plans and by working with relevant partners (e.g. Audiences NI, arts organisations, community/voluntary groups) to address these barriers;

- in conjunction with Audience NI we would recommend that ACNI consider developing an audience development strategy which would:
 - set out to provide a co-ordinated approach to audience development which would consider how audience development programmes are managed and how funding is distributed; and
 - identify specific actions in relation to targeting the barriers identified in this report;
- we recommend that in the future ACNI gives consideration to different approaches to the distribution of funding for audience development projects. Many of the reports discussed in this research have highlighted the need to provide a sustained approach to addressing barriers and developing audiences. We would therefore also recommend that ACNI considers funding projects that aim to take a sustainable approach to targeting specific groups (such as young people or the disabled) and the associated barriers to attendance. We would also suggest that priority is given to funding organisations that:
 - will collaborate on projects with other groups (e.g. with other arts organisations, community/voluntary groups);
 - will aim to follow or take into account best practice when designing, implementing and evaluating projects (see Section 8); and
 - are prepared to share their experiences with other arts organisations and learn from best practice;
- our research has shown that attendance levels at arts events are in general lower than those in the rest of the UK. It is therefore important that all population groups are targeted, however, we recommend that ACNI (working with Audiences NI) consider giving priority to developing audiences among the population sub-groups that were identified in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey as being less likely to attend the arts (see Table 4.1), namely:
 - those over the age of 65 / retired;
 - those without dependents;
 - disabled people;
 - those with lower educational attainment; and
 - those with lower incomes;
- while it is important to address all barriers to attendance we recommend that ACNI (working with Audiences NI) consider giving priority to addressing the following barriers to attendance, which were identified in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey (see Table 5.1) as being the main reasons for non-attendance, namely:
 - difficulty finding time to attend/lack of time;
 - cost; and
 - family commitments/childcare.

Consideration should also be given to the additional barriers highlighted through the focus groups with arts organisations, namely:

- a lack of understanding or awareness of the arts;
 - lack of participation;
 - lack of choice; and
 - poor quality customer service;
- we recommend that ACNI develop specific monitoring and evaluation requirements for those arts organisations in receipt of funding for audience development. Arts organisations should also be encouraged by ACNI to undertake full evaluations of their projects in order to add to the knowledge of barriers to the arts and also to ensure that best practice is shared and learnt from by others; and
 - we recommend that ACNI encourages arts organisations to access the research that has been carried out already (e.g. through the New Audiences website) and to use this information to benefit audience development activity taking place in Northern Ireland.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction

Deloitte was appointed by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) to carry out research into the actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland.

The terms of reference for this assignment were:

- recognising the broader social, cultural and political context to identify and describe actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland. This included consideration of financial, social, physical, cultural and practical barriers. Publicly funded arts covered the artforms of music, drama, dance, literature, visual arts and crafts and traditional arts (Ulster Scots /Irish);
- to identify and describe actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland as faced by minority groups;
- to identify approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome perceived and actual barriers to the arts at a policy, programme and project level;
- to review best practice in increasing access to the arts adopted by arts organisations in the United Kingdom; and
- to consider the impact of findings on ACNI objectives.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology we used to complete this research involved four distinct elements that aimed to address different aspects of the terms of reference. This involved undertaking:

- **A Review of Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey Results**

In September 2004, the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA) undertook an Omnibus Survey for Northern Ireland. The survey interviewed almost 1,300 people across Northern Ireland using a sampling frame that was representative of the general population who were over the age of 16. As part of the survey, a module of questions in relation to the arts was included. The questions focused on respondents' attendance and participation in the arts, barriers to participation and their perceptions of the arts in Northern Ireland.

We undertook an analysis of the survey results in order to understand:

- the profile of those that are currently attending the arts in Northern Ireland;
- the barriers that are faced in attending the arts; and
- the profile of those that are not attending the arts.

We also undertook a high-level comparison of the results with similar surveys that have been carried out in Scotland, England and Wales.

- **A Review of Literature**

In order to assist in identifying and describing actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts (as defined in Section 2.1) we undertook a literature review of research that had been carried out in Northern Ireland and other parts of Great Britain. Through the review we identified barriers that are faced by the general population and those that particularly affect sub-groups of the population such as young people, the disabled and families.

A list of literature that was reviewed is attached at Appendix I.

- **A Consultation Exercise**

We undertook consultations as part of this research for two reasons:

- to validate the barriers that we had identified through the literature review in a local context (i.e. Northern Ireland); and
- to identify approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome barriers to the arts.

The consultations took place in three parts:

- focus groups with arts organisations - we invited all of the organisations that are currently funded by ACNI (2005/6) to participate in the focus groups;

- telephone interviews with arts venues that are currently funded by ACNI; and
- interviews (either face to face or by telephone) with organisations that represent or assist specific sub-groups of the population, such as young people, the disabled and people living in rural areas.

- **A Review of Best Practice**

We have undertaken a review of 'best' or 'good' practice in increasing access to the arts. This was carried out through desk research by reviewing studies that had been carried out in the UK. We examined best practice in two ways - general best practice principals in developing audiences and best practice in relation to increasing audiences for specific groups of the population such as young people, the disabled and families.

2.3 Report Format

The remainder of this report is set out as follows:

- Section 3 Background
- Section 4 Attendance Levels
- Section 5 Literature Review
- Section 6 Consultations
- Section 7 Approaches
- Section 8 Best Practice
- Section 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

This section aims to provide a brief overview of the context in which this research into barriers to publicly funded arts has been carried out. We have considered ACNI strategies and policies relating to this research and the wider strategic context of government policy in Northern Ireland.

3.2 Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI)

ACNI commissioned this research in order to gain a greater understanding of the barriers that are faced in attending publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland. It also wished to identify approaches taken by arts organisations to try and overcome these barriers.

This research links closely with ACNI's remit as the lead development agency and prime distributor of public funding for the arts, in that a key part of that remit is to 'develop an appreciation of and access to the arts' for all people in Northern Ireland.

ACNI's current five-year plan (*The Arts: Inspiring the Imagination, Building the Future*) aims to develop this remit further by setting specific priorities and objectives. Within the strategy four priorities are outlined, one of which is to 'develop new audiences for the arts'. Barriers to attendance and participation are acknowledged as part of this priority, as is targeting less frequent attenders especially children and young people. The strategy goes on to outline seven strategic objectives which include 'increasing audiences for the arts'. ACNI aims to address this by working:

'in partnership to remove barriers that prevent people from taking part in the arts, especially children and young people, those with disabilities, people from ethnic minority groups and those who are socially excluded'.

This research also complements other projects that are being undertaken by ACNI, such as the establishment of Audiences NI, research into disabled access in venues and the provision of funding to arts organisations for audience development projects. Together, these projects will add to the knowledge of barriers to the arts and assist in developing strategies to address these barriers so that a greater number of people in Northern Ireland can experience the arts.

3.3 Wider Policy Context

The ACNI priorities and objectives outlined above also have clear links to the strategies of ACNI's parent department, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and to wider government agendas in Northern Ireland. Key elements of these strategies and agendas are outlined below.

3.4 Northern Ireland Government

3.4.1 Programme for Government / Priorities and Budgets

The Programme for Government (PfG) produced by the Northern Ireland Assembly (2001 to 2003) outlined a range of proposed strategic aims and priorities that aimed to 'improve and modernise our society'. PfG had five key priorities, one of which was 'Growing as a Community'. This priority recognised the potential for arts, leisure and cultural activities to be linked to the development of good citizenship and the embedding of peace in Northern Ireland.

In the past few years, since the suspension of the Assembly, PfG has been replaced by 'Priorities and Budget' for Northern Ireland. 'Priorities and Budget 2005-2008' summarises the Government's main policies and priorities over the next few years. The Government's vision for the future of Northern Ireland is for a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. It will be based on partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of good relationships.

The main focus for the three years is on improving health, education and infrastructure in Northern Ireland. While there are no specific overarching objectives for the arts, the government is committed to building equality and community cohesion by increasing opportunity for all and ensuring stronger communities. This is reflected in the proposed budgets for DCAL in that core expenditure funding is maintained and higher levels of funding for investments is provided.

3.4.2 Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure

DCAL is responsible for policy, service delivery, administration and the monitoring for the arts, creativity, museums and libraries in Northern Ireland. The Department's vision is for 'a confident, creative, informed and vibrant community'.

DCAL's Corporate Strategy sets out the Departments plans for 2004 to 2007. The strategy also outlines the Department's mission 'to protect, nurture and grow our Cultural Capital for today and tomorrow'. Cultural Capital manifests itself in three ways:

- **people:** the creators and consumers of cultural capital;
- **infrastructure:** the physical spaces within which culture is created and enjoyed, including our cultural venues; and
- **products and services:** our cultural output, including art, music, and events.

The Department will invest in our Cultural Capital to ensure that Northern Ireland has the right infrastructure to support the people who develop our cultural products and services, ensuring that our culture is accessible to people today and sustained for people in the future. In developing Northern Ireland's Cultural Capital DCAL will promote the connections between people and places, between participation and enjoyment and in doing so underpin social inclusion, social capital and positive economic development in the region. A key goal identified by the Department is 'to enable as many people as possible to experience and appreciate the excellence of our cultural assets'.

3.5 Equality of Opportunity

3.5.1 Good Friday Agreement

The Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) was reached on Friday 10 April 1998 in Belfast and set out a plan for devolved government in Northern Ireland that all sections of the community in Northern Ireland would be prepared to participate in.

As part of the Agreement the political parties affirmed their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community. In particular the '*the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity*' was recognised.

3.5.2 The Northern Ireland Act - Section 75

Following on from the Good Friday Agreement, the Northern Ireland Act (1998) set out the responsibilities of public authorities in relation to equality of opportunity. Section 75 of the Act stated that:

‘A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-

- (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;*
- (b) between men and women generally;*
- (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and*
- (d) between persons with dependants and persons without’.*

As a result of the Good Friday Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act, equality of opportunity has become a key element of government policy and society in Northern Ireland. It therefore places a responsibility on ACNI to ensure that everyone in Northern Ireland is provided with the opportunity to access and participate in the arts.

3.6 Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is defined by the UK government as:

‘what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as employment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown’¹

Addressing social exclusion is a policy priority for both the UK and NI governments. In Northern Ireland, social exclusion is addressed through the New Targeting Social Need policy.

3.6.1 New Targeting Social Need (New TSN)

New TSN is a government policy that aims to *‘tackle social need and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by targeting its efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need’*. New TSN was formally launched in 1998 and had three core elements of policy:

- to focus on tackling unemployment and increasing employability;
- to tackle inequalities in other policy areas such as health, education and housing, and the problems of disadvantaged areas; and
- Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) through which Departments work together and with partners outside Government to identify and tackle factors which contribute to social exclusion, and to undertake positive initiatives to improve and enhance the life and circumstances.

While areas such as unemployment, health, education and housing are key elements of the policy, all areas of inequalities are considered relevant and every Northern Ireland Department is required to develop an annual Action Plan showing how it intendeds to implement New TSN.

¹ Cabinet Office, 2000

The Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure's (DCAL) current Action Plan (2004/5), has the following objectives in relation to culture and arts:

- to identify action to overcome barriers to participation in culture, arts and leisure;
- to increase participation in the arts by disadvantaged people;
- to enhance skills and thereby increase opportunities for disadvantaged people.

The above objectives in relation to barriers to participation and increasing participation clearly link to this research project.

3.7 Summary

This section has aimed to discuss this research project in relation to the broader social, cultural and political context in Northern Ireland.

The strategies and policies outlined above show that there are clear links between the arts and other issues in society, such as equality of opportunity and social exclusion. It is therefore important for ACNI to understand and address barriers to the arts in order to make them more accessible and to increase participation and attendance levels.

4. ATTENDANCE LEVELS

4.1 Introduction

While the main focus of this research is to examine barriers to publicly funded arts, it is important to firstly understand the profile of those that are currently attending the arts in Northern Ireland. In order to do this we have examined the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey undertaken by NISRA and provided a high level analysis of the results by population sub-categories such as age, gender and disability. We have also provided a high-level overview of those that are not attending the arts.

Similar surveys on attendance and participation in the arts have also recently been carried out by the Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Wales and we have provided a high level comparison of the results of this research.

4.2 Northern Ireland

In September 2004, NISRA undertook an Omnibus Survey for Northern Ireland. The survey interviewed almost 1,300 people across Northern Ireland using a sampling frame that was representative of the general population who were over the age of 16. As part of the survey, a module of questions in relation to the arts was included. Questions focused on respondents' attendance and participation in the arts, barriers to participation and their perceptions of the arts in Northern Ireland.

An analysis of the survey results shows the following general characteristics of the sample:

- seventy-three per cent of those interviewed had been to one or more event² as a member of the audience or as a visitor in the last 12 months;
- twenty-seven per cent had not attended any event in the last 12 months;
- of those who had attended in the last 12 months, 80 per cent had been to an event in the last four months;
- the most popular event attended was film (at a cinema, arts centre or festival) with 53 per cent attending in the last 12 months; and
- attendance at other events was significantly lower: 22 per cent had been to a play or drama and 21 per cent had been to a rock or pop concert. Only 2 per cent had been to a contemporary dance performance, opera or jazz concert.

A more detailed analysis of the survey information shows that there are differences in attendance levels depending on the sub-category of the population examined. We have outlined details of those attending events in the last 12 months based on gender, age (over 16), those with dependants (children), disability, community background, urban/rural areas, education, income level and employment status. The ethnicity of the interviewee was not recorded as part of the survey and therefore we have been unable to provide an analysis of this sub-category. However, Northern Ireland has a very small ethnic minority population (less than one per cent at the last census³) and this would have therefore resulted in a small sample size that would not have provided sufficient information for analysis.

It should also be noted that attendance levels for some events were very low, for example, three per cent of the sample (38 people) had been to a ballet in the last 12 months and two per cent had been to a jazz concert (23 people). This can at times make comparisons between small numbers of the sample difficult.

4.2.1 Gender

There was a slight variance in attendance levels at events in the last 12 months between men (72 per cent) and women (75 per cent). For some types of events this variance was more apparent; women were more likely to attend a crafts event than men (16 per cent v 8 per cent), a play/drama (25 per cent v 19 per cent) or a pantomime (14 per cent v 7 per cent). Conversely slightly more men than women had been to a classical music concert/recital (7 per cent v 6 per cent).

² Events were classified as: film, carnival/circus, arts festival, community festival, ballet, contemporary/Irish dance performance, play/drama, pantomime, poetry reading/story telling, other live dance event, classical music concert or recital, rock/pop music concert, jazz concert, opera, folk/traditional or world music performance, other live music event, craft exhibition, museum, exhibition of art/photography/sculpture.

³ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=263>

4.2.2 Age

Attendance at an arts event in the last 12 months was closely related to the age of the interviewee. Average attendance levels decreased with age with 90 per cent of those aged between 16 and 24 attending an event compared to only 42 per cent of those aged over 65.

This fall off in attendance levels was most apparent for events such as carnivals or circuses, community festivals, other live dance events and film. However for those aged between 16 and 34, their attendance at other types of events was less than those aged over 35. Only one person aged 16-34 had been to an opera, while three per cent of those aged over 35 had attended. There were similar attendance patterns for ballet, with only one per cent of those aged 25-35 attending compared to nearly five per cent of those aged between 35 and 49 and over 65. Attendance at pantomimes was highest for those aged between 25 to 49.

4.2.3 Dependents

Interviewees with dependants⁴ (responsibility for the care of a child) were much more likely to have attended an event. Eighty-four per cent of those with dependants had attended compared to 69 per cent of those without.

Again, the level of attendance varied by the type of event. Films, carnivals / circuses, community festivals, plays, pantomimes, crafts events and museums were all attended more by those with dependants. Attendance rates at arts festivals, classical music concerts, opera, ballet, jazz and folk / traditional or world music performances were slightly higher for those without dependants.

