

Statement on Comedy

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland acknowledges the quality, diversity and innovation evident within the comedy sector in Northern Ireland, as well as the vision, energy and commitment of individual artists.

The comedy arts sector is an important part of our cultural experience and a major creative and economic driver with tourism, health, good relations, and other benefits for the community. Comedy is also an important gateway to the arts in general as well as a popular arts form in its own right with a wide appeal to non-traditional arts audiences.

Comedy receives Arts Council support through a broad range of venues and festivals for example the Black Box, the MAC and The Playhouse as well as the Belfast International Comedy Festival. Many acts within the comedy industry cut their teeth through these venues which are both publically and privately financed.

In addition we fund comedians who work in theatre, and actors and companies whose work contains elements of stand-up or sketch comedy.

The Arts Council also funds a raft of community projects which give people the training to perform and it is from that background that many comedy acts have been nurtured.

The Arts Council is concerned with work of predominately artistic intention, and while each application will be assessed on its merit we recognize that much comedy is commercially viable and self-sustaining. This is to be welcomed. There are obvious benefits of relatively low touring costs, modest technical requirements, and the portability of the genre for building audience appetite for quality comedy.

The Arts Council welcomes the recognition of comedians by Equity in 2015 and the establishment of the Equity Comedians' Network to lobby for better conditions in the sector.