

I want to make a provocation about entitlement, and particularly about joining the dots.

This is an extraordinary moment for children and young people's cultural education. We have curriculum reform, the new National Centre for Arts Education, the Enrichment Framework, changes in PE and school sport, and the National Youth Strategy.

There's huge opportunity here, but the existence of all these initiatives isn't, in itself, joined-up policy. They are separate agendas, often sitting across different parts of government, while the young people they're designed to serve are the same.

Their lives aren't divided into education, culture, sport and wellbeing. Our approach to them shouldn't be either.

For me, the test is entitlement. Every child should have access to a rich creative life, regardless of where they live, their family's income, their gender or which school they attend.

Creativity brings joy, connection, confidence and wellbeing. And for some, it opens a pathway into our cultural sector.

But we know that talent is everywhere. Opportunity isn't. That inequality shapes who develops their talent, who sees this sector as somewhere they belong, and ultimately who gets to work in it.

Dance illustrates this perfectly. It sits at the intersection of art, creativity and physical activity. That should be its superpower. Too often, it means it falls between the gaps.

So my provocation is: how can DCMS and DfE work across government, and meaningfully with the cultural sector, to turn this collection of opportunities into one genuinely joined-up ambition for young people?

Because success isn't simply having all these initiatives. It's whether, together, they actually change who gets access, who gets opportunity, and ultimately who gets to belong.