4.2.4 Disability

Those who considered themselves to have a disability^{5 6} were much less likely to have attended an event. Fifty-six per cent of those with a disability had attended an event compared to 79 per cent of those not having a disability.

Due to the small sample size and the low level of attendance at some events it is difficult to map trends in attendance levels between the above groups. However differences in attendance levels among the disabled and non-disabled were identifiable for events such as film (28 per cent disabled v 60 per cent non-disabled), plays or dramas (13 per cent v 28 per cent) and museums (10 per cent v 19 per cent).

There was less of a difference in attendance levels among those who were responsible for the care of someone with a disability or an elderly relative⁷ (68 per cent) and those who were not (74 per cent).

⁴ 32 per cent of the sample advised they had responsibility for the care of a child (n=413)

⁵ The question asked by NISRA was: 'Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By a long-standing I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time.'

⁶ 19 per cent of the sample advised they had a disability

⁷ 12 per cent of the sample advised that they were responsible for the care of a person with a disability or a dependent elderly person

4.2.5 Community Background

Overall, community background (Catholic or Protestant) did not affect attendance levels, with 74 per cent of Catholics attending an event in the last 12 months compared to 72 per cent of Protestants. There were differences in attendance at certain types of events; Catholics were nearly twice as likely to attend a community festival (19 per cent v 10 per cent) and attended three times as many more folk, traditional or world music performances (12 per cent v 4 per cent). However, Protestants were slightly more likely to attend a ballet, pantomime or classical music concert.

4.2.6 Urban and Rural Areas

Overall, whether residents resided in an urban or rural area did not appear to have much affect on their levels of attendance at events. Seventy-three per cent of those living in urban areas had attended an event in the last 12 months compared to 74 per cent of those living in rural areas. An analysis was also carried out on those living in Belfast, the East and West of Northern Ireland. Slightly higher attendance was found in the East (75 per cent), compared to the West (71 per cent). A further breakdown of the figures by area shows that 75 per cent of those living in the South-East had attended an event, compared to 73 per cent in Belfast and the North-East, 72 per cent in the South and 71 per cent in the West.

There were however noticeable differences in attendance levels for different types of events. A higher number of interviewees living in Belfast and the East had attended films and museums than those living in the West. However, attendance at community festivals, pantomime, other live dance/music events was higher in the West.

4.2.7 Education

Attendance rates were closely linked to educational background. Ninety-three per cent of those educated to tertiary level had been to an event. This compared to 85 per cent of those educated to secondary level and 48 per cent of those educated to primary level. As Figure 4.1 shows, these differences in attendance levels were apparent for each type of event.

4.2.8 Income Level and Employment Status

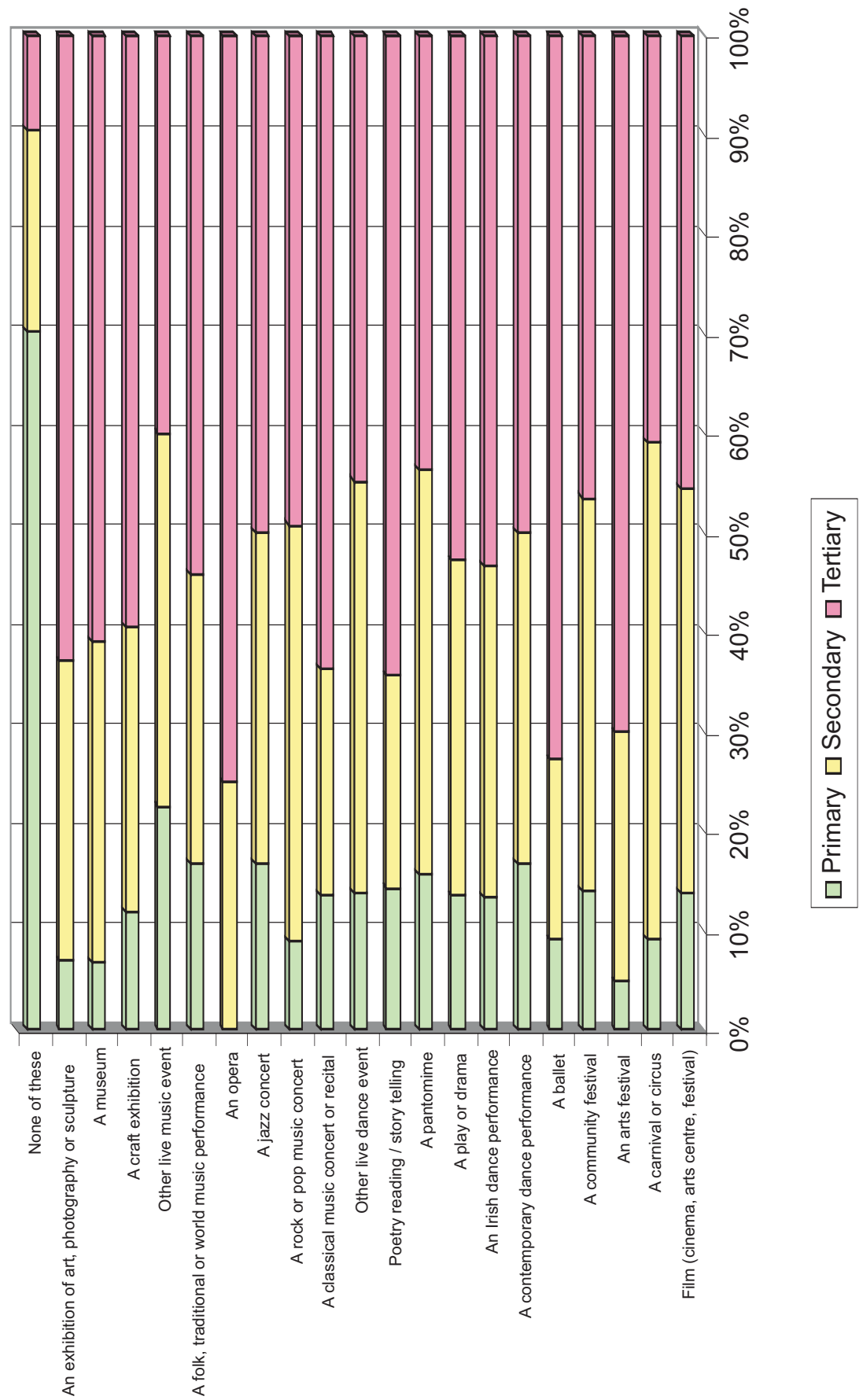
The amount of income⁸ received by the interviewee was closely related to whether or not they had attended an event. Ninety-two per cent of those earning over £20,800 had attended in the last 12 months, compared to 65 per cent of those earning up to £6,239. In some instances, attendance was higher for those earning up to £6,239 than for those earning between £6,240 and £10,399.

Attendance levels were highest for those who were still at school or were a student⁹, with 93 per cent having attended in the last 12 months. Eighty-five per cent of those employed had attended an event, while only 44 per cent of those who were retired had attended.

⁸ Income categories: up to £6,239, £6,240 to £10,399, £10,400 to £15,599, £15,600 to £20,799, £20,800 to £31,199, £31,200 to £39,999, £40,000 to £49,999, £50,000 +

⁹ 5 per cent of the sample were students, 54 per cent were employed, 10 per cent were looking after the home/family, 7 per cent were sick or injured, 3 per cent were unemployed and 21 per cent were retired

Figure 4.1
Attendance in last 12 months by Education Level



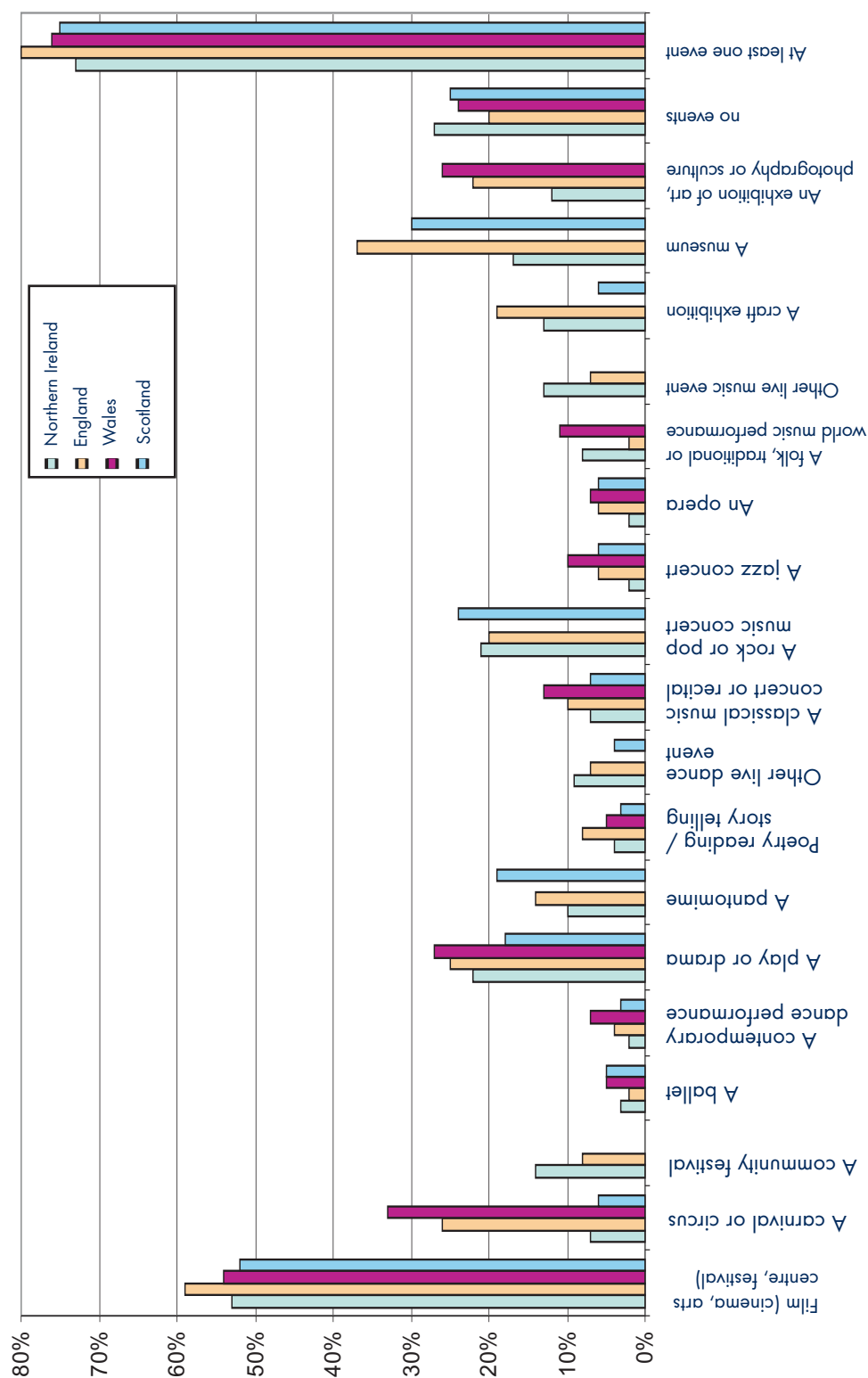
4.3 Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales

Similar surveys on attendance and participation in the arts have also recently been conducted by Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales¹⁰. Although there are some differences in the phrasing of questions and the categorising of arts events the results do allow for broad comparisons to be made.

Figure 4.2 provides a comparison between attendance levels in the last 12 months in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. In general, attendance rates at one or more types of event are slightly higher in the rest of the UK (England, 80 per cent, Scotland, 75 per cent and Wales 76 per cent) compared to Northern Ireland (73 per cent). In all three regions the most common event attended was film whereas events such as ballet, opera, contemporary dance and poetry readings/story telling had on average much lower attendance levels.

¹⁰ *Arts in England 2003: attendance, participation and attitudes*, Arts Council England, 2005
The Arts in Wales, Attendance and Participation in the Arts among Adults in Wales, Arts Council Wales, 2005
Taking Part: Arts Attendance, Participation and Attitudes in Scotland 2004, Scottish Arts Council, June 2005

Figure 4.2
Comparison of Attendance at an Event in the Last 12 Months



Note: Northern Ireland (n=1293), England (n=6025), Wales (n=6,851), Scotland (n=2020). Certain categories have been excluded as information was not available for these events. Category descriptions vary slightly between surveys

4.4 Attendance v Non-Attendance

The results of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey indicated that 73 per cent of those interviewed had attended an event in the last 12 months and 27 per cent had not. The previous sections have discussed in detail the profile of those that had attended events, but it is also useful to understand the profile of those that did not attend any events during this period. We have outlined some of key facts about these two groups in Table 4.1 below.

	One or More Event %	No Events %
All	73	27
Gender (% of)		
Male	72	28
Female	75	25
Age Group (% of)		
16-24	90	10
25-34	89	11
35-49	84	16
50-64	65	35
65+	42	58
Dependents/Children (% of)		
Yes	84	16
No	69	31
Disabled (% of)		
Yes	56	44
No	79	21
Community Background (% of)		
Catholic	74	26
Protestant	72	28

Continued

	One or More Event %	No Events %
Urban v Rural (% of)		
Urban	73	27
Rural	74	26
Belfast	74	26
East	75	25
West	71	29
Education (% of)		
Primary	48	52
Secondary	85	15
Tertiary	93	7
Income Level		
< £10,399	63	37
£10,400 - £20,799	81	19
£20,800 - £39,999	91	9
£40,000	100	0
Employment Status		
Student	93	7
Employment	85	15
Looking after Home/Family	72	28
Sick / Injured	62	38
Unemployed	71	29
Retired	44	56

4.5 Summary

This section has outlined attendance levels at arts events by those interviewed as part of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

The information has shown that almost three quarters of those interviewed had attended an event in the last 12 months, however the pattern of attendance varied between different sub-groups of the population.

Our analysis indicated that:

- women are slightly more likely to attend events than men;
- attendance is related to age and younger people are more likely to attend than the elderly;
- those with children were more likely to attend;
- disabled people were less likely to attend;
- community background and living in an urban or rural area only slightly affects attendance levels;
- attendance was closely related to the level of educational attainment and income; and
- students and those in employment are more likely to attend events, whereas retired people are least likely to attend.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Introduction

In undertaking this study we have conducted a literature review of research that has been carried out in Northern Ireland and the UK on barriers to participation in the arts. A full list of literature reviewed is attached at Appendix I.

Research in Northern Ireland has primarily been limited to a report that was carried out for the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in 2003 *'Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure'* and the results of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey (September 2004) carried out by NISRA.

Significantly more research has been carried out in England with some additional research in Scotland and Wales. Most of this has been commissioned by the respective Arts Councils, particularly in relation to the New Audiences Programme that ran between 1998 and 2003.

In this section we have identified barriers that are commonly faced by all sections of the community. We then go on to describe barriers in relation to specific groups within the population, such as, young people, the elderly, those living in rural areas and ethnic minorities. We have incorporated the DCAL and NISRA research where appropriate in each of these sections to provide a comparison between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

5.2 Definition

For the purposes of this research, our understanding of a 'barrier' is something that impedes or restricts access. Barriers can be described in several ways; they can be actual or perceived, practical (e.g. lack of disabled access), psychological (e.g. 'not for the likes of me'), economic (e.g. cost) and social (e.g. unhelpful staff). There can be barriers to attendance and participation. For this research we have primarily focused on barriers to attendance.

5.3 Non-attendance v Barriers

Although there are many barriers faced in attending arts events, it is important to take into account that there is a section of the population that may remain as non-attenders because they are not interested in the arts events or because they prefer to spend their free time in other ways.

Within the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey, a question was asked to interviewees about what would prevent them from going to or participating in any arts event or activity. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents advised that they were 'not really interested' in participating in arts events or activities. A further 18 per cent advised that they 'prefer to spend their free time in other ways'.

