

Facts and figures about the affordable studios sector

THE VALUE OF THE AFFORDABLE STUDIOS SECTOR is being increasingly recognised by local and national government, regeneration agencies, property developers and housing associations. A register of artists' studio groups and organisations in the UK captures vital information on studio providers across the UK, which the Federation uses in advocating for and promoting the studios sector with all these agencies.

The latest Register records the basic details of 147 groups and organisations managing affordable workspace in 270 buildings across the UK, supporting around 6,000 artists. Although of widely differing scales, structures and ways of working, together these groups make a vital contribution to the development and success of the visual arts in the UK through their fundamental support for artists and art.

Published by NFASP for the first time in 2008, the scope of information gathering extended to include groups in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. As a result the Register provides an invaluable source of information about studio groups and their needs and activities. This contributes to two main areas of the Federation's work, advocacy for the studios sector, and advice and support to the studios sector. Some examples follow:

Advocacy for the studios sector

Arts Council England's consultation on self assessment and peer review: NFASP ensured that the nature of the studios sector would be reflected in the considerations of benchmarking data. Not all studio organisations deliver the same range of activities and, therefore, cannot be measured in the same way. For example, not all are involved with presenting artistic practice to audiences.

NFASP also noted that a requirement for studio providers to undertake self assessment could over-burden organisations where they have limited capacity and few or no staff, and care would need to be taken in applying this.

Temporary workspace: there has been considerable media and Government interest recently in the potential for using empty shops as galleries and studios and for other arts purposes in order to revitalise our high streets and communities. Arts Council England too, is interested in temporary space as a solution to providing more creative workspace – one of their priorities. In discussions with Arts Council England's National Office, NFASP highlighted the need for temporary workspace to be used as a way of securing more permanent facilities for artists as the sector had, for too long, relied on temporary and short-term leases.

Cultural Metropolis - The London Mayor's priorities for culture 2009-2012: NFASP responded to this consultation document and raised a number of issues, many of which drew on register statistics, including:

- Many studios are registered charities and provide studios for artistic practice at, on average, a third of the cost of commercial workspace
- Affordable studios are essential in supporting the research and risk-taking that lead to high quality cultural activities that also feed into education, community engagement and academic outcomes
- Artists' networks referred to in cultural priorities are often formed and found in studio buildings which, in turn, give rise to cultural quarters which are to be supported more in the future by the Greater London Authority

London 2012 Olympics: NFASP commissioned research into the impact of the Olympics on artists' studios in the five London Olympic host boroughs. NFASP provided statistics and information from the register about all known groups in the affected area, which informed the research. Since the report was published, NFASP has been

pursuing advocacy meetings with a range of agencies using the information in presentations and discussions about future studio provision.

Advice and support to the studios sector

The statistics from the June 2008 register indicate that security of tenure continues to be a significant problem, with 79% of building space rented. Information supplied in the register updates also indicates that a minimum of 21 groups in England faced a threat from rent reviews and increases, redevelopment of their buildings and expiring leases. The more we know about issues to do with tenure, the more we are able to highlight the issue and lobby for more permanent studio provision.

Other issues that studio groups have raised through our two conferences, meetings and through enquiries to the Federation over the last eighteen months include:

- leases, rent reviews and lease renewals and how to negotiate with landlords
- advice on dealing with developers and planners and requests for letters of support
- a benchmark of affordability for studio rents
- starting up studios, finding space, getting the appropriate constitutional structure and securing capital finance
- studio occupancy procedures
- information about local authority policies which include creative workspace
- queries to do with business rates and VAT

The NFASP advice service successfully responded to over 70 detailed enquiries in the last year and continues to offer advice to members on a range of topics such as those above. Principally for members, but also for those with an interest in developing studios, the NFASP advice service is proving to be one of our most popular and highly regarded services.

Facts and figures from the Register about affordable studios

- 147 groups managing 271 buildings providing studios for artists
- Groups throughout the UK of widely differing scales, structures and ways of working
- Nearly 6,000 artists working in 4,800 studio units
- 61 buildings are freehold and 210 leasehold
- 133 groups provide activities that directly benefit the public, including:
 - 116 groups having open studios
 - 103 groups holding exhibitions
 - 87 groups providing community/educational workshops
 - 77 groups having public talks
 - 74 running events
- The number of groups and organisations providing affordable space for artists has increased between 2004 and 2008 in all regions except the West Midlands (information drawn from a comparison with the first national survey of studio groups and organisations undertaken by Acme Studios in 2004 – England only).

To receive this document or information in another format, contact us on:

Tel: 020 7426 0067 Email: ask@nfasp.org.uk www.nfasp.org.uk

NFASP, Unit 5, Toynbee Studios, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6AB