

Members' Room



Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure
Room 344, Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

31st March 2013

Dear Michelle,

Committee Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to your committee inquiry.

I am writing in my individual capacity as an elected member of the City of London Corporation, where I currently chair the board of the Barbican arts centre.

The City of London Corporation is a major supporter of the arts and culture in London and beyond, particularly through the Barbican Centre, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Museum of London, our library service and the London Metropolitan Archives. It is a focus of each of these institutions to work with our neighbouring communities, including more disadvantaged or deprived groups

You will have received separate submissions from the Museum of London and from the Barbican/Guildhall School Creative Learning department.

In terms of libraries and archives, the City owns and manages three lending libraries, a business library, a reference library specialising in the history of London, and the London Metropolitan Archives. Further details of each can be found on our website, www.cityoflondon.gov.uk.

Among the services which our libraries provide, the following may be of interest to your inquiry:

- Monthly art exhibitions (free to view) from individual artists and groups at Barbican Library. Priority given to 1. City residents and 2. to other London residents to exhibit.

- Free use of digital pianos at Barbican Library. Annual “People’s Pianos” programme matching residents aged 60+ with 1 2 1 tuition by a student from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama using the same pianos.
- Children’s Library activities programme includes arts events e.g. Spanish language and Flamenco and a workshop given by Axel Scheffler (illustrator of The Gruffalo)
- Pete Frame’s “Rock Family Trees” exhibition in the Barbican Music Library attracted rock-lovers from across the UK and last year’s Bang, Bang, Bangladesh exhibition (a celebration of paintings, music, storytelling and poetry from Bangladesh) and complementary events in both Barbican and Artizan Street Libraries attracted large numbers of adults and children and had massive social media interest.
- “Unsigned London”, music by unsigned artists based in London is stocked and loaned free of charge from Barbican Library
- a range of classes and groups held at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre, which serves the more disadvantaged residential area of the City. These include for example life drawing in partnership with a small provider which also delivers classes at St Martins and the Tate Modern.

London Metropolitan Archives has been involved with many projects which cover the kind of areas the Inquiry will investigate although only one (the partnership with Eastside) has explicitly used the specific concept and phrase ‘working class’. The examples given below provide some indication of the kind of projects archive services can become successfully engaged in:

- **Schools programme generally:** this is often the LMA’s first point of contact with children and older students from all kinds of background, including what can be described as working class. The heart of the programme is giving these young people the opportunity to experience arts venues outside the classroom and engaging them creatively with, in our case, the history of London and the people who have lived and worked here.
- **Groundworks:** LMA has worked on two projects with this environmental charity which aims to engage young people, often from deprived backgrounds, with their local area through such entry points as ecology and local history.
- **Eastside Community Heritage:** LMA has supported Eastside, a community led organisation, in a number of projects which have engaged with working

class communities, including 'Working Lives of the Thames Gateway' which included oral history and a major exhibition at the City's Guildhall Art Gallery.

- **Remembering London Lives:** an occasional series of film and photograph reminiscence sessions at LMA for people who live locally.
- **Black Experience Archive Trust (BEAT) workshop programme run by Migrant Media 2009 – 2012:** Migrant Media created the Black Experience Archive Trust programme and identified 'at risk' students from Park View Academy to engage them with heritage. The projects introduced archives and heritage to the students and the many links to their own lives. It taught media and film skills and oral history collection.
- **Irish Voices 2013** Irish Voices (based on a recently successful community led Heritage Lottery Fund bid) aims to work with a secondary school in London to translate an archive of oral histories about the St. Patrick's day parade into a learning resource, which can inform the teaching of multi-cultural and citizenship studies with young people. The story of the Irish in London provides a unique understanding around issues of integration and the aim is to promote young people's understanding around the changing nature of identity within a multi-cultural city. The project will draw out parallels between the Irish story and the young people's own heritage.

Together with the submissions which you will have received from the Museum and the Barbican/Guildhall, I hope this gives your committee a flavour of our work in this area.

If there is anything you would like to discuss in more detail, or anything I can follow up for you, please let me know.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C McGuinness', with a large circular flourish at the start.

Catherine McGuinness
Deputy
Castle Baynard Ward
City of London Corporation