5.4 Barriers Faced by the General Population

5.4.1 Common Barriers Identified in the Literature

Taking into account the reasons for non-attendance outlined above, research undertaken by DCAL (2003), ACE (2004) and Scottish Executive (2004) among others has shown that there are common barriers that are faced by all groups in attending the arts. The main barriers identified are briefly discussed below.

- **Cost**

Cost was identified as the greatest barrier to arts attendance in the research carried out for DCAL (2003). It can affect all sections of the population such as families, the elderly and young people. While the main cost is often the ticket price for events, additional costs can be incurred for travel (especially for people from rural areas), refreshments/food and even for appropriate clothing to wear to the event.

- **Time**

Time is also a major factor that limits attendance. Nearly 50 per cent of those surveyed by ACE (2004) advised that they found it difficult to find time to attend more events. The figure was lower in Northern Ireland with 26 per cent advising they found it difficult to find time. This barrier mainly affects people with extensive work and family commitments. Only five per cent of those aged over 65 in Northern Ireland found time an issue (NISRA, 2004).

- **Location**

For some people, the lack of events / facilities near to where they live can be a barrier to attendance. This particularly affects people that live in rural areas, where they many have to travel long distances to attend an arts event. For others, especially in Northern Ireland, the location of venues in areas identified with the 'other' community, could also act as a barrier.

- **Lack of Public Transport**

For non-car owners lack of public transport can be a key reason for not attending. This mainly affects those living in rural or peripheral areas, the disabled and young people, but can also affect the general population when use of public transport is necessary if suitable parking facilities are not available.

- **Lack of Information**

Lack of information can also be a cause of non-attendance. In some situations events are not well publicised and therefore people are simply not aware of the event taking place. In other situations the information is not easily accessible e.g. by telephone or internet. For disabled people or those caring for the disabled lack of information about disabled facilities can also be a barrier.

• Unsuitable Events

Events can be unsuitable in several different ways. For people from minority ethnic backgrounds events can be perceived as unsuitable because they feel they are not relevant to their culture. For the disabled, lack of audio-described performances or non-visual information can make events unsuitable and for young people, the perception that the event is 'un-cool' or adult centred can prevent them from attending.

• Feeling Uncomfortable or out of Place

Feeling uncomfortable or out of place at an arts event can affect people in different ways. For those from a low socio-economic background or those who have no one to go with they can often feel out of place or self-conscious. Disabled people can also feel uncomfortable when they receive negative reactions to their disability from staff and the public at arts events.

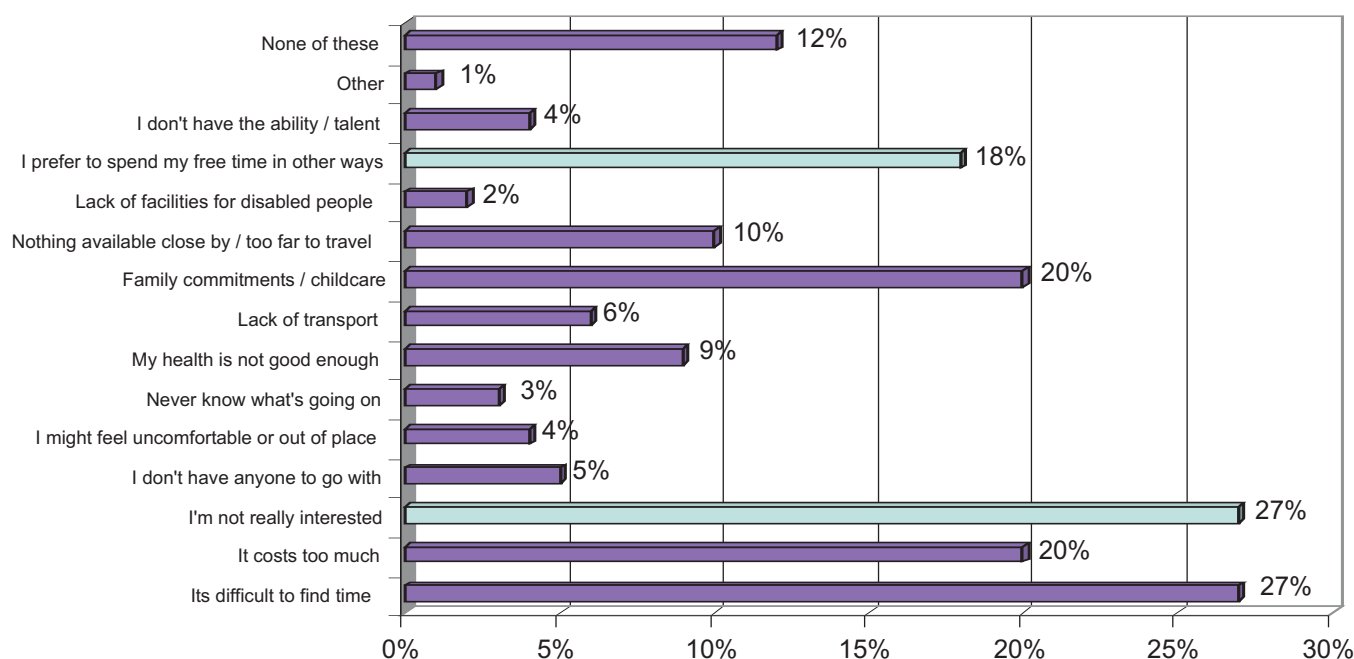
5.4.2 Common Barriers Identified by Surveys

In the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey, the options for answers to the question 'What would prevent you from going to or participating in any arts event or activity' covered the main barriers identified above. The overall results of this question are detailed in Figure 5.1. Apart from those who advised that they were not really interested (27 per cent) and would prefer to spend their free time in other ways (18 per cent), the main reason stated was that it was difficult to find time (27 per cent). Cost (20 per cent) and family commitments (20 per cent) were stated as the second most common barrier.

Further details of the barriers mentioned in this survey will be discussed in Section 5.5 below.

Figure 5.1

What Would Prevent You from Going to or Participating in any Arts Event or Activity?



The recent Arts Council England survey also asked interviewees a similar question about reasons that prevented them for attending events. Table 5.1 provides a comparison of answers between the two regions¹¹. It should be noted that the wording of the questions and the options provided for responding vary slightly between surveys.

The data shows that time, cost and lack of transport were more significant issues in England. However family commitments were a greater reason for not attending in Northern Ireland.

Table 5.1
Barriers to Attendance - Comparison between Northern Ireland and England

	NI %	England %
It's difficult to find time	27	48
It costs too much	20	34
I'm not really interested	27	17
Family pressures / commitments/childcare	20	14
Lack of transport	6	12
Health is not good enough	9	8
Don't have anyone to go with	5	7
I might feel uncomfortable or out of place	4	3
Nothing close by / too far to travel	10	n/a
Lack of facilities for disabled people	2	n/a
I prefer to spend my free time in other ways	18	n/a
I don't have the ability/talent	4	n/a
Other	1	6
None of these	12	8

n/a = not provided as an option

¹¹ The 2005 Scottish Arts Council survey did not ask this question. The Arts Council Wales survey analysed barriers in relation to particular art forms, therefore at present overall results for this question are not available.

5.5 Barriers Faced by Specific Groups

5.5.1 Introduction

In carrying out the literature review, we have found that most of the research undertaken on barriers has focused on specific groups within the population, for example, young people, the elderly and the disabled. We have therefore presented our literature review based upon these groupings.

5.5.2 People with Disabilities

There are many different types of disability (e.g. sensory, physical, learning) and much research has been carried out on the barriers to arts attendance that are faced by disabled people. We have aimed to represent a selection of the different types of disabilities and the barriers that are associated with them in our review of research presented below.

In 2003, Arts Council England published *'Disability access, A good practice guide for the arts'*. Although the guide aims to provide practical advice for arts organisations, the publication also outlines the barriers that disabled people face in attending arts events.

There are a range of physical barriers faced such as disabled entrances, seating and facilities. However the guide goes on to explain that in surveys undertaken around disability access *'results usually show people's attitudes as the biggest barrier faced by disabled people on a daily basis.'*

While disabled people understand that it is not always possible to make substantial physical alterations to premises...people's attitudes and ignorance can be a far greater barrier to access'. It is suggested that there need for people (staff, volunteers and board members) involved in arts venues to become aware and undertake training to ensure that all visitors have equality of opportunity.

In 2003 Mencap produced a report entitled *'Arts for All'*. The report detailed the experiences of families with children with a learning disability while visiting arts and cultural events at venues in and around the London area. The report highlighted that for many disabled children and their families, there are many obstacles preventing them from enjoying arts and cultural events. These obstacles were practical and social in nature. Practical obstacles faced were things like transport, getting into venues (signage, physical access and queues), cost of tickets, lack of information and poor eating and toilet facilities. Social issues faced included staff that were unhelpful and had uninformed attitudes to disabilities. The attitudes of staff and also members of the general public towards the children with a learning disability made many parents anxious. As a result these obstacles or barriers make families reluctant to try out mainstream venues, however families that had tried some theatre performances had a positive experience.

'Changing the Scene' a report by Arts Council England (2003) examined the barriers that are faced by visually impaired performers and audiences in London. The research was based on two focus groups with visually impaired people and a subsequent seminar with those working in the arts in London. A number of key barriers were identified through the research, namely:

- cultural barriers:
 - visually impaired people have low expectations about how they should be welcomed and treated at performing arts venues and as a result, many believe that theatre, opera and dance are 'not for us';
 - sighted people make incorrect assumptions about the abilities, needs and interests of visually impaired people; and
 - visually impaired people sometimes encounter fear and hostility if frontline staff have not been properly trained;
- economic barriers:
 - the cost of attending performance arts events is often too expensive - more visually impaired people are unemployed and on lower incomes than sighted people;
 - concessionary tickets are not always accessible to visually impaired customers;
- inaccessible transport: practical issues such as being advised to get off the bus at the wrong stop, accessibility issues with Underground stations and the cost associated with having to use taxis as a result of the problems with public transport were all cited as common barriers;
- communication and information: unskilled staff that are unable to help visually impaired people, inaccurate directions to venues all provided obstacles for the visually impaired; and
- physical access barriers: these occur for a number of reasons including poor signage, the lack of non-visual information about the venue, orientation aids, properly trained staff and audio-described performances.

'Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure' (DCAL, 2003) identified barriers to attendance for disabled people in Northern Ireland. The barriers identified are similar to those outlined in the research discussed above, namely:

- access to venues is particularly problematic for many people with physical disabilities and therefore they are not able to access culture, arts and leisure services. Common problems include narrow doors, multiple levels, stairs, lack of suitable toilets etc;
- access problems are further complicated for people with disabilities living in rural areas as public transport is limited and is often not adapted to accommodate those with disabilities;
- the reaction of staff to people with disabilities. Many people felt stigmatised as a result of staff comments and attitudes to their disability; and

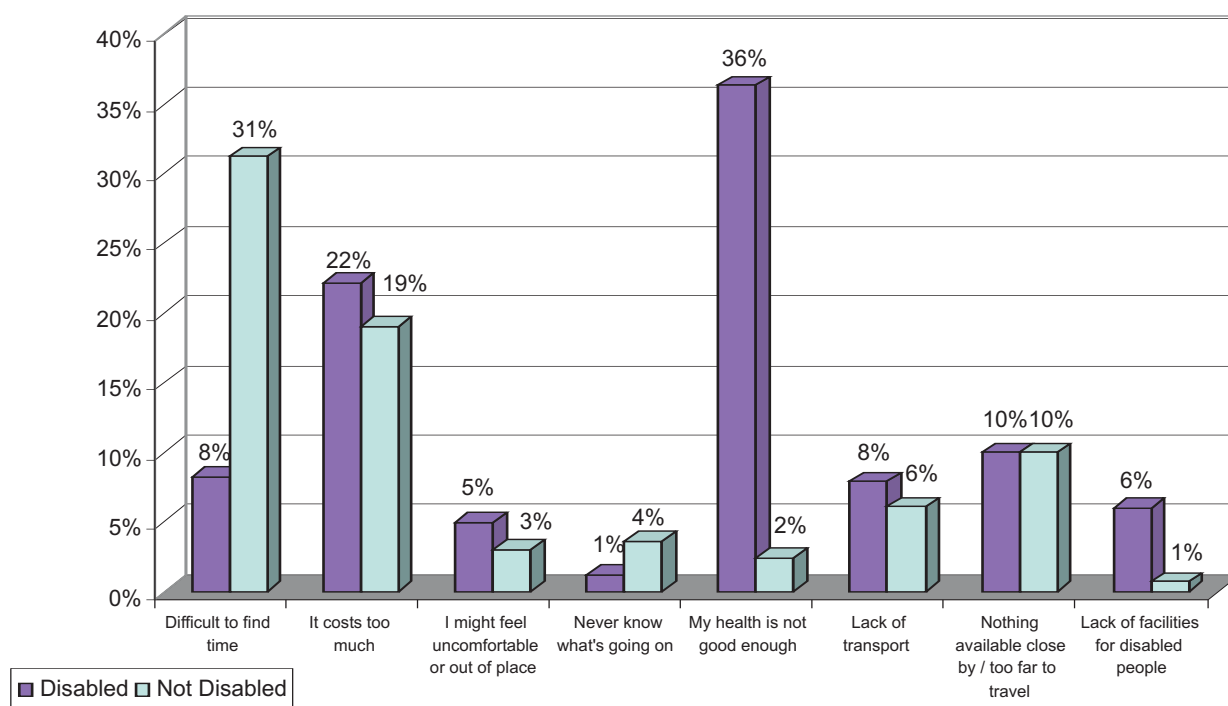
- for people with certain disabilities e.g. those with a visual or hearing impairment, actually getting information about the time, location and cost of events and facilities could be a problem.

In the *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* (NISRA, 2004) several of the barriers discussed above were provided as possible answers to the question that asked about reasons for not going to or participating in the arts. Figure 5.2 shows these reasons broken down by disabled and non-disabled interviewees.

The main barrier identified among disabled people was poor health (36 per cent). Cost, feeling uncomfortable or out of place, and lack of transport were slightly more of a barrier to going to or participating in the arts. However, significantly less disabled people found that it was difficult to find time to attend events.

Figure 5.2

What Prevents you from Going to or Participating in any Arts Event or Activity?



MORI have recently undertaken research for ACNI with a sample of venues in Northern Ireland on disability requirements, policies, training and attendance and participation of disabled people at arts events.

The results of the survey support some of the findings of the DCAL and other research outlined above. Although access has been highlighted above as a major barrier for the disabled, few venues surveyed were monitoring their compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and most had only made minor changes to their premises to ensure compliance. Only one person interviewed had received specific training on the implications of DDA. In addition, very few venues had drawn up disability policies or actions plans that were kept up to date.

However, many managers and front line staff in the venues surveyed had undergone disability awareness training and most had been trained by a disabled person. Most had attended courses focusing on terminology, challenging perceptions of disability and 'how to treat disabled visitors'. However, these courses were one-off and few venues have ongoing or continuous training, with staff passing on information to others who have not received training.

Many venues also commented that it was not financially viable to target disabled audience members and there was a resistance to the idea of targeting disabled people, as this might make them feel singled out. Many offered marketing materials in large print but felt that Braille and other formats were too expensive.

Summary of Barriers for Disabled People

access to venues
attitudes of staff and the public
transport
cost
lack of information

5.5.3 Elderly People

As part of the New Audience Programme an '*Evaluation of the Gateway 4 Programme*' was undertaken by Cultural Intelligence for ACE in 2003. Gateway 4 aimed to address the changing needs of audiences and drew, in particular, on predictions (made by the Henley Centre for Forecasting) regarding how the way we live is likely to change by the year 2010. Under the programme funding was available for programmes of work addressing the needs of elderly people.

The report outlined details of research that suggested that the degree to which an older person participates in the arts will not have much to do with age. Participation is more likely to be affected by their historical socio-economic, educational history and wider cultural data. In addition, older people who have always participated in the arts are much more likely to participate than those who have little history of participation. Their participation is likely to continue until physical barriers or infirmity make participation more of a challenge.

