

What is the Arts Council review about?

This report looks at **Arts Council England**, the organisation that helps decide how public money is given to arts and culture (like theatres, music, museums, dance and artists) across England.

Baroness Margaret Hodge was asked by the government to check:

- Is the Arts Council still doing a good job?
- Is the system fair?
- Is arts funding working properly?
- What needs to change for the future?

She and her team talked to hundreds of artists and organisations all over the country before writing this report.

Why does arts and culture matter?

The report says **arts and culture really matter** because:

- They help people understand the world and each other
- They bring communities together
- They help the economy (jobs, tourism, town centres)
- They help people feel proud of where they live

But the report also says that the UK spends much less public money on culture than many other countries, and funding has been cut a lot over the last 10–15 years.

What is the Arts Council supposed to do?

Arts Council England:

- Gives out public money to arts organisations and artists
- Is meant to be **independent from politicians**
- Is supposed to support **great art** and make sure **everyone can access it**, not just people in big cities or with money

The report says it is really important that politicians do not decide which artists get funded. This is called the “arm’s length principle” — it protects freedom of art and ideas.

What problems did people raise?

Lots of people said similar things:

1. There isn't enough money

- Arts funding has fallen while costs (like energy, wages, travel) have gone up
- Some theatres, venues and artists are close to shutting down
- Buildings are old and breaking, with no money to fix them

2. The system is too complicated

- Applying for Arts Council funding takes a *huge* amount of paperwork
- Small organisations and artists spend more time filling in forms than making art
- Reporting back after getting money is also very time-consuming
- People don't always understand why funding decisions are made

3. The rules can feel restrictive

- The current Arts Council strategy ("Let's Create") was meant to help inclusion
- But many people felt it became a **tick-box exercise**
- Artists felt they had to fit Arts Council rules, instead of explaining their own ideas
- Some felt **artistic quality and excellence** had been pushed into the background

4. Trust has been damaged

- Some organisations lost funding suddenly, with little explanation
- Some felt the Arts Council didn't stand up strongly enough to political pressure
- This has made people feel anxious and less confident in the system

What does the review say should happen next?

The review makes lots of recommendations, but the big ideas are:

1. Keep the Arts Council — but fix it

- The government **must keep Arts Council England**
- It must stay independent from politicians
- Trust needs to be rebuilt with artists and organisations

2. Make funding simpler and fairer

- Fewer forms
- Less pointless data
- Different rules for big organisations and small ones
- Longer funding periods, so organisations can plan properly

3. Focus on great art *and* access

- Support excellent art
- Make sure people across the country can see and take part in it
- Support touring, so shows don't just stay in London

4. Support artists properly

- Create a new programme giving individual artists enough money to live on for a year (around £30,000)
- Especially support people from low-income backgrounds or under-represented groups

5. Find new ways to fund the arts

- Improve tax reliefs so touring costs are covered
- Encourage donations outside London
- Let the Arts Council recycle money from successful shows
- Look at ideas like tourism levies or charging overseas visitors at big museums

In one sentence

The report says the arts are hugely important, badly under-funded, and over-burdened by rules — and that the Arts Council needs more trust, more freedom, simpler systems, and better support for artists and communities across the whole country.