

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

Media release

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Book festival event is a reminder of children's real life trauma

As research regularly shows that stress, family trauma and the effects of poverty are taking their toll on the mental health and wellbeing of Scotland's young people, an event at this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival, chaired by Bronwen Cohen, Chief Executive of Children in Scotland, will generate a timely discussion about the value of featuring these real-life situations in works of fiction aimed at younger readers.

Children in Scotland has a long-standing commitment to researching and promoting the role of the arts and developing emotional literacy in young people, and the Book Festival event, 'Compelling Novels, Vulnerable Children', taking place on Sunday 23 August 2009, at 6.30pm, will examine whether the experiences of a variety of children at risk, including runaways, orphans and young carers, should be used for entertainment, and to what extent authors treat such subject matter with the sensitivity it merits.

The panel of young people's authors – Anne Fine, Melvin Burgess and debut novelist Rachel Ward, will spark what is set to be a candid debate.

Speaking ahead of the event, Bronwen Cohen said: "The arts in all its forms plays a vital part in the development of creativity, emotional maturity, and wellbeing for young people. Works of fiction, such as those we will be discussing, can offer new perspectives, and allow young readers to deal with difficult situations in their own lives. But, authors must take responsibility, treating the subject matter with sensitivity, not sensationalism."

Notes for Editors –

Children in Scotland is the longstanding national 'umbrella' agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninScotland.org.uk

Children in Scotland, with YouthLink and the Scottish Arts Council, has developed a new professional development award, 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. Delivery of this award was piloted through 2007/08 by Children in Scotland's Arts Officer, Rose Harrison.

The Children in Scotland publication, *Arts for all? Developing cultural entitlements for young children in rural Scotland*, is a clear guide to the cultural entitlements enshrined in the Culture (Scotland), allowing all those involved in delivering arts and culture to children and young people to develop

their skills, and enhance the lives of young people. The publication is available for purchase at £18. Visit www.childreninScotland.org.uk for information.

Issue 14 of *Children in Europe*, 'Picture this... Young children and the arts', examines the exceptional ability of the arts to transform and enhance the lives of young children, and contribute to lifelong creativity and wellbeing. The magazine is available for purchase, priced £8. Visit www.childreninScotland.org.uk for information.

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The Edinburgh International Book Festival runs from 15-31 August. For more information about this year's programme, visit www.edbookfest.co.uk/