The report also summarised recent research relating to barriers faced by older people in attending the arts. The major physical barriers identified were:

- lack of transport, compounded by the physical impact of night-time and winter weather conditions; and
- lack of facilities for the physically disabled and those with sensory disabilities.

The major psychological barriers identified were:

- receiving information that does not make clear that there are facilities for the physically disabled and those with special sensory needs;
- not receiving information sufficiently in advance of the date to make attendance 'fit' within a range of other activities;
- not receiving information on a consistent basis; and
- not receiving information that is readable, (font type and size), clear (design and layout) and provides a range of programme choices.

The evaluation report included five case studies of projects that targeted older people. Findings from these projects confirmed many of the barriers to the arts experienced by older people in the research outlined above.

'*Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure*' (DCAL, 2003) also identified barriers to attendance for elderly people in Northern Ireland. The issues facing elderly people related to:

- travel distance: travelling a considerable distance to events could be 'off-putting' and as many arts and cultural events are held in the evening and elderly people often feel too tired to make the necessary journey;
- access: those with mobility problems sometimes could not access services as a result of the need to climb stairs or because of the lack of parking close to the venue that meant they would have to walk a considerable distance;
- cost: some events were seen as particularly expensive such as theatre, concerts and opera; and
- not having anyone to go with: many elderly people lived on their own and had a limited circle of friends. Therefore they would have to go to events alone.

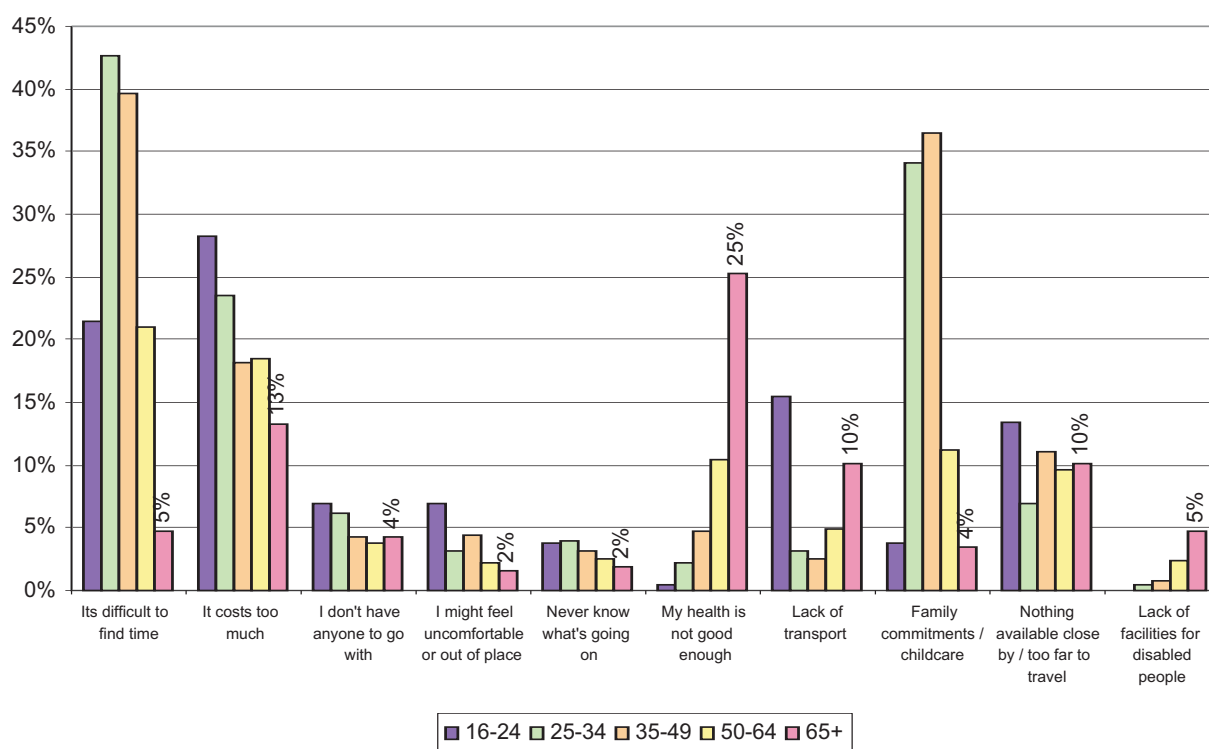
Figure 5.3 shows the *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* (NISRA, 2004) results for a cross-tabulation carried out between the age of the interviewee and the reason for not going to or participating in the arts.

The information shows that for those over the age of 65¹², poor health was the main reason stated (25 per cent). Cost was cited by 13 per cent, transport and too far to travel by 10 per cent and lack of disabled facilities by five per cent. Apart from poor health the percentages by reason for those over 65 were in general lower than the other age groups.

In the equivalent survey carried out in 2003 in England, *'Arts in England 2003, attendance, participation and attitudes'* (ACE, 2004), poor health was also cited as a reason for not attending by 18 per cent of those aged 65-74 and 32 per cent of those aged over 75. Lack of transport affected 15 per cent of those aged 65-74 and 24 per cent of those aged over 75.

Figure 5.3

What Prevents you from Going to or Participating in any Arts Event or Activity?



N=267 (65+)

Summary of Barriers for Elderly People

Lack of transport
Lack of facilities for those with a disability
Lack of information
Cost
Not having anyone to go with
Poor health

¹² 21 per cent of the sample was over the age of 65

5.5.4 Children and Young People¹³

The final report of the *New Audiences Programme* (Johnson et. Al., 2004) summarised some of the barriers that young people face in attending the arts. These barriers were described as physical and psychological in nature.

Physical barriers can include lack of transport (particularly in rural areas), price of tickets, lack of time, lack of opportunity and availability of information. Psychological barriers can include peer pressure, expectations that activities will be dull, perception that arts venues are intimidating and that typical audiences are not like themselves.

The *Gateway 4* programme (part of New Audiences) involved arts organisations carrying out projects in order to develop new audiences of young people. The programme was asked to consider the findings of previous research into barriers to the arts for young people that had been carried out by Kinder and Harland in 1999¹⁴. Kinder and Harland found that:

‘attendance at cultural venues declines as children become teenagers and that the mid-teens in particular were associated with low levels of audience involvement. Attendance at arts events was correlated to socio-economic factors. Generally, males and young people from semi-skilled or unskilled backgrounds were more likely to be non-attenders than females or teenagers from professional backgrounds’.

The research also found that although the physical barriers of cost, travel and lack of time were significant, physiological barriers were found to be paramount and mainly related to young people feeling that the arts are irrelevant to them and are culturally exclusive.

The Gateway 4 research confirmed the findings of this previous research however, some additional conclusions in relation to barriers were drawn, namely that:

- arts events are not on the ‘leisure map’ of most young people and that both the art venue and art product are too unknown. Taken together the arts experience represents a ‘risky’ and challenging experience, not worth the bother;
- attendance at a ‘special event’ does not mean that they will be repeat attenders in the future; and
- in relation to cost, it was not a matter of can’t pay by more about that they won’t pay to go to arts events and young people who have limited incomes want value for money.

A Picture in your head - Children and the arts: a study of the perceptions and participation of children aged 5-12 (Jentsch, 1999) was a small scale study that examined barriers children may encounter when they wish to take part in the arts. Focus groups with children identified that although they participated in the arts, they felt that their opportunities were restricted, with disinterest by parents and cost cited as barriers. Another obstacle cited by children was the fact that exhibitions and plays tend to be adult-centred, with limited if any, attention paid to children’s interests and needs.

¹³ based on the research we have reviewed we had defined the age range for children and young people as being from early years to mid twenties.

¹⁴ *Crossing the Line - Extending young people’s access to cultural venues*, Harland and Kinder, NFER Gulbenkian Foundation and Arts Council England, 1999

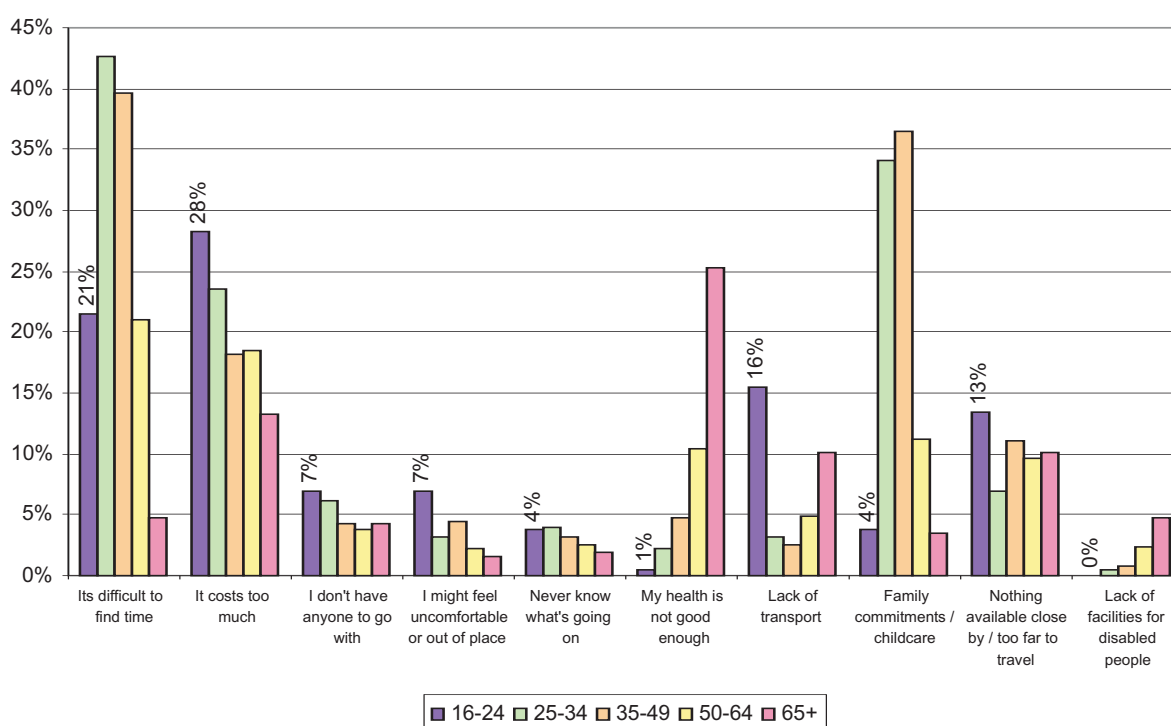
'Young People's Arts Participation Research (Arts Council of Wales, 2002) examined arts participation and attendance among young people aged 11 to 15 in Wales. The research consisted of focus groups in schools and the completion of 2794 questionnaires by pupils in 24 schools across Wales.

The main reason given by young people for not undertaking more or any arts activities was lack of time. This was due to school commitments and competition from other activities. Some young people, especially those living in rural areas, said that they were unable to undertake some arts activities because of the lack of opportunity or facilities in their particular area. Transport was also a barrier as young people felt they had to rely on their parent to take them to and from certain arts activities. Some arts activities were perceived as too expensive while others felt that they had been prevented from participating in certain arts activities because of insufficient information or lack of awareness.

The *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* (NISRA, 2004) interviewed people over the age of 16 and therefore can provide some insight into the barriers faced by young people in attending the arts in Northern Ireland. Figure 5.4 shows the results for the cross-tabulation carried out between the age of the interviewee (those aged between 16 and 24) and the reason for not going to or participating in the arts. The information shows that cost (28 per cent), lack of transport (16 per cent) and the perception that no events are available close by (13 per cent) seem to affect young people more than other age groups within the population. These results would therefore appear to tie in with what the research discussed above has identified.

Figure 5.4

What prevents you from going to or participating in any arts event or activity?



Summary of Barriers for Children and Young People

Lack of transport
Lack of time - competing activities
Availability of information
Peer Pressure
Opportunities restricted by living in rural areas or parents
Adult centred events
Cost

5.5.5 Ethnic Minorities

'Arts - What's in a Word? Ethnic minorities and the Arts' (Jermyn and Desai, 2000) was commissioned by Arts Council England and examined attendance and participation levels, perceptions and barriers to the arts among ethnic minorities in England. Several factors were identified as limiting arts attendance, these included:

- lack of time and money - not wanting to 'waste' money on something they perceived they would not enjoy;
- availability or location;
- lack of information, which especially affected people who socialised only in their own community or who spoke little or no English;
- language, which was a barrier for those who spoke little or no English;
- social barriers, which were especially important for younger people and women. Pakistani women in particular could experience, and were concerned about, community disapproval;
- feeling out of place, which was a particular concern for many young people, those from working class backgrounds and Black people;
- lack of understanding: people felt they would need specialist knowledge to understand and appreciate the arts;
- irrelevance, which related particularly to classical music, opera, ballet and much theatre; and
- the audience experience: social interaction and participation were felt to be missing.

Opening Doors: Developing Black and Asian Audiences (AMA, 2001) was a seminar held by the Arts Marketing Association for professionals who wanted to develop culturally diverse audiences for the arts. The seminar had as one of its main objectives 'to help delegates understand some of the barriers that may prevent Black and Asian people from attending'. The seminar discussed qualitative studies that had researched barriers to attending 'mainstream venues'. A considerable number of barriers were outlined and these are summarised below.

- **Product and Programme**

- lack of relevant product; programming does not appear to feature any African, Caribbean, South Asian product/performers;
- mainstream programme perceived as 'white', 'elitist' and 'middle-class' - 'its not for us';
- attending a particular art form would be an unfamiliar risk/fear of not understanding;
- lack of interest in classical Western culture;
- own concept of 'arts' differs from mainstream (e.g. may include weddings, carnival);
- unfamiliarity/uncomfortable with procedures (e.g. perception of sitting in silence during a performance, productions starting promptly as 'the white way');
- event/experience is not interactive enough.

- **Venues**

- safety concerns regarding some environments (e.g. fear of racist attacks in some areas);
- venue does not appear to have a culturally diverse message/image/audience;
- signage only provided in English;
- lack of awareness of availability;
- no visible African, Caribbean, Asian staff.

- **Other Audience Members**

- event does not allow for social interaction;
- no-one from peer group to attend with;
- fear of being 'the only one'/expectations of racism.

- **Price**

- culture and finance, e.g. large families;
- negative value perceptions in relation to product perceived as 'boring' or 'risky'

- **Promotion**

- promotion is/appears to be targeted at older, white, middle-class attenders;
- lack of awareness of availability: publicity not visible in local area or in culture-specific media;
- lack of familiar endorsement of product.

- **People (staff)**

- no Black or Asian staff visible in the building;
- no staff speak any South Asian languages, or cannot pronounce names correctly;
- poor staff customer care/cultural awareness skills; and
- box office staff do not appear to take Black and Asian programming seriously.

'Focus on cultural diversity: the arts in England, attendance, participation and attitudes' (ACE, 2003) provided the first national information on how the culturally diverse population in England engages with the arts and culture. Similar to the survey carried out by ACE with the general population (ACE, 2004), a question was asked on what prevented interviewees attending more arts events. The most common reasons were 'lack of time' (51 per cent), cost (37 per cent) and lack of transport (13 per cent). Some differences in the perceived barriers to increased attendance were noted between different ethnic groups. Mixed ethnicity and Asian or British Asians were more likely than others to say that lack of time was a barrier to attendance; people of mixed ethnicity or from the Chinese and other ethnic group were the most likely to cite cost as a barrier. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African respondents were most likely to say that concerns about feeling 'uncomfortable or out of place' prevented them attending.

'Sharing the Spotlight - Increased Access and Participation in the Arts by Scotland's Minority Ethnic Communities' (Scottish Arts Council, 2003) was the first major study on issues relating to access and participation in the arts by Scotland's minority ethnic communities¹⁵. The study consisted of focus groups with ethnic minority groups and the Scottish Arts Council, and interviews with representatives from minority ethnic organisations, local authorities, mainstream arts agencies and artists from a minority background.

