



May 2022

PRESS RELEASE: IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Newham's Rosetta Arts CEO gives evidence to Parliamentary Select Committee on Levelling Up in Culture

Sanaz Amidi, CEO of Newham's Rosetta Arts, was invited by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to present at Parliament's Select Committee investigation: "Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda" to talk about her experiences as the CEO of a hyper-local arts charity.

As one of three witnesses to present for the second hearing of this enquiry, Sanaz discussed the current challenges a grass-roots organisation like Rosetta Arts faces post-Covid and situated in the UK's capital. Sanaz emphasised the value of arts organisations like Rosetta beyond their monetary return and stressed that this often stems from our misunderstanding of arts impact within society:

"Our role is about reflecting the ever-changing and expanding lives that people live in our programming... in the traditional art sense, we have not been necessarily good at recognising the spectrum of arts and culture that is coming from the community... We have to look horizontally across the contribution it [arts and culture] makes in all the different sectors"

Also, as part of the [Contemporary Visual Arts Network](#) (CVAN) London Steering Committee, Sanaz emphasised the importance of arts education and highlights that whilst this is acknowledged in the government's levelling up agenda, it continues to be brushed aside:

"There is definitely one area that has suffered and that's [arts] education. The Levelling Up agenda talks about the creative and cultural sector being a leading driver for growth and yet at the same time, creative arts education is being devalued. For the last ten years, it's become harder and harder to do... And, for us, that's been a very important way of giving people the experiences and skills that they need in order to be an active player in the sector."

Sanaz also discussed the importance of resourcing local authorities in order to empower community arts organisations. She notes that institutions like Rosetta make an invaluable impact in the social sector and help local authorities realise their goals.

Note to the editor: Having grown and developed over 25 years, Rosetta Arts responds to the needs and desires expressed by local communities. We are proud to be a dynamic and diverse organisation, delivering rigorous and innovative courses, creative workshops and participatory art experiences for people in East London.



“At Rosetta Arts we work and have been working across six or seven different departments in the local authorities, everything from adult social care, community neighbourhoods, regeneration, children and young people services and others. Newham have published the “Towards a Better Newham” strategy, which is a post-Covid strategy in the development of the borough because of the effects of pandemic. We have responded to that strategy and pledged ourselves against three out of the eight pillars in the recovery of the borough. When local authorities work well and are well resourced, they are able to contribute effectively to creative and cultural organisations... Also, the relationship has to be two ways. We think about what problems can we solve, what things can we do to help the local authority in what it is trying to do and try to speak in that language.”

The discussion provided a frank and thorough account of the arts and culture landscape as it exists across the UK right now, the post-Covid challenges and the way visual arts institutions have had to adapt. Presenting alongside Sanaz on Thursday 21 April were: Keith Merrin, Director at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums and Clare Reddington, Chief Executive at Watershed.

You can watch the oral evidence session in full [here](#). Or read the oral evidence session transcript [here](#).

Images available upon request.

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