

Valuing Voluntary Arts

SECTION C

CHAPTER FIVE

Sources of Support

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A. Membership of Umbrella Bodies and Support Agencies

A.1. Levels of Membership

Just over half of groups in both counties stated that they belong to an umbrella body, network or support agency with a slightly greater percentage in Somerset (57% in Somerset and 51% in Dorset). In Somerset the only art forms with more than half of their groups belonging to National Umbrella Bodies (NUBs) were the performing arts (64%) and literature (63%). Groups involved in the visual arts were least likely to belong in both counties (47%, Somerset, 42% Dorset). Craft and cross-form were divided equally. Craft was in a similar position in Dorset, yet in contrast to Somerset, three-quarters of cross-form groups stated membership of a body.

Of those belonging to a body, 38% (Somerset) and 40% (Dorset) belonged to more than one, 13% and 14% three or more, 5 % and 9% upwards of four. No respondents in Dorset belonged to five or more, compared to 5% in Somerset.

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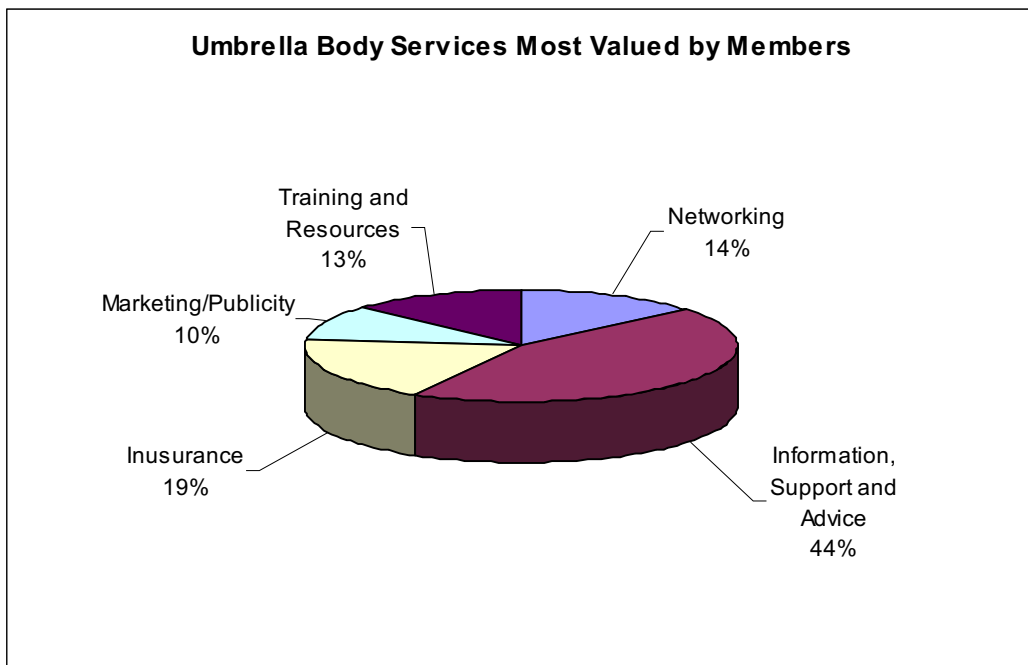
A.2. Most Common Bodies

14% of Dorset's respondents to this question stated that they were a member of Dorset Arts Promoters Forum (DAPF). This was the most common body reported by the groups, and accounted for 7% of the total respondent base. The next most common was Making Music with 12% of these respondents stating membership (accounting for 6% of total respondent base).

In Somerset, the greatest number (30%) belonged to Somerset Fellowship of Drama (accounting for 15% of Somerset's total respondent base). 20% were members of National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) (10% of the total respondent base) and 10% of Making Music.

A.3. The Most Valued Umbrella Body Services

The provision of information, support and advice was the most valued service by 44% of respondents belonging to umbrella bodies. Almost twenty percent of those belonging to umbrella bodies stated that they used them in connection with their insurance. Other services deemed to be of most significance to groups were networking, training and resources and marketing/publicity.