The findings of the research presented barriers to participation and attendance faced by Scotland's minority ethnic communities. The barriers relating to attendance included several factors which were generally applicable to the mainstream population. These included costs of admission to events, proximity to venues, transport costs, timing of events and the need to provide child-care among parents of young children. Some barriers that were applicable to the general population were more heightened among the minority ethnic communities. These barriers included:

- the lack of relevance and previous exposure to certain art-forms, such as ballet and opera;
- conservative views and discomfort with the use of 'swear' words and scenes of a sexual nature;
- language differences which inhibited access to mainstream arts for among some older people and which inhibited access to young people to minority ethnic arts; and
- certain cultural attitudes relating to the role of minority ethnic women which may influence their ability to access certain art forms.

The *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* did not request details of ethnicity, however it should be noted that Northern Ireland has a significantly smaller minority ethnic population than the rest of the UK. At the last Census (2001)¹⁶, less than one per cent of the population in Northern Ireland were from a minority ethnic background. This compares to nine per cent in England, and two per cent in Wales and Scotland.

¹⁵ The study was mainly concerned with the Pakistani, Chinese, Indian and African communities in Scotland

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=263>

Summary of Barriers for Ethnic Minorities

Lack of time
Lack of money / cost
Location
Lack of transport
Lack of information / awareness of availability
Language - events and staff
Social barriers
Feeling out of place
Irrelevance to own culture
Not interactive enough

5.5.6 Rural Areas

'Only Connect, Arts Touring and Rural Communities' (Comedia, 2004) commissioned by the National Rural Touring Forum examined how rural touring has developed, its contribution to the arts and its impact on rural communities. Part of the report focused on access problems that are faced by rural communities. For those who wanted to attend a theatre or concert hall in a town, barriers faced included lack of transport, cost and their disability. For some young families the added costs of babysitting and transport was a particular issue. For older people, many only saw the arts in their local village hall as some were intimidated by the thought of the city late at night. Single people, especially those who had been widowed, felt they had no-one to go with. Children living in rural areas also had similar access issues around transport and cost but also excluded themselves because they thought the village hall was 'un-cool', they were afraid of being patronised or told how to behave, they preferred to be away from their parents or had other interests.

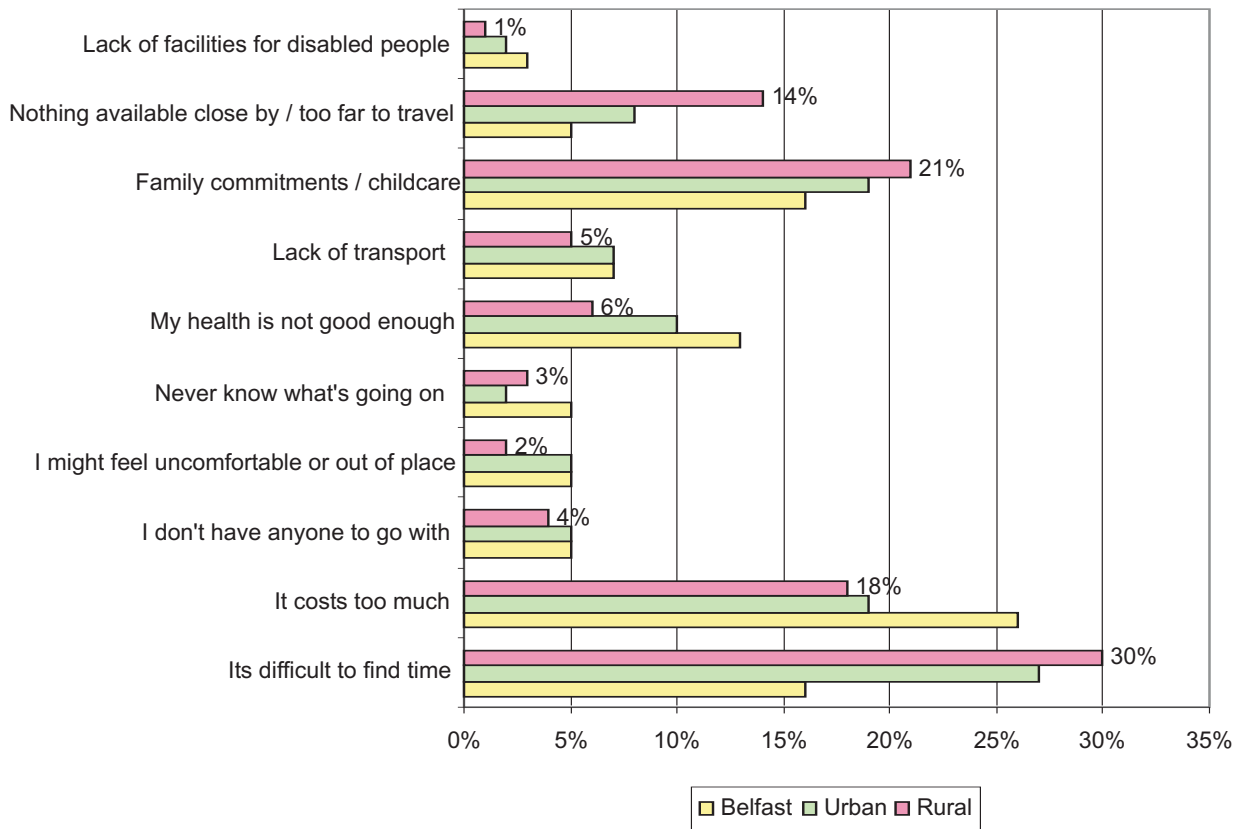
The summary report of the *'New Audiences Programme'* (Johnson et al, 2004) also briefly discussed the barriers faced in rural areas. The key barrier identified was distance and the resulting need to travel to an event. Other barriers identified were lack of information and isolation.

'Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure' (DCAL, 2003) also identified barriers to attendance for people living in rural parts of Northern Ireland. Time and cost involved in travel were seen as the major barriers to participation. However some people from rural communities also felt intimidated at the prospect of attending events in the 'big cities' since they did not feel as confident as 'city dwellers'. The crowds and the unfamiliarity of the situation and the surroundings made some people feel uncomfortable.

Figure 5.5 shows the *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* (NISRA, 2004) results for a cross-tabulation carried out between those living in Belfast, an urban or rural area and the reason for not going to or participating in the arts. The information shows that for those living in rural areas, time, distance and family commitments were cited as greater reasons for not attending than those living in Belfast or another urban area.

Figure 5.5

What Prevents you from Going to or Participating in any Arts Event or Activity?



Summary of Barriers for People Living in Rural Areas

Distance to travel
Lack of transport
Added costs (tickets, travel, childcare)
Fear of / Uncomfortable in the City
No one to go with
Lack of Information
Isolation

5.5.7 Families

The final report of the '*New Audiences Programme*' (Johnson et al, 2004) outlined details of projects that had attempted to address issues for families participating in the arts. It was emphasized that several factors can put pressure on the ability of families to engage in arts and leisure activities. These included issues such as family breakdowns, the decline of traditional family structures, increased mobility and parents' lack of time for family commitments due to longer working hours. Specific barriers outlined in relation to arts events can be summarised as:

- staff at venues not being welcoming towards families;
- lack of facilities at venues for families;
- lack of events that are suitable for the whole family;
- transport;
- lack of childcare;
- lack of information about the venue and event; and
- cost.

'Family Friendliness, Audit of Recent Research and Recommendation for the Development of Family Audiences in the Arts' was published by ACE in 2002. The audit noted the following barriers identified through the research, namely:

- lack of appropriate facilities;
- cost/affordability;
- perception that the arts and venues were elitist and exclusive
- timings (for working families);
- lack of childcare for young children
- transport; and
- lack of publicity.

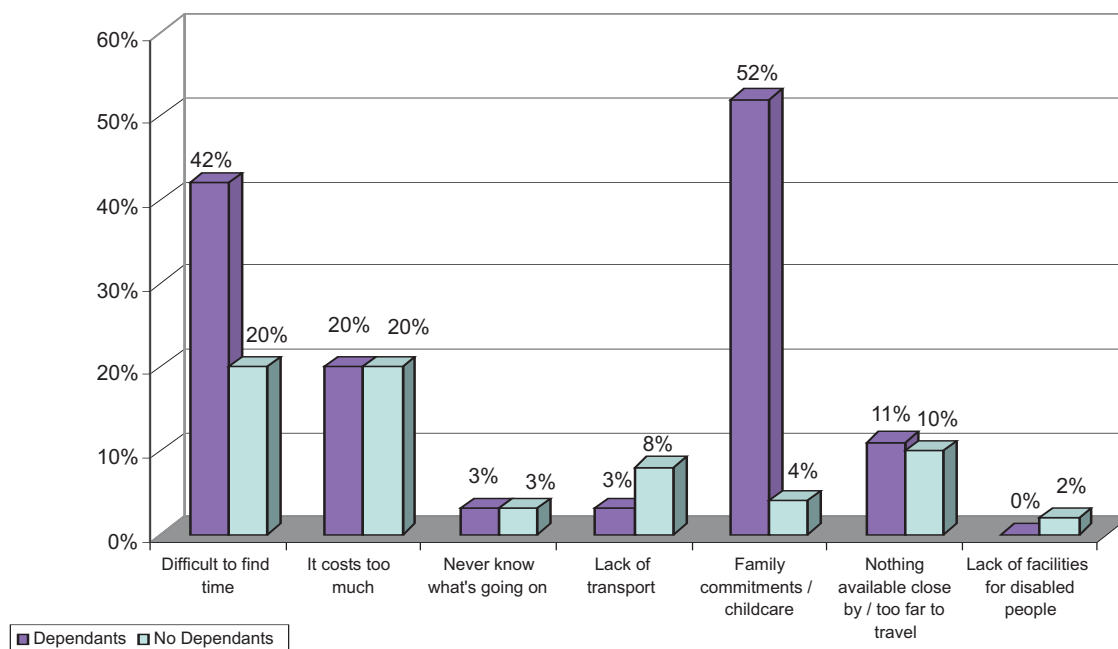
'Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure' (DCAL, 2003) also examined the barriers faced by people with dependants. As in the above New Audiences report, work and family commitments were highlighted reasons that made it impossible or at least very difficult for them to participate in activities. Other barriers highlighted were:

- lack of family orientated events that were more interesting for children. The suggestion was made to have specific events which were advertised to welcome children; and
- lack of child friendly facilities such as access for buggies, baby changing and feeding rooms and affordable refreshment facilities.

Figure 5.6 shows the *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* (NISRA, 2004) results for a cross-tabulation carried out between those with and without dependents and the reason for not going to or participating in the arts. The information confirms the barriers identified above in relation to time and family commitments, with 42 per cent of those with dependents finding it difficult to find time to attend and 52 per cent citing family commitments as a reason.

Figure 5.6

What Prevents You from Going to or Participating in any Arts Event or Activity?



Summary of Barriers for Families

Lack of time
Unwelcoming venues and staff
Lack of facilities for children
Lack of events for all the family
Transport
Lack of Information/Publicity
Cost

5.5.8 Community Background

Community background issues are primarily related to Northern Ireland and the historic divisions between Nationalists (mainly Catholics) and Unionists (mainly Protestants). *'Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure'* (DCAL, 2003) examined barriers relating to community background and highlighted the following perceptions from Nationalists and Unionists:

- **Nationalists**

- among Nationalists there was the feeling that much of the cultural activity in Northern Ireland was divided on religious and class lines;

- there was a strong perception amongst working class Catholics that the theatre and a number of other cultural performances and events were not intended for them and as a result there were some cultural and arts events which they would feel uncomfortable about attending; and
- the location of some venues, in areas identified with the 'other' (i.e. Protestant) community, could also act as a barrier;

- **Unionists**

- it was suggested that Protestants did not understand and support their cultural background; and
- it was felt that certain cultural events had an exclusive 'one community' dimension, which made it difficult for them to participate.

As identified in Section 4.2.5, the analysis of the *Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey* data indicated only slight variances in overall attendance levels between Catholics and Protestants. However the view expressed above that some types of events may be more relevant to one or other community, may correspond with the different attendance levels between Catholic and Protestants at some types of events e.g. community festivals and folk or traditional performances.

Summary of Barriers - Community Background
Perception that certain types of events 'are not for us'
/ have a 'one community' dimension
Location of venues

5.5.9 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

'*Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure*' (DCAL, 2003) also examined barriers that were experienced by the LGBT community in Northern Ireland. The main findings were that:

- services are designed on the assumption that users are heterosexual. Little consideration is given to ensure that LGBT people are included;
- LGBT people do not feel arts events are reflective of their culture - there are a small number of plays and arts exhibitions that feature LGBT themes, in spite of the fact that a considerable number of people involved in the arts world are from LGBT communities;
- LGBT events not widely advertised;
- staff awareness of and attitudes to LGBT issues were also seen as problematic - staff were often embarrassed by interactions with people in these communities; and
- cost was seen as a barrier to access for many members of the LGBT communities - many members of the communities were on low incomes and so they often found it difficult to access services due to the 'excessive' cost of entrance fees.

Summary of Barriers - LGBT
Events not reflective of their culture
LGBT events not widely advertised
Staff attitudes and awareness at events
Cost

5.6 Summary

This section has identified the barriers to attendance that exist both for the general public and specific sub-groups of the population.

Common barriers faced by the public include cost, lack of time, location, lack of public transport, lack of information, unsuitable events and feeling uncomfortable or out of place. For others barriers are more specific, such as lack of disabled access, language, lack of facilities for children and relevance to culture.

We have identified these barriers through research carried out in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. These barriers are further examined through the consultation results discussed in the next section of the report.

6. CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In order to validate the barriers that we had identified through the literature review at a local level (i.e. Northern Ireland) we undertook a consultation exercise. The consultation took place in three parts:

- focus groups with arts organisations - we invited all of the organisations that are currently funded by ACNI (2005/6) to participate in one of three focus groups that we organised;
- telephone interviews with arts venues that are currently funded by ACNI; and
- interviews (either face to face or by telephone) with organisations that represent or assist specific sub-groups of the population, such as young people, the disabled and people living in rural areas.

The 2003 research carried out by DCAL¹⁷ into barriers to participation in culture arts and leisure was carried out through an extensive series of focus groups¹⁸ with the general population and through key informant interviews. Therefore, to avoid repetition, this research concentrated on gathering views on barriers to the arts from the experiences of arts organisations and venues.

¹⁷ *Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure*, Independent Research Solutions, February 2003

¹⁸ 35 focus groups were organised for this research. The focus groups were organised to provide representation by geographic area, the general population, social disadvantage and PSI groups, and those listed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act

The views detailed in this section are therefore those of the arts sector in Northern Ireland. As will be outlined in the following sections, those views are for the most part consistent with the barriers identified through previous research.

In total, 20 arts organisations (of the 131 funded by ACNI) chose to participate in the focus groups and four arts venues were also interviewed. A full list of these organisations and venues is attached at Appendix II.

The following sections summarise the barriers that we identified through the literature review, discuss how these barriers apply in Northern Ireland and outline additional barriers that were identified through the consultation process. This section follows a similar format to the literature review in that we discuss barriers faced by the general public followed by barriers that affect specific sub-groups of the population.

6.2 Barriers faced by the General Population

The literature review undertaken in Section 5 identified the main barriers to attending the arts, as faced by the general population, as being:

- **cost** - e.g. ticket prices, travel, food/refreshments;
- **lack of time** - particularly for those with work and family commitments;
- **location** - lack of events / facilities close by, particularly in rural areas; location of venues in areas identified with the 'other' community;
- **lack of public transport** - for non-car owners, those living in rural areas, young people and the disabled. This was also an issue if use of public transport is necessary due to inadequate car parking;
- **lack of information** - events not well publicised therefore a lack of awareness, information not easily accessible, lack of information about disabled facilities;
- **unsuitable events** - events can be unsuitable in a number of ways - not relevant to culture (e.g. for ethnic minorities), lack of audio described or non-visual information for disabled people, young people feel events are 'un-cool' or adult-centered; and
- **feeling uncomfortable or out of place** - this affects people in different ways - self-consciousness by those from low socio-economic backgrounds or those who have no-one to go with; negative reactions from staff/public to disabled people.

