

## Evaluation of the Momentum programme – Phase 2: Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Momentum programme aims to engage marginalised young people in inspiring and creative activity, aiming to provide the young people with hard outcomes, increase their skills and confidence, improve their emotional wellbeing and develop their employability. The first phase of the programme in 2014 was a pilot phase to allow the Arts Council to test the effectiveness of its approach to identification, tracking, progression and outcomes for the young people involved. Phase 2 (January-September 2015) funded 11 projects to deliver arts interventions to around 314 young people, extending the age range to include those in the 19-24 age group.

Arad Research was commissioned by Arts Council of Wales to undertake an evaluation of Phase 2 of the Momentum programme. The aims of the evaluation were to collate evidence of hard and soft outcomes, assess the effectiveness of the partnerships involved and make recommendations for changes to the programme where it might lead to more successful outcomes.

### Key findings

- The 11 Momentum projects have successfully delivered a range of hard and soft outcomes, and illustrated the role the arts can play in providing effective engagement and progression opportunities for vulnerable young people.
- The Momentum projects have exceeded their overall target for the number of young people to be engaged. A total of 314 participants were engaged compared to a target of 234.<sup>1</sup>
- All Momentum projects have delivered at least two hard outcomes (and usually more) for participants. A total of 57 per cent of all participants (aged 11-24) gained a qualification, while 60 per cent of participants aged 11-16 improved their school attendance levels. A total of 36 per cent of participants aged 16-24 moved from being NEET (not in employment, education or training) to being in employment or education and 34 per cent are engaged in volunteering.
- Soft outcomes have been delivered in every Momentum project including a range of personal outcomes as well as project-specific and employability skills. Personal outcomes have included confidence and self-esteem, improved physical and mental health, and improved literacy skills. Project-specific and employability skills have provided some participants with a foundation for employment, self-employment and volunteering as well as offering opportunities to work in professional environments.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that initial targets were formulated by projects at a very early stage and do not necessarily reflect later project delivery e.g. projects may have decided it was more effective to work with a different age group.

- Recruitment of participants has worked particularly well where committed partnerships between a range of organisations are in place. Successful recruitment is often attributed to the flexible approach of partners and the attractiveness of the arts as an engagement tool. Most projects matched the art form to the participants' interests and abilities which had a further positive impact on recruitment and retention.
- Difficulties with recruitment have been attributed to issues such as a lack of initial, active engagement from partners; communication and behaviour issues; and the transient nature of the target groups.
- Projects used a range of approaches to assessing their own impact and effectiveness in order to reflect the diversity of soft and hard outcomes they were delivering. Many projects undertook both a baseline and final assessment, to best illustrate the progress of participants.
- Momentum projects have developed a wide range of effective partnerships. Through developing a common understanding of participant needs and aspirations project partners were able to develop tailor-made activities and ensure appropriate support for participants.
- Partnership challenges included difficulties in initiating partnerships, communication issues and a lack of buy-in from some partners during the project's duration, and timing issues when working with schools.
- Most of the projects funded through the second phase of Momentum participated in the pilot phase. This continuity has enabled projects to develop trust and build on previous good practice and lessons in recruitment, management and delivery while developing more sustained outcomes for some participants.
- Ensuring an effective exit strategy and suitable progression routes for participants has been key for sustaining impact. Participants have progressed into a wide range of opportunities in employment, education and volunteering. A particularly effective element of some projects has been to integrate participants into the project partners' wider work and links with local communities.
- Some projects have continued partnerships in order to respond to other opportunities. This contributes to the sustainability of outcomes and opportunities to further develop arts engagement activities. These activities can link to action plans such as Creative Learning Through the Arts and wider Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government engagement strategies.

## Recommendations

1. Projects should continue to work on developing the employability and entrepreneurship of participants, including through the development of business and self-employment skills.
2. All projects should give particular consideration to developing exit strategies for participants, to ensure any positive impact is maintained and a suitable progression route is available.

3. Projects should be flexible in considering which qualifications are most suitable for each project element and aim to match them with individual participants' needs and aspirations.
4. Roles and responsibilities should be formalised for wholly new partnerships before the start of project delivery. This will help to ensure commitment from partners unfamiliar with the requirements of Momentum projects.
5. Projects should consider how partnerships developed during project delivery can be maintained and can best support the delivery organisations' wider work with young people NEET and in the community.
6. The Momentum programme should continue to support participants aged 18-24, having demonstrated successful outcomes for this age group during this second phase.
7. Future iterations of Momentum should link closely to the wider goals of Arts Council of Wales relating to engagement with the arts and creative learning.