

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Putting arts at centre of education ‘could achieve Curriculum for Excellence goals’**

Embedding the use of arts and culture in formal education provision could deliver many of the aspirations outlined in the new Curriculum for Excellence, according to the latest issue of Children in Europe magazine.

The Curriculum for Excellence, which is currently being developed by the Scottish Government, states that the purpose of education is “to enable all young people to become successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals”.

But children need the necessary experiences at an early age if they are to succeed in this aspiration. Many of these can come through the provision of creative activities and the nurturing of ‘artistic’ characteristics that occur naturally in all children.

One contributor to the magazine, Colwyn Trevarthen, professor (Emeritus) of child psychology and psychobiology, University of Edinburgh, believes that “Children are born to be creative artists”. But for many children these creative and artistic abilities seem to dissipate as they progress through a school system dominated by examinations and league tables.

Ironically, major employers now encourage ‘creative corporate training’ using art, music, drama and expressive writing to unlock creativity in employees who spent their educational years trying to pass exams to a set formula, with little room for any creative expression.

Joan Parr, guest editor of the magazine and head of education at the Scottish Arts Council, said: “In Scotland we are currently exploring ways of translating the aspiration to fulfill the potential of every young person into a reality. Learning in and through the arts is central to this ambition.

*Picture This* illustrates some of the international, wide ranging debate and practice that is contributing to this process. Reading through the contributions has reinforced my belief that we have much to learn from young people themselves.”

Bernard McLeary, Chief Executive of Learning and Teaching Scotland, a partner in Children in Scotland’s ‘Picture This’ conference taking place this December, said: “Active learning is key to engaging children and young people in their education. Curriculum for Excellence offers education professionals the freedom and flexibility to use new and innovative ways to teach and the arts can play a big part in helping develop successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.”

Children in Europe Issue 14, *Picture this: young children and the arts* goes on to examine the exceptional ability of the arts to transform and enhance the lives of young children, and contribute to lifelong creativity and wellbeing. Major themes include the centrality of the arts to education and learning, arts as communication or language and the relationship between arts and creativity. Case studies from Norway and Palestine illustrate the link between the arts and local/community identity. In the words of Ramzi Abu Redwan, who runs Al Kamandjat, a non-profit organisation running music schools in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Southern Lebanon,

music “constitutes a way to preserve one’s identity, in a situation of occupation where everything is done to erase it”.

Contributors from elsewhere in Europe explore whether we honour every child’s right to participate freely in cultural life and how well educators, artists and arts organisations are trained to help them exercise this right. *Picture this* is a celebration of the arts’ potential and a reminder that failure to invest could have serious consequences for a country’s long-term success as a creative economy.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, the English language publisher of Children in Europe magazine, said: “This publication demonstrates how the arts can transform and enhance the lives of children. The arts have a major role to play in contributing to lifelong creativity and wellbeing, but need to have a more central role within the educational sphere, from parent and toddler groups to schools. The magazine also explores the need to strengthen understanding of the role of arts within initial and continuing education of the children's sector workforce.”

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*Picture this: young children and the arts* a major international two day conference supported by the Scottish Arts Council and Learning and Teaching Scotland, will take place in Glasgow and other venues throughout Scotland on 4-5 December 2008.

For further information contact Carolyn Roulstone Email: [croulstone@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:croulstone@childreninscotland.org.uk) / tel:0131 222 2449

Notes for editors:

Children in Europe is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0-10 and those interested in children’s issues. It is published simultaneously in 12 languages by a network of national magazines from across Europe. It aims to provide a forum for ideas, practice and information and contribute to the development of policy and practice and European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. *Picture this*, issue 14 of Children in Europe, is published 17th March 2008.

Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisation and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provision are of the best possible quality and able to meet the demands of a diverse society.

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