As part of the focus groups and interviews with venues these barriers were discussed further. Overall there was general agreement that the barriers we had identified through the literature review applied in Northern Ireland.

The issue of 'cost' as a barrier was frequently discussed throughout the consultations and there was no clear agreement as to whether this was actually a barrier to accessing the arts in Northern Ireland.

Some participants recognised that cost could be a barrier to attendance and considered that there is a need for more discounted tickets, particularly for families. Others agreed that cost was an issue because potential attenders are unwilling to pay for the 'unknown' if they have little or no experience of the arts or are unsure of the quality or content of the event.

However the argument was also put forward that ticket prices for most arts events are relatively low in Northern Ireland compared to other types of events such as pop concerts. It was the opinion of others that a 'value judgement' was being made by potential attenders, who perceived some arts events as being less value for money than others (e.g. cinemas).

6.2.1 Additional Barriers Identified

Lack of Understanding of the Arts

Throughout the consultations, a lack of understanding of the arts was identified as a key barrier.

It was suggested by several consultees that this lack of understanding was in part a result of the position of the arts within the school curriculum. It was felt that children are not being provided with sufficient opportunities to experience or participate in the arts as part of school activities. Although art and music are currently part of the curriculum, it was felt that only certain art forms are being experienced by children (such as painting, drama and music) and this can create a very narrow experience and view of the arts. It was also suggested that the extent of childrens involvement in arts activities could be influenced by the school staff and if these staff have little interest in the arts, this in turn could affect childrens exposure to the arts. It was also the perception that there was a lack of trained teachers in schools with experience of the arts.

Consultees also expressed the view that if children were not experiencing and developing an interest of the arts at school, that they were unlikely to gain an understanding of the arts and so were less likely to participate or attend arts events later in life.

Lack of Participation

Consultees also emphasised the need to recognise the link between participation in the arts and attendance levels at arts events.

It was felt that people who are actively participating in the arts are more likely to attend an arts event because they have an understanding of the art form and because they can connect with the experience as it often relates to their participation activities (e.g. participating in amateur dramatics and attending the theatre). However it was suggested that many participants are not attending at present and there is a need for more development work to take place in order to 'bridge the gap' between participation and attendance.

It was also suggested that more needs to be done to build a culture of participation in the arts. At present it was felt that there was no clear framework or structure for people to become involved in the

arts and with an increasing number of activities competing with the arts, it is important to provide easier opportunities to access the arts. If more opportunities were provided for participation, this could in turn could assist to increase attendance levels at arts events.

Venues

The lack of venues (especially in Belfast) in which to hold arts events was mentioned by a number of arts organisations. As a result, it was felt that this is restricting the number of events that can be held in the City. It was also noted that there was a lack of venues in some areas outside of Belfast such as North Antrim.

Other consultees felt that potential attenders are not going to arts events as they feel intimidated by some venues. This could either relate to the perception that a venue was not welcoming (e.g. because of its appearance or access) or because of its location.

Lack of Choice / Product

The view was also expressed that the current lack of venues for the arts was in turn having an affect on the range and choice of events that can be provided to audiences.

It was suggested that one of the reasons why attendance levels are not higher is that audiences (or potential attenders) are not being provided with enough variety of programming and different types of arts events consistently throughout the year. It was felt that by not providing this choice, audiences were not always being provided with events that they feel are relevant to them or that they were able to 'connect' with. By providing a greater range of arts events that this would provide a greater choice and in turn increase audience levels.

In addition to providing a greater choice of events, it was also felt that there is a need to provide more access to the arts at a local / community level.

Overall Experience / Customer Service

This relates in part to the barrier identified through the literature review of 'feeling uncomfortable or out of place'.

There was agreement among consultees that more needs to be done by arts organisations / venues to improve the experience of attending an arts event. This would include making the process of attending easier, ensuring attenders (especially new attenders) are made welcome and that their experience is enjoyable and that they feel comfortable attending.

This would involve organisations / venues placing more emphasis on customer service, from the initial decision to attend through to the conclusion of the event. For example, providing more information about an event, assisting with ticket purchases, providing better facilities (refreshments, toilets, facilities for parents with children, creches, car parking etc), building relationships with the audiences by helping them to familiarise themselves with the venue and art form and by holding pre-show / post-show talks / events.

It was felt that by not focusing on the entire experience of an arts event, many attenders can leave an event feeling that overall they have had a bad experience, even though the quality of the artistic performance may have been high. This experience can then result in them not attending again and also developing the perception that that type of event (e.g. dance, theatre) or venue is 'not for them'.

Lack of Night-time Economy / City Centre Safety

This issue was raised in relation to Derry City Centre, however it is also an issue that applies to other cities and towns across Northern Ireland.

It was felt that there is a lack of a night-time economy in cities and towns due to shops mostly closing at 6pm and through a lack of cafes/restaurants. This can give the impression that the city/town has closed down and is not welcoming to visitors. It was felt that the combination of these issues was affecting attendance levels at arts events.

6.3 Barriers Faced by Specific Groups

6.3.1 Overview

As outlined in the literature review, a substantial amount of research has previously been carried out in relation to barriers to arts attendance that are faced by specific sub-groups of the population. As part of this research we considered it important to confirm these barriers in the local context of Northern Ireland and to identify any additional barriers that had not been identified through the literature review.

In order to do this we undertook a small scale consultation (though face to face and telephone interviews) with organisations that represented these specific groups. The organisations detailed in Table 6.1 were consulted. We were unable to interview an organisation that represented rural areas; several groups were contacted however they felt that they did not have enough experience in the arts to comment on barriers faced by people living in rural areas. We also did not undertake a consultation with disability organisations as a separate research exercise is being carried out by MORI for ACNI in this area.

In addition to the interviews, a discussion of barriers faced by these sub-groups of the population also arose as part of the focus groups with arts organisations and through the interviews with venues.

Table 6.1
Organisations Consulted

Sub-group of the Population	Organisation Consulted
Elderly	Age Concern Northern Ireland
Children and Young People	Youth Council of Northern Ireland
Ethnic Minorities	Community Relations Council
Families	Parents Advice Forum
Community Background	Community Relations Council
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender	Coalition on Sexual Orientation

There was a varying amount of experience of and involvement in the arts among the organisations consulted. The Youth Council, Community Relations Council and CoSo were actively involved in the arts, whereas the Parents Advice Forum and Age Concern currently have a much more limited involvement. However, each organisation consulted was able to discuss the barriers we had identified and assist us in the research.

Overall, there was broad agreement from consultees with the barriers that had been identified through the literature review and in the following sections we discuss additional barriers and issues that were identified through the discussions.

6.3.2 Elderly People

Through our consultation with Age Concern we identified that all of the barriers highlighted through the literature review were considered as relevant to the elderly in Northern Ireland. A number of additional barriers were also highlighted, namely:

- the perception among elderly people that events are '*not for me*' due to the way they are advertised;
- **literacy problems** - literacy levels are sometimes an issue for elderly people and are therefore a potential reason for not attending arts events;
- **lack of opportunity** - it was suggested that there is a lack of opportunities for the elderly to become involved in the arts both as participants and attenders. More outreach activities are needed to encourage attendance;

- **isolation** - for some elderly people, isolation can be an issue. Interim steps such as engaging with other people would need to be introduced before attendance could be encouraged; and
- **unwillingness to go out at night** - even though many older people are car owners, some will not drive after dark and will not use public transport.

It was also emphasised to us that the elderly should not be considered as a homogenous group. Many lead active lifestyles and have limited time for the arts or other activities while others are already participating in the arts through events organised by folds or housing associations. Arts organisations should therefore not assume that all elderly people will like a certain type of arts events (such as reminiscence events or tea dances).

6.3.3 Children and Young People

The Youth Council of Northern Ireland is actively involved in the arts both as a contributor towards youth policies and through the funding of a number of arts organisations that work with young people.

Through our consultation we identified that the barriers to the arts we had previously noted were relevant to children and young people living in Northern Ireland. In addition, the barrier described above (in Section 6.2.1) in relation to 'lack of understanding of the arts' was also identified through our discussions with the Youth Council. It was felt that there is a need to consider how the arts are viewed by schools and as part of the curriculum. The perception is that some schools value the importance of the arts and its educational benefits while others view it as providing children and students with a break from the 'formal' learning environment. The view was also expressed that we need to consider the knowledge and awareness of the arts among young people. Many associate the arts only with traditional forms such as art classes and drama and are only provided with a limited range of participation opportunities which can often be influenced by parents or teachers views. It was also felt that there is a 'generational gap' between what young people want and expect from the arts and what is on offer from providers. For example, young people may want to access DJ or digital media skills, however these are not readily available or difficult to access. The Youth Council is currently undertaking research into what young people want from the arts in order to assist their funding priorities in the future.

6.3.4 Ethnic Minorities

A substantial amount of research has already been carried out in the UK in relation to barriers that are experienced by ethnic minorities in attending the arts. As noted in Section 5.5.5 above, Northern Ireland has a significantly smaller ethnic minority community than that of the rest of the UK; at the last Census (2001) it was less than one per cent of the population. However, this figure is rising in Northern Ireland, with an increasing number of people entering the region from other countries and cultures.

Neither the DCAL research carried out in 2003 nor the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey recorded details of ethnicity, therefore we consulted with the Community Relations Council (CRC) in order to validate the barriers identified through the literature review and to discuss those that are particular to Northern Ireland.

Our discussions confirmed that in general many of the barriers highlighted in the literature review were relevant to Northern Ireland. CRC also emphasised that many of the barriers faced by ethnic minorities were exactly the same as those faced by the general population. In addition, CRC suggested that in order to address some of the barriers to the arts there is a need:

- for greater understanding of ethnic minority cultures by the arts sector (and wider community) in Northern Ireland;
- for more opportunities to participate in and attend the arts for ethnic minority cultures;
- to include ethnic minority culture as part of events that are taking place; and
- to neutralise some of our cultural venues to ensure they are welcoming to all cultures.

However, CRC also stated that many arts organisations were already actively working with ethnic minority communities to encourage participation in and attendance at arts events. Many activities are already taking place in local communities which are being organised by the community and voluntary sector.

6.3.5 Families

Our discussions with the Parents Advice Forum confirmed the barriers that we had identified through the literature review. Particular issues relating to some of these barriers identified were as follows:

- **cost** - this was considered a substantial barrier for families. Although family tickets are available, these are often restricted to families consisting of two adults and two children and these are not suitable for many families. More flexibility is therefore needed on family tickets;
- **timing of events** - it was felt that evening performances for events that are targeted at children and young people are scheduled too late in the evening i.e. 7.30pm / 8pm. Many children are normally in bed at this time or are too tired to attend. The lack of availability of matinee performances was also a concern;
- **lack of facilities** - the lack of facilities for children with special needs was highlighted as was the lack of creche facilities, both of which were considered as barriers for enabling families to attend events; and
- **staff awareness** - a greater awareness is needed by staff in venues as to how children behave - e.g. children don't or can't always sit in their seats for the duration of the performance and more training needs to be given to staff in this area to assist parents.

6.3.6 Community Background

Community Background is an issue that is specific to Northern Ireland and as a result only one significant piece of research has been carried out to date, by DCAL in 2003.

Our discussions with the Community Relations Council reflected the issues that were highlighted in the DCAL research, namely:

- that cultural activity in Northern Ireland has historically been divided on religious and class lines;
- the location of some venues act as a barrier to attendance; and that
- certain types of events are still perceived to have an association with one or other community.

However, it was also perceived that in recent years a 'generational' change has begun to occur and that these barriers are becoming less of an issue for both communities.

Nevertheless it was felt that there is still a need to neutralise some of our cultural venues and also to provide more opportunities to participate in and attend the arts for all sections of the community.

6.3.7 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Through our literature review we were only able to source one piece of research on barriers to the arts faced as by the LGBT community, this was the research carried out by DCAL in 2003. Our consultation with the Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSo) was therefore valuable in assisting us to gather additional information about the barriers faced by the LGBT community.

In general CoSo agreed with the barriers identified through the DCAL research, namely that:

- there is a lack of events that specifically reflect the LGBT culture and there is little pro-active engagement from the arts sector with the LGBT community;
- LGBT events are not widely advertised; and
- there is little understanding of the issues that are faced by the LGBT community.

In addition, the location of some venues (particularly in Belfast) was seen as a barrier to attending arts events. It was emphasised that in order for the LGBT communities to be comfortable attending venues, they need to be located in a strong neutral area of the City, for example the Cathedral Quarter.

The issue of cost was highlighted as a barrier for the LGBT community through the DCAL research. However, CoSo disagreed with this as they felt that most arts events are of relatively low cost and therefore can be afforded by most people.

Although CoSo highlighted that more pro-active engagement by the arts sector is needed, they also stated that more capacity building is needed within the LGBT community to enable them to access funding and increase arts provision.

6.4 Summary

Through the consultation exercise we aimed to validate the barriers that had previously been identified through the literature review.

In general the barriers that we identified were acknowledged as being relevant to Northern Ireland. The only significant variance was in relation to the cost of attending the arts, where opinion was split on whether this was an actual barrier.

A number of additional barriers were also identified, namely:

- **lack of understanding of or an awareness of the arts** - this mainly related to the role of the arts within the educational system and it was felt that young people are not being provided with enough opportunity to access and participate in the arts;
- **lack of participation** - the link between participation and attendance was noted and it was felt that more development work needs to take place in order to increase participation and this in turn may assist in developing greater audiences for the arts;
- **lack of choice** - it was suggested that there is insufficient choice and range of events for the public to attend and that this was closely related to the small number of venues (particularly in Belfast) that were available to host events. It was felt that by providing a greater range of venues and arts events that this increased choice would in turn assist in growing audience numbers. This issue also affected different sub-groups of the population, namely
 - the LGBT community who felt that there is a lack of events specifically for their community;
 - young people who want access to a broader range of different and more contemporary art forms in order for the arts to meet their needs in terms of participation and attendance; and
 - elderly people who can feel that there is a lack of opportunities for them to become involved in the arts.
- **poor quality customer service** - it was felt that more needs to be done by arts organisations / venues to improve the experience of attending an arts events for the public. Often due to poor customer service audiences are choosing not to return to certain venues or types of productions. For families more facilities for children are needed as is staff training on how to assist families.

7. APPROACHES

7.1 Introduction

As part of the terms of reference for this research we were asked to identify approaches taken by arts organisation in Northern Ireland to overcome perceived and actual barriers to the arts at a policy, programme and project level. In order to gather this information we discussed this topic with all of those we consulted with.

7.2 Approaches

Many examples were provided of approaches that had been taken by arts organisations to overcome barriers to the arts. The examples covered a broad range of art forms and different types of non-attenders. We have summarised these approaches in Table 7.1 and have attempted to categorise these into policy, programme and project level¹⁹ approaches.

It should however be noted that these examples are only based on the experiences of those that chose to participate in the consultation process and have not been evaluated by us. There may be more (and possibly better) approaches that have been taken by other arts organisations in Northern Ireland.

It was clear from the examples provided, that many of the approaches taken were at a programme or project level and were therefore either one-off or short term in nature. Consultees also raised a number of issues in relation to undertaking projects that attempt to address barriers, namely that:

- audience development is an expensive process;
- audience development activity is hard to sustain if sufficient resources (funding and staff) are not continually available;
- long term sustained relationships need to be built with audiences in order to see a lasting increase in audience numbers; and
- it is difficult to encourage audiences to become repeat attenders - e.g. young people will come to events that specifically organised for them, however it is hard to get them to then go to other types of events.

