

# Executive Summary

## The Commission

In early 2009 Arts Inform was commissioned by The National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills and Arts Council England, East to carry out a piece of work looking into how the performing arts and schools sectors could best provide support in the Arts Council England, East Region for the Creative and Media Diploma (CMD). The Diploma is based on a new approach to pedagogy: work-related learning, characterised by working partnerships between schools and creative and cultural organisations to support curriculum delivery. Each of the three levels can be offered either pre-16 (age 14-16) or post-16 (age 16–19). This is a summary of phase one of research.

## Focus

For the purposes of this study we concentrated on the Creative & Cultural Skills Performance Arts footprint: opera, dance, theatre, circus, carnival, street arts, and puppetry.

We looked at two consortia: Cambridge Area Partnership and Norwich City Consortium (Open Opportunity).

## Method

The main approach of phase one was to look at the two areas: comparing the organisational and financial structures of the consortia, assessing the experience of the creative and cultural organisations and investigating possible progression routes for the diploma learners in both areas.

Information was gathered through a combination of face-to-face interviews and questionnaires with both structured and open questions.

Phase one took place between February and July 2009.

## Creative and Cultural Organisations' Views

Creative and cultural organisations felt enthusiastic about the introduction of the CMD, even in cases where involvement had been at a cost to their organisations. They:

- felt supporting CMD fitted in with their aims and objectives and
- were willing in both areas to engage with the consortia.

However, respondents (both engaging and not engaging) identified a number of obstacles to involvement. They:

- lacked the time, capacity and/or resources to participate
- felt that the education sector did not fully understand the Creative and Cultural sector, and experienced difficulties with communication and planning of activity.
- found, funding arrangements unclear and unsustainable in many cases
- did not feel they fully understood the CMD and its relationship with other new initiatives (such as Arts Awards, National Skills Academy, Apprenticeships).

Creative and cultural organisations felt overwhelmingly that much change was needed if the industry is to support the Diploma in the future, including:

- Earlier involvement with 'budget setters rather than budget spenders'
- Better guidance for creative and cultural organisations
- Clearer structuring of partnerships and projects
- Guidance on child protection issues
- A structured approach to funding
- Contextual information from the schools
- Better briefing on the calibre of students and their knowledge of the world of work

## **Structures**

In both Norwich and Cambridge the consortia had clear structures. However the mechanisms for communicating with creative organisations were less explicit in Cambridge than in Norwich. In Cambridge personal contact between key players seemed to play a crucial part, in Norwich an intermediary structure meant the process was less personal.

Satisfaction with the Cambridge approach seemed very high, but as there have been key personnel changes, there is no structural guarantee that this level of satisfaction will be sustained. The process adopted in Norwich had a more robust and sustainable structure, but very mixed levels of satisfaction suggested there were some issues in the way the structure had been applied.

Cambridge concentrated on a smaller number of creative and cultural employers; Norwich began with a larger group.

The creative and cultural organisations themselves did not appear to have created their own structure for exchanging ideas and techniques in either Cambridge or Norwich (despite an attempt in Norwich) and there is evidence that they would have found it helpful

## **Funding**

Both Norwich and Cambridge chose to use funds for employer engagement, in line with the core ideas of the Diploma. Of the two areas researched, Norwich had developed a very coherent way of allocating funding for employer engagement. Cambridge on the other hand had responded to circumstances as necessary. Despite this, levels of satisfaction with funding arrangements in Cambridge were rather higher than in Norwich.

Where we were able to obtain details (in Norwich) there seemed to be no relationship between what was done and what was charged.

- The charge per hour of preparation and contact varied from 92p to £57
- The charge per student contact hour varied from 2.6p to £8.89.

We have not been able to identify any charging guidance issued by either of the consortia.

## **Progression Routes**

Traditional routes into FE and HE are expected at this stage. Higher Education Institutes welcomed the Diploma but will still wait to assess each student on individual merit for September 2010. It currently appears there will be few opportunities for progression into apprenticeship or paid or unpaid work in the creative and cultural organisations. Apprenticeships began at the same time as the diploma so opportunities could well increase over time.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that Arts Council England, East and the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills work with creative and cultural organisations who wish to participate in the Creative and Media Diploma to increase their knowledge and capacity in:

- Employer Engagement project design and structure
- Charging frameworks
- Child protection issues
- Creative Apprenticeships and other structured employment
- Other relevant technical issues.

This could be achieved through:

- networking and the development of consortia-wide advisory groups made up of creative and cultural organisations across all disciplines
- developing and disseminating models of good practice
- initiating and encouraging debate
- developing resource materials
- identifying systems for sharing relevant information

We would expect to address many of the above recommendations in phase two of this research.