



**EMBARGOED: 28 February 2007**

## **More artists should have skills to work with children**

A new professional development award for artists working with children and young people has been validated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority – the culmination of a three-year project by Children in Scotland, Youthlink and the Scottish Arts Council.

The qualification coincides with a new Children in Scotland report *Arts for all? Developing cultural entitlements for children in rural Scotland*, which highlights the need for more artists to be equipped with these skills to help deliver new 'cultural entitlements' should the Culture (Scotland) Bill become law.

The draft Culture (Scotland) Bill, published in December last year proposes "cultural entitlements" be defined by local authorities.

This could further increase demand for trained and experienced artists who also have the skills to work with children and young people as local authorities seek to develop partnerships in order to develop cultural entitlements.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said: "Many arts practitioners, by the very nature of their background are highly skilled in the various arts forms that they represent – in visual arts, drama and theatre, dance and music, video and film. However, these highly skilled 'artists' have not necessarily been well equipped through their existing training to engage with and facilitate groups, meet the challenges of working in different contexts, or to programme and develop engaging sessions.

"Equally, if local authorities are to lead on setting cultural entitlements locally, as is proposed in the draft Culture Bill, then staff need education and training to help define entitlements.

"More fundamental changes could be made to the professional training of those working with young children. Arts training should be built into staff initial education and professional development."

It is hoped that increasing support for the involvement of artists in their local communities will reap benefits, particularly in Scotland's rural areas where populations are in decline. Bronwen Cohen, added: "If children's local culture is not projected positively through their learning experiences, it can lead children to place less value on their own experience of rural living. A deficiency of individual and community self-worth can contribute to young people withdrawing from rural communities, when it is positive, confident and skilled young people that these communities need.

"In the short-term, using self-employed artists who benefit from part-time work with schools and other children's services can help diversify and reinvigorate the local economy."

**Case study:** *'An Dealbh Mor'*, an ambitious two-year, bi-lingual visual arts and performance project, which saw pupils work intensively with artists, a choreographer and composer is detailed below. Pictures are available.

## Notes for editors

- **Arts for all: developing cultural entitlements for children in rural Scotland** is published today Tuesday 27 February. For further information visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)
- **Arts Education in Practice – a professional development award**

*Arts Education in Practice* has been developed and accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority to provide training for artists to give them the skills for engagement to work with children and young people.

The award will provide arts practitioners from across all forms with a basic understanding of the planning and teaching process, the organisation of learning scenarios, relevant legislation processes of engagement within different settings with different client groups and of developing sessions and programmes of work that promote an informed level of practice.

The awards aims to:

- create an opportunity where arts practitioners can increase their skills and knowledge in relation to working with children, young people and adults
- fill an identified need and provide professional development tailored to and specifically meeting the needs of arts practitioners across all artforms who wish to engage in education and community based practice
- enhance current arts provision for children, young people and adults across Scotland
- provide professional development opportunities within the arts field
- offer a nationally recognised qualification which is flexible enough to allow practitioners to work in a range of art forms across a wide range of different contexts.

The development of this award has been made possible by the support of the Scottish Arts Council. With its continued support this award will be piloted through 2007/2008. For more information on pilot courses contact Jeannie Cranfield at Children in Scotland on 0131 222 2433.

- **Children in Scotland**

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national children's agency, bringing together voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals to improve the lives of Scotland's children and their families.

- **Case study (pictures available)**

An Dealbh Mor, meaning “the big picture” in Gaelic, was an ambitious two-year, bi-lingual visual arts and performance project, which saw pupils aged 4-12, from Sleat Primary School on Skye work intensively with artists, a choreographer and composer to create not only a large-

scale painting of the island's landscape, but also a performance depicting the evolution of Skye, which used the artwork as its stage.

Julie Brook, a Skye resident and artist, was frustrated by the poor access to the arts experienced by local young people, and set about undertaking a large project that would develop the children's skills across the curriculum. A bus was hired to take the children around the island, drawing the landscape, and from these two months' worth of initial sketches, larger A1 charcoal versions were made, which were then followed by watercolour drawings, again on A1.

The cafeteria in Skye's Sabhal Mor Ostaig College was identified as the best venue, from its balcony the audience could look down as the young people performed on the artwork.

For two months, the children also worked to develop their collaborative performance, which was shown in March 2006. This dramatic final stage of the project was so successful that another exhibition of the work has been organised for this month in Portree with a catalogue being prepared. The event was also filmed, and Brook is keen to take the project on the road, to allow interested groups in other parts of Scotland the chance to see what can be achieved, and hopefully be inspired to create something of their own.

Comments from children:

"We appreciate where we live more."

"It made me feel freer."

"It was like a savings account, all the work that you put in was paid back out to you in reward, and MORE!"

Comments from teachers:

"I've noticed that the normally underachieving pupils seem to be much more confident and vocal."

"When I'm looking, when I'm driving around the countryside, I see things and notice things more— the hills look clearer, I see the colours better."

**For further information, contact Nicola Pay or Sarah Burton at Children in Scotland on 0131 222 2448 / 0131 222411 or email [npay@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:npay@childreninscotland.org.uk) [sburton@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:sburton@childreninscotland.org.uk)**