The need to take a long term approach to audience development was also raised as part of the evaluation process of the New Audiences Programme²⁰ which found that *'the development of new audiences is a long-term process, which is not well serviced by short-term project funding initiatives'*. The *Art of Inclusion* (ACE, 2004) report also highlighted that a barrier to achieving sustainability was because of the short-term nature of much funding and that *'organisations that want to work in a strategic way can be hampered from doing so because they were essentially project funded'*.

¹⁹ Definitions: Project = one event; Programme = a series of events; Policy = forming part of the organisation's strategy/aims or priorities

²⁰ *New Audience Programme 2000-2002, Overview Evaluation of Gateway 4, New Approaches to Presentation*, Volume 1, Cultural Intelligence, 2003, pg 8

However, New Audiences Programme evaluations also found that some projects that were funded 'failed to appreciate the level of additional work required to develop new markets' and that 'some projects did not allocate sufficient priority or resources in terms of funding or staff time to project evaluation'.

Table 7.1
Examples of Approaches Taken to Addressing Barriers to the Arts

Type of Approach	Policy / Programme / Project Level
Children and Young People	
Belfast Children's Festival (Young at Art) - aims to attract children and families to the arts by providing high quality events aimed at children / families / schools	Programme
Wheelworks - aim to work with young people that may otherwise not have an opportunity to take part in the arts	Policy
Playhouse (Derry) - aim to increase young audiences through youth drama performances on subjects such as drugs / youth awareness	Programme
Burnavon (Cookstown) - events for young people e.g. plays that are on the school curriculum or that deal with social issues. Local theatre groups visited schools and offered 'taster session' for performances in the Burnavon of the Little Shop of Horrors	Programme
Millennium Forum (Derry) - Education Officer employed to develop the schools market and encourage attendance from young people	Policy
Women	
Spanner in the Works - aims to build audiences by working with participants to introduce them to the arts by relating it to social issues	Programme
Sure Start Project* - aimed to introduce young women to art through an education project	Project

Note: * identifies examples that were provided by consultees of work undertaken by other arts organisations that were not participants in this research.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)**Examples of Approaches Taken to Addressing Barriers to the Arts**

Disabled People	
The NI Piping and Drumming School - worked with the Drake Music Project to develop access to the arts for disabled people	Programme
Elderly	
Two events held as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival by the Arts for Older People Network*	Project
Rural Areas	
Burnavon (Cookstown) - 'Transport to Theatre' scheme - organised with the local community transport. £1 is added to ticket price and transport is provided by bus to and from the event. This scheme has run for 2-3 years however there has been little uptake	Programme
General	
Castleward Opera* - aimed to increase audiences through holding a 'Fish & Chips' night in association with Harry Ramsdens	Project
Belfast Festival at Queens* - buddy programme which aimed to assist attenders by accompanying them to events and through facilitated post-event discussions	Programme
Kabosh - have attempted to address the issue of venues by holding events outside the normal theatre environment - e.g. in pubs and outdoor spaces	Policy
Kabosh - attempted to increase repeat attenders by organising post-show discussions where audiences can interact with cast/crew	Programme
Opera in the Gardens (Belfast City Council)* - approach to developing opera audiences by offering free admission in Botanic Gardens	Project
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival - develop audiences through holding events in different locations - e.g. Indian Rope trick event in the car park beside St Anne's Cathedral	Programme
Ulster Orchestra - organise a 'popular season' on Saturday nights, provide outreach projects and pre-concert talks	Programme
Creative Exchange - focus on building audiences through working with the local community and East Belfast Partnership Board	Programme
OMAC - 'Frequent Flyer' Scheme - Ticket deals and 'early bird' offers	Programme
OMAC - workshops and pre-post show talks	Programme

Note: * identifies examples that were provided by consultees of work undertaken by other arts organisations that were not participants in this research

7.3 Summary

This section has outlined approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome barriers to the arts. As Table 7.1 showed, many of the approaches were at a project or programme level, were short-term in nature and were not part of a longer term or co-ordinated strategy.

The examples however show that a wide variety of approaches have been undertaken that have tried to deal with barriers faced by both the general population and specific sub-groups. They have involved trying to encourage attendance through education and outreach activities, working with groups such as the disabled and young people and through addressing other more practical barriers such as price, venues and transport.

8. BEST PRACTICE

8.1 Introduction

As part of this research we were asked to review best practice in increasing access to the arts adopted by arts organisations in the United Kingdom. This was carried out through desk research by reviewing studies that had been carried out in the UK. We focused on research that had set out to identify best practice or that which aims to provide arts organisations with guidelines on how best to approach audience development.

We have looked at best practice in two ways - general best practice principals in developing audiences and best practice in relation to increasing audiences from specific groups of the population such as young people, the disabled and families.

In our identification of 'best practice' we have considered the following research and summarised the salient points from each.

8.2 Best Practice - General Principles

8.2.1 'Not for the Likes of You'

'Not for the Likes of You' was jointly commissioned in 2003 by Arts Council England, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. The focus of the project was on how cultural organisations can become accessible to a broad general audience by changing their overall positioning and message, rather than just implementing targeted audience development schemes or projects. The project worked with 32 organisations in the cultural sector and Part A of the report summaries the best practice that was observed and experienced in these organisations.

The report has three parts, which focus on attitudes and motivations, and the changes that need to occur internally and externally to make projects successful. A summary of the internal and external best practice principles are outlined below. One of the key messages of the report is that organisations must

model internally what they wish to achieve externally and that any audience development work must be rooted within a wider organisational commitment to access and inclusion.

- **Internal Success Criteria - Summary of the Main Points**

- develop specific kinds of leadership behaviour;
- create effective multi-disciplinary teams;
- bring education and marketing closer to management;
- hire a diverse range of people;
- think about audiences first; and
- promote a people-centred, 'can do' culture.

- **External Success Criteria - Summary of the Main Points**

- engage with and involve audiences;
- devise specific products that say 'it is for the likes of you';
- define benefits of attending that actually mean something;
- make links with known culture;
- make newcomers welcome; and
- invest in customer service.

8.2.2 New Audiences Programme

One of the key aims of the New Audiences Programme was *'to allow learning and sharing of experiences between organisations to improve audience development practice'*. As a result the Programme places great emphasis on evaluation both through independent research and self-evaluations.

The final report of the *New Audiences Programme* (Johnson et. Al., 2004) highlighted some key lessons and success factors for audience development projects, namely:

- the importance of relevant programming for specific audiences;
- the importance of involving target audiences in consultation;
- creation and presentation of work was a key success factor for many projects;
- increasing audiences may be a key aim of projects but were not the only indicators of success;
- attracting large numbers for a one-off project or event does not always make for a successful campaign. The emphasis should be on a holistic approach, developing the skills, confidence and audience knowledge to embark upon longer term strategic audience development plans;
- the need to explore methodologies for performance indicators based on qualitative rather than quantitative factors;

- that partnerships, particularly with the non-arts sectors such as health, education and youth services were crucial where hard-to reach audiences were involved as the partner could bring specialist knowledge of a target group;
- that the knowledge and support of project co-ordinators, specialist advisors, audience development and marketing agencies can contribute to a project's success;
- successful projects tended to be based on:
 - good project planning;
 - realistic objectives;
 - a strong research and knowledge base of target audiences;
 - use of suitable communication channels;
 - the development of targeted advertising and marketing materials; and
 - the involvement of target audiences and communities in the planning of activities;
- successful project evaluations require:
 - effective planning;
 - effective goal setting;
 - clear aims and objectives for the evaluation;
 - good project management;
 - communication with partners to ensure clarity of collecting evidence and reporting; and
 - adequate resources (time, money and people).

8.2.3 Guide to Audience Development

The *Guide to Audience Development* was prepared by Heather Maitland in 2000 for Arts Council England. The guide aimed to provide a step-by-step guide to planning and carrying out audience development schemes, an overview of good practice in audience development and examples of projects which have been proved to work. It was the result of research into audience development in over 350 cultural organisations.

The guide provides a nine step approach to projects.

1. **choose who to work with** (before deciding on the type of event);
2. **collect information about the target group** (gather information on current audiences and the profile of the local population, identify barriers and identify information potential audiences need);
3. **make use of the information** (use key facts to shape the project, and use other research);
4. **choose the arts event** (that will interest your target group and will overcome the barriers which currently stop them attending);

5. **plan the project** (set clear aims and objectives, agree evaluation criteria);
6. **consultation** (try out ideas on staff and other organisations, consult the target group);
7. **implement the project**;
8. **sustain the relationship** (keep in touch with attenders and develop the relationship to encourage re-attendance); and
9. **evaluate the project** (evaluate immediately against objectives and targets, establish if it was an effective use of resources, consult the target group).

8.2.4 The Art of Inclusion

In 2001, research was commissioned by Arts Council England to explore social exclusion work in the arts. One of the overall objectives of the research was to '*develop measures of success that could be used to evaluate a broad range of initiatives*'. The research was carried out in two strands and the *Arts of Inclusion* report, published in 2004, formed the second strand. Key good practice principles identified through the research were that projects had:

- **clear aims and objectives** that were worked through in terms of project delivery e.g. projects with long-term goals need to build in mechanisms for achieving those;
- **enough lead-in time and planning**: research and recruitment of participants, development of partnerships, recruiting artists, finding appropriate venues etc;
- **strong partnerships**: it is important to agree and understand the projects objectives, ensure that the project 'fits' with the organisations respective goals, establish effective ways of working together which involves being clear about roles and responsibilities and good communication; and
- **sustainability and exit strategies** - the future welfare of participants needs to be considered at the outset of projects - either by building longer term partnerships or by thinking about how to bring projects to a close.

8.3 Best Practice - Specific Groups

8.3.1 New Audiences Programme

The New Audiences Programme provided funding through 14 separate strands throughout the five-year programme. The final evaluation of the Programme identified priority areas in which audience development work had been carried out; these included general audiences, the disabled, diversity, rural, young people and older people. The evaluation report therefore provides a summary of the key success factors in relation to each of these priority areas. Key findings from the report in relation to best practice are outlined below.

- **General Audiences**

- 'Ambassador' or network marketing is effective, though time and resource intensive;
- 'Test Drive the Arts' marketing is effective in attracting people to new venues and artforms; and
- projects in new places and at new times can draw in new audiences particularly those not used to attending arts venues;

- **Young People**

- consultation and personal contact bring greater awareness of young people's perceptions, issues and needs, and lead to better project planning;
- organisations can appeal to young people's interests by adapting their programmes, delivering more interactive activity, or placing their projects in non-traditional venues with the right ambience and ethos;
- partnerships are important, particularly where partners have specialist knowledge that can help arts organisations to build relationships with young people. Positive influence by peers, friends, teachers and mentors is also an important factor in encouraging young people to attend; and
- successful communication methods that combine a familiar medium (e.g. text messaging) with language relevant to young people, through word of mouth is most successful.

A list of recommendations to arts organisations was also drawn up to assist in engaging young people as audiences in the arts. These were:

- change the venues to provide wider socialising functions e.g. as a meeting place;
- make changes to front of house, including promotional information, environmental and management aspects of the venue e.g. staff with a positive attitude towards young people;
- adapt content - shortening performances, more activity/interaction, themes and content appealing to young people;
- introduce works performed or created by young people;
- relocate events to familiar (non-arts) venues;
- increase opportunities to attend;
- introduce cultural mentors;
- engage with the ideas, aspirations, experiences and opinions of the sometimes wide cultural mix of the young, especially in programming;

- develop a consistent bridge between schools and arts venues;
- use new technology to attract, maintain and develop young audiences; and
- introduce special schemes and initiatives e.g. pay as you please, free tickets;

- **Diversity (Ethnic Minorities)**

- partnership working enables mainstream and community organisations to build capacity through the exchange of expertise and experience;
- successful partnerships require long-term commitment, firm leadership from senior management, time/resources, a willingness to challenge preconceptions, strategic planning, clarity about partners' aims, a skills audit/training, support from mentors, advisors or co-ordinators and a dedicated project champion; and
- it is crucial that the links between communities and organisations are able to be maintained beyond the employment of one key individual;

- **Disability**

- many organisations changed their marketing practices, introducing new promotional formats and developing partnerships with the community/voluntary sector to reach disabled groups; and
- disabled people played a critical role in developing projects, as artists, consultants and ambassadors;

- **Families**

- a family friendly approach must offer programming that will appeal to all within the family group, create a safe environment with appropriate facilities, offer a warm and genuine welcome, provide information for planning a visit and represent value for money;
- additional financial resources are not necessarily required. Changes in customer care, for example, may require little investment but can make a huge difference;
- family friendliness helps arts organisations become inclusive and welcoming focal points within communities, enabling them to contribute to social objectives. It can generate additional income for the arts and stimulate the development of artistic programming;

- **Rural**

- rural based arts organisations are well placed, and should be supported, to develop a cultural response to issues affecting the communities in which they work;
- the 'tyranny of distance' can be overcome through outreach projects showing the work of urban based companies and practitioners in rural community settings; and

- well planned and targeted outreach work can encourage better use of rural based arts facilities and expertise;

- **Older People**

- partnership working is effective, and the older the audience, the more important it is to work across sectors, for instance with nursing and residential homes;
- both arts venues and older people prefer to choose from a wider variety of good quality products and do not just want special programmes for 'older people';
- timing of events and customer care are important factors for some older people. Daytime events and matinee performances are popular, as are events supported by education work or offering social opportunities;
- older people are more willing to engage with new arts activities and venues if some sifting and selection has been done by someone whom they trust; and
- ambassadorial schemes, group promotions, membership clubs, outreach schemes and culturally specific programming are all effective approaches.

8.3.2 Disability

'Disability Access, A Good Practice Guide for the Arts' was produced by Arts Council England in 2003 and aims to provide a guide to increasing participation in the arts by disabled people. As previously discussed in Section 5.5.2 the guide also outlines the range of barriers that are experienced by disabled people. Key good practice suggestions include:

- developing a disability access action plan for the organisation;
- understanding that disabled people do not form a homogenous group and have different needs in relation to the type of events they wish to attend or participate in;
- ensuring that the organisation's board/committee members have a wide range of knowledge and experience of disability and access issues;
- for groups working with disabled people exclusively it is suggested that at least 50 per cent of their governing body should be disabled people. For an organisation working with disabled people as part of a mixed programme of work, it is suggested that the number of disabled people within the membership of the governing body is in proportion to the disability arts work undertaken;
- when undertaking large-scale projects, a wide range of groups should be consulted such as local / regional/national / culturally diverse disability groups organisations and individuals, disabled people who are current users/attenders and disabled people who are possible future users / attenders;

- establishing a specific disability advisory groups in order to ensure that disability has been considered at all levels from a local perspective;
- ensure that all policies, procedures and practices are non-discriminatory and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act;
- carrying out access audits to assess how the organisation's premises, policies and practices enable disabled people to participate in its activities; and
- providing regular disability equality training for staff and board members to ensure that all people, including disabled people have equality of opportunity.

8.3.3 Families

In December 2001, the Arts Council of England commissioned research to undertake an audit of 'family friendly' work across the arts and cultural sector²¹. The audit aimed to bring together key information in relation to families and 'family friendliness' work and to examine models of best practice.

The report highlighted that the projects reviewed were on the whole short term in nature, were restricted due to lack of resources and that there was little evidence that organisations had accurate baseline data in relation to family audiences. However, the report suggested that when organising events for families, the following should be considered:

- families can make decisions as a group as to whether to attend and event - therefore when marketing programmes to children a knowledge and understanding of the family decision making process and behaviour is vital; and
- when developing programmes for families, organisations need to be clear about what they are offering families and why. Venues seriously committed to becoming family friendly need to develop a strategic policy and integrate this work into their core activity.