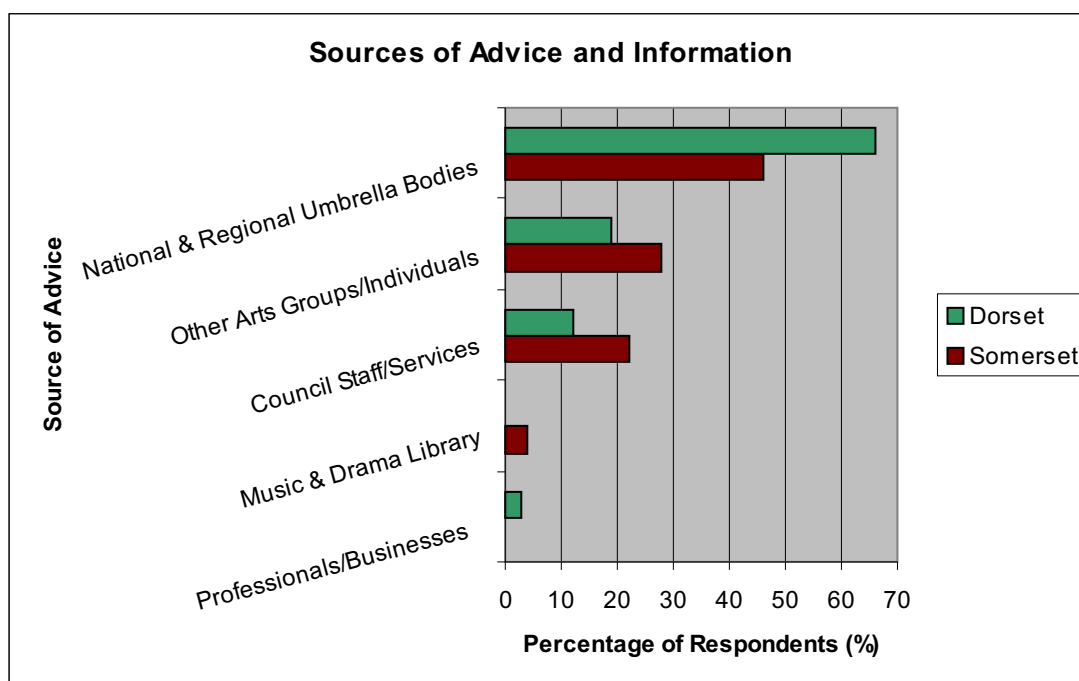
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A.4. Reasons for not Belonging

50% of the groups in Somerset that do not belong to a body, state that this is because they do not see the umbrella, support or network bodies to be of any use to them. This was the feeling of 66% of the equivalent respondents in Dorset. This amounts to around 26% of Somerset's and 32% of Dorset's total questionnaire respondent base. Similar levels (45% in both counties) reported that they were unaware of any bodies. 29% in Somerset and 7% in Dorset felt that they would not be able to afford subscription fees whether or not they were aware of bodies relevant to their group.

B. Sources of Advice and Support

Of those stating their first choice to turn for advice over half (53%) of Somerset's respondents to this question chose a National or Regional Umbrella Body, compared to an even greater proportion in Dorset (68%). The next most common place to turn was to 'others in the business' (23%, Somerset; 19% Dorset). This includes other groups, individuals involved in the arts, and tutors or arts professionals. 19% in Somerset and 11% in Dorset chose council services and staff as their first choice for advice. Within this the areas of learning and leisure, arts, tourist information, social services and disability consultancy were included. 4% in Somerset noted the Music and Drama Library as their first choice. 3% in Dorset stated that they would turn to professionals such as accountants.



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The increasing significance of networking between groups and individuals in the voluntary arts is clear from these findings and the comments of groups. Some groups showed great enthusiasm for the development and maintenance of a database of amateur and professional artists, musicians, groups, tutors, conductors and speakers available in the South West.

This clearly shows the importance of National Umbrella Bodies and other support bodies as well as the significance of networking. Arts groups and artists are significant sources of information and advice.

Out of the places to turn for advice, whether first, second or third choice, National or Regional Umbrella Bodies held the greatest proportion with 46% of choices in Somerset and nearly a third in Dorset (66%). Over a quarter of choices were designated to 'others in the business' in Somerset and 19% in Dorset. Council staff and services made up 22% of the choice in Somerset, but only 12% overall in Dorset.

Some respondents commented that would appreciate increased support from the public sector. Generally groups were appreciative of the support given by existing arts officers but felt that in order to provide the sector with the support it needs, more staff were needed. In relation to this, some groups felt their lack of funding prevented them from gaining access to support and training elsewhere.

Around 5% of groups in Somerset recognised the importance of the Somerset Performing Arts Library (or as the respondents called it, 'the Music and Drama Library'). Although not noted in this section by respondents in Dorset, a number of respondents (and groups on the database) in the county were on the library's membership list. This suggests that although these members did not automatically see it as a place for 'advice and information', it is an important source of material for their artwork.

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CHAPTER SUMMARY 5: Sources of Support

- Over half (57%, Somerset; 51%, Dorset) of all respondents stated that they are a member of an umbrella body, network or support agency.

- Overall groups involved in Visual Arts were the least likely to belong to an umbrella body.

- The provision of support, information and advice were deemed to be the most valued umbrella body services. This was recorded by 44% of those with a membership.

- 32% of Dorset's and 26% of Somerset's total respondent base stated that they do not see umbrella bodies as being any use to them.

- 68% of respondents in Dorset, and 53% in Somerset, stated an umbrella body or support agency as their first choice to turn to for advice. The next most common place to turn was to 'others in the business'.

- Libraries, on the whole, are not recognised as a source of advice and information for the sector. However, the Somerset Performing Arts Library was an exception as it was noted by a number of groups. In addition, a number of respondents to the questionnaire were sourced from the library's membership list.

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"... our main focus is producing plays in and around Taunton. All members are volunteers.

..we tend to feel undervalued by the public sector and see little or no support.."

"..we are a small village group, well supported by the local community..

..however, we have problems attracting new members, particularly men and young people as performers and backstage..

..we would welcome advice on this..."