'**Family Friendly**' was a project undertaken by 11 London-based organisations as part of the New Audiences Programme. As part of the project report a set of 'family friendly' guidelines and a checklist was produced. The guidelines recommended that the following areas be considered when organising an event:

- the 'total experience' is more important for families than for other groups (e.g. the journey, environment, facilities, customer care);
- it is important to make parents and carers feel welcome - from the treatment they receive from frontline staff to the appropriateness and frequency of the programme;
- ensuring that the event is interactive and that children are engaged throughout;

²¹ *Family Friendliness, Audit of Recent Research and Recommendations for the Development of Family Audiences in the Arts*, ACE, 2003

- providing as much information about the event as possible (e.g. travel and access, what to expect, age guidelines, background information, how to behave);
- recognising that families come in different shapes and sizes;
- recognising that cost is an issue and perceived value for money is a major factor;
- recognising that time is a factor for families;
- providing easy access to information; and
- recognising that having fun together at an event is often a priority for families.

In addition to the guidelines the checklist provided detailed criteria that should be considered when organising events. This has been attached at Appendix III.

8.4 Summary

This section of the report has aimed to provide an overview of best practice guidelines that should be considered in order to increase access to the arts. The literature reviewed has highlighted some key areas that need to be considered in order to assist in achieving this, namely:

- the importance of good project management of events - including allowing sufficient time to plan, organise, implement and evaluate the event;
- ensuring that organisations model internally what they wish to achieve externally and that any audience development work must be rooted within the wider organisational commitment to access and inclusion;
- understanding that audience development is a continuing process and lasting audiences can generally not be achieved through one off or short-term projects;
- customer service and the 'whole' experience are important, not just the artistic element;
- partnership working is important;
- undertaking quality evaluations are key to determining the success of projects and in sharing and disseminating best practice with other organisations; and
- that for specific groups of the population different approaches to audience development are needed.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The final aim of this research was to consider the impact of the findings of our research on ACNI objectives. We have outlined in this section our main findings and conclusions arising from our research and then detailed our recommendations for ACNI to consider going forward.

9.2 Findings and Conclusions

Our main findings and conclusions arising from the research are outlined below.

9.2.1 Attendance at Arts Events

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey indicated that 73 per cent of those interviewed had attended an event in the last 12 months. However there were significant variances in the types of events attended and the profile of those that were attending. The most popular type of event attended was film (53 per cent) however attendance at other events was significantly lower: 22 per cent had been to a play or drama but only 2 per cent had been to a contemporary dance performance, opera or jazz concert. In relation to the demographic profile of those attending events, our analysis indicated that:

- women are slightly more likely to attend events than men;
- attendance is related to age and young people are more likely to attend than the elderly;
- those with children were more likely to attend events;
- disabled people were less likely to attend;
- community background and living in an urban or rural area only slightly affects attendance levels;
- attendance was closely related to the level of educational attainment and income; and
- students and those in employment are more likely to attend events, whereas retired people are least likely to attend.

When broad comparisons are made with other regions of the UK, the information shows that in general attendance levels are lower in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK.

9.2.2 Barriers to Attendance

A significant amount of research has already been carried out in the UK (particularly in England) in relation to barriers faced in attending the arts. This research has showed that the common barriers faced by the public include cost, lack of time, location, lack of public transport, lack of information, unsuitable events and feeling uncomfortable or out of place. For others barriers are more specific, such as lack of disabled access, language, lack of facilities for children and relevance to culture.

Through the consultations we found that in general, the barriers that had we had identified through the literature review were acknowledged as being relevant to Northern Ireland. The only significant variance was in relation to the cost of attending the arts, where opinion was split on whether this was an actual barrier. A number of additional barriers were also identified, namely, a lack of

understanding of or an awareness of the arts, lack of participation, lack of choice and poor quality customer service.

9.2.3 Approaches to Overcoming Barriers

As part of the terms of reference for this research we were asked to identify approaches taken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland to overcome perceived and actual barriers to the arts. Our consultations with the arts sector identified that a variety of approaches have been undertaken by arts organisations in Northern Ireland that have tried to deal with barriers faced by both the general public and specific sub-groups of the population. However many of these approaches were one-off or short term in nature and not part of a longer term or co-ordinated strategy.

9.2.4 Best Practice

Our review of best practice involved examining a selection of studies that had been carried out in the UK which had specifically set out to identify best practice or which aimed to provide arts organisations with guidelines on how best to approach audience development. The literature reviewed highlighted some key areas that need to be considered in order to assist in achieving this, namely:

- the importance of good project management of events - including allowing sufficient time to plan, organise, implement and evaluate the event;
- ensuring that organisations model internally what they wish to achieve externally and that any audience development work must be rooted within the wider organisational commitment to access and inclusion;
- understanding that audience development is a continuing process and lasting audiences can generally not be achieved through one off or short-term projects;
- customer service and the 'whole' experience are important, not just the artistic element;
- partnership working is important;
- undertaking quality evaluations are key to determining the success of projects and in sharing and disseminating best practice with other organisations; and
- that for specific groups of the population different approaches to audience development are needed.

9.3 Recommendations

9.3.1 Introduction

Before outlining our recommendations, it is important to firstly consider recent key developments in relation to audience development and the arts and in Northern Ireland.

ACNI's current five-year plan (*The Arts: Inspiring the Imagination, Building the Future*) outlines the specific priority of developing new audiences for the arts (see Section 3.2). This has resulted in two key developments over the lifetime of the plan: the creation of the Audience Development Scheme which provides Lottery funding over three years to organisations to develop their audiences, and the establishment of Audiences NI, Northern Ireland's Audience Development Agency. Going forward, the role of Audiences NI will be to develop audiences for the arts in partnership with key stakeholders and to provide strategic market intelligence information on audiences and their development. Therefore in the future a significant number of audience development activities previously undertaken by ACNI will be transferred to Audiences NI. However ACNI will continue to fund the Agency and there will be close co-operation and collaboration on a broad range of activities and initiatives.

An additional development this year has been the publication by the Review of Public Administration (RPA) of a consultation document²² which sets out proposals for a major reform of public administration in Northern Ireland designed to transform the way in which public services are developed, organised and delivered.

The consultation document outlines proposals for the delivery of arts and culture in Northern Ireland and suggest that an alternative to ACNI:

'would be to delegate most of the Arts Council's grant giving power to local government and to bring the remaining funding within DCAL for direct support of regionally important projects'.

Although the consultation period is at this point still ongoing, the resulting decisions made by the RPA could have wide-ranging impacts on the Arts Council and the arts in Northern Ireland.

9.3.2 Recommendations

Outlined below are our recommendations in relation to developing audiences for the arts and addressing actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland in the future:

- given the findings in relation to the persistence of particular barriers to attendance we recommend that ACNI should continue to prioritise their work in this area, through setting relevant objectives in future strategic plans and by working with relevant partners (e.g. Audiences NI, arts organisations, community/voluntary groups) to address these barriers;
- in conjunction with Audience NI we would recommend that ACNI consider developing an audience development strategy which would:

²² *Further Consultation*, The Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland, March 2005

- set out to provide a co-ordinated approach to audience development which would consider how audience development programmes are managed and how funding is distributed; and
- identify specific actions in relation to targeting the barriers identified in this report;
- we recommend that in the future ACNI gives consideration to different approaches to the distribution of funding for audience development projects. Many of the reports discussed in this research have highlighted the need to provide a sustained approach to addressing barriers and developing audiences. We would therefore also recommend that ACNI considers funding projects that aim to take a sustainable approach to targeting specific groups (such as young people or the disabled) and the associated barriers to attendance. We would also suggest that priority is given to funding organisations that:
 - will collaborate on projects with other groups (e.g. with other arts organisations, community/voluntary groups);
 - will aim to follow or take into account best practice when designing, implementing and evaluating projects (see Section 8); and
 - are prepared to share their experiences with other arts organisations and learn from best practice;
- our research has shown that attendance levels at arts events are in general lower than those in the rest of the UK. It is therefore important that all population groups are targeted, however, we recommend that ACNI (working with Audiences NI) consider giving priority to developing audiences among the population sub-groups that were identified in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey as being less likely to attend the arts (see Table 4.1), namely:
 - those over the age of 65 / retired;
 - those without dependents;
 - disabled people;
 - those with lower educational attainment; and
 - those with lower incomes;
- while it is important to address all barriers to attendance we recommend that ACNI (working with Audiences NI) consider giving priority to addressing the following barriers to attendance, which were identified in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey (see Table 5.1) as being the main reasons for non-attendance, namely:
 - difficulty finding time to attend/lack of time;
 - cost; and
 - family commitments/childcare.

Consideration should also be given to the additional barriers highlighted through the focus groups with arts organisations, namely:

- a lack of understanding or awareness of the arts;
 - lack of participation;
 - lack of choice; and
 - poor quality customer service;
- we recommend that ACNI develop specific monitoring and evaluation requirements for those arts organisations in receipt of funding for audience development. Arts organisations should also be encouraged by ACNI to undertake full evaluations of their projects in order to add to the knowledge of barriers to the arts and also to ensure that best practice is shared and learnt from by others; and
 - we recommend that ACNI encourages arts organisations to access the research that has been carried out already (e.g. through the New Audiences website) and to use this information to benefit audience development activity taking place in Northern Ireland.

APPENDIX I - LITERATURE AND BEST PRACTICE REVIEW SOURCES

Title	Author	Date
Northern Ireland		
Barriers to Participation in Culture, Arts and Leisure	IRS / DCAL	February 2003
Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey (ACNI Module)	NISRA (Central Survey Unit)	September 2004
GB		
A Literature Review of the Evidence Base for Culture, The Arts and Sport Policy	Scottish Executive	February 2004
A Picture in Your Head - Children and the Arts: a study of the perceptions and participation of children aged 5-12	Jentsch	1999
Arts for All	Mencap	2003
Arts in England 2003: attendance, participation and attitudes	ACE	December 2004
Arts in Wales 2004-2005: Attendance and Participation in the Arts among Adults in Wales	ACW	2005
Arts - what's in a word? Ethnic minorities and the Arts	Helen Jermyn & Philly Desai / ACE	January 2000
Attendance at, Participation in and Attitudes towards the Arts in Scotland	Scottish Arts Council	2005
Changing the Scene	ACE	2003
Disability Access, A good practice guide for the Arts	ACE	May 2003
Evaluation of the Gateway 4, New Approaches to Presentation, Volume 1	ACE	2003
Family Friendliness, Audit of Recent Research and Recommendations for the Development of Family Audiences in the Arts	ACE	2003
Family Friendly - Audience Focused Seminar Programme - Resource Pack	Audiences London /ACE	November 2003

Title	Author	Date
Focus of cultural diversity: the arts in England: attendance, participation and attitudes	Bridgwood et al / ACE	December 2003
Guide to Audience Development	Heather Maitland /ACE	2000
New Audiences for the Arts, The New Audiences Programme 1998-2003	Johnson et al	2004
Not for the Likes of You - How to Reach a Broader Audience	Morton Smyth Ltd	May 2004
Only Connect - Arts Touring and Rural Communities	Francois Matarasso / Comedia for the National Rural Touring Forum	2004
Opening Doors: Developing Black and Asian Audiences	Arts Marketing Association	2001
Sharing the Spotlight - Increased Access and Participation in the Arts by Scotland's Minority Ethnic Communities	Scottish Arts Council	February 2003
The Art of Inclusion	Helen Jermyn / Arts Council England	July 2004
Young people's Arts Participation research	Arts Council Wales	2002

APPENDIX II - CONSULTEE LIST

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- Mike Maloney, Prison Arts Foundation
- Brenda Kent, Voluntary Arts Network
- Maureen Harkin, Community Arts Forum
- Patricia Downey, Spanner in the Works
- Conor Shields, New Belfast Community Arts Initiative
- Ali FitzGibbon, Young at Art
- Will Chamberlain, Belfast Community Circus School
- Karl Wallace, Kabosh Theatre
- Gavin O'Connor, Wheelworks
- Stephen Beggs, Bruiser Theatre Company
- Sean Kelly, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival
- Thomas McElroy, Andersonstown Traditional and Contemporary Music School
- Paul Brown, Moving on Music
- Sam Bailey, Northern Ireland Piping and Drumming School
- Melissa Shortall, Armagh Rhymers Workers Co-operative
- David Byres, Ulster Orchestra
- Mary Trainor, Ulster Orchestra
- Elizabeth Bicker, Belfast Music Society
- Maria McConville, Creative Writers Network
- Acitore Artezione, Creative Exchange
- William Artts, Creative Exchange, NI Visual Arts Network

VENUES INTERVIEWED

- Max Beer, Playhouse, Derry
- Tony McCance, Burnavon Centre, Cookstown
- Gillian Mitchell, Old Museum Arts Centre
- Amanda Hamilton, Millennium Forum, Derry

ORGANISATIONS INTERVIEWED

- Age Concern Northern Ireland
- Youth Council of Northern Ireland
- Community Relations Council
- Parents Advice Forum
- Community Relations Council
- Coalition on Sexual Orientation

APPENDIX III - FAMILY FRIENDLY CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Family Friendly Criteria Checklist Audiences London / ACE, 2003

Not all of things listed will be appropriate or immediately achievable for every organisation? it might be useful to discuss, adapt and extend this list as a team exercise. Your list can also help devise a plan to develop services and activity and monitor progress.

1. Programming for Families and Interpretation

- Inclusion of programming for families in the organisation's overall objectives
- Consistent provision of accessible programme, education, outreach and activities for families
- A willingness to respond to the findings of family research and needs of family audience
- Opening times suited to family audience
- Scheduling of programme and activities to suit family audiences
- Provision of interpretation to increase enjoyment and appreciation of the work
- Notes and descriptions enabling parents and carers to explain show/ exhibition
- Dedicated programme
- Regular schedule
- Interactive activity
- Highlight 'known factors' to lower sense of risk

2. Physical Provision

- Appropriate ambience
- Comfortable temperature
- Clean toilets
- Clearly signposted baby changing facilities in male and female toilets
- Tannoy in baby changing facilities
- Steps for young children to reach toilet/hand basin
- Hand drying facilities
- Low level washbasins
- Children's menus in cafe
- High chairs in cafe
- Children's Cutlery and crockery
- Clearly designated no smoking signs
- Appropriate and affordable children's menu pricing
- Affordable merchandise available
- External/internal signage designed to help visitors with children
- Provision of lifts/ramps for people with pushchairs/wheelchairs
- Storage facilities for wheelchairs and pushchairs
- Storage facilities for pushchairs and other family belongings
- Automatic doors wide enough for wheelchairs and pushchairs

- Parking provision for visitors with children close to main entrance
- Child supervision facilities
- Theatre booster seats
- Comfortable cushions/bean bags for foyer/gallery events
- Private breastfeeding facilities
- Health and safety considerations specific to young people
- Quiet space/running around space
- Appropriate height of artwork/plinths/labelling for children

3. Customer Care

- Positive staff attitude to families and children
- Positive and proactive
- Interaction between FOH staff and family visitors
- Meeting point for lost children
- Children/baby specific first aid training
- Family customer care training
- Merchandise memorable, affordable, appropriate
- Refreshments

4. Marketing and Communication

- Identifying the family as a target market in strategic objectives and marketing activity
- Setting target figures and financial objectives for family visits and tracking attendances
- Communication objectives to include promotion of the fun/educational aspects of the
- Venue and its programme to families
- Specific family press lists to facilitate communications objectives
- Dedicated family print
- Branding of family friendliness
- Family distribution lists
- Pricing strategies aimed at families
- Research activity around family visits and their experience
- Regular dialogue between venue and family audience
- Regular dialogue with other venues to keep abreast of family friendly initiatives
- Attempt to create/attain a recognised standard for Family Friendliness
- Proactive targeting
- Dedicated print/ mailing list
- Promote facilities
- Honesty' and managing expectations
- Relationship building

5. Evaluation

- Audience research to monitor family attendances
- Consultation and feedback
- How does this affect planning



Alternative formats of Research into the Actual and Perceived Barriers to Publicly Funded Arts in Northern Ireland may be available on request.

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