



A Cultural Strategy for Scotland –

Draft for Consultation A Vision for Culture in Scotland

September 2018

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do. By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland. We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

One of Children in Scotland's priorities is to champion the participation and inclusion of all children and young people. This is to ensure that their views are listened to and acted on. One of our actions under this priority is to **“support inclusive, participatory communities where children and young people lead”**.¹

As part of our current programme of work we are being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out participative projects across Scotland in collaboration with heritage and youth partners.²

This piece of work aims to help increase children and young people's understanding of culture and heritage and encourage their future engagement in heritage opportunities. Additionally, the project will support staff within heritage settings to develop their skills, allowing them to develop their own participative approaches to meaningfully engage with children and young people in the future. These participative approaches will be influenced by what children have said works for them. As a result, heritage partners will develop sustainable approaches extending beyond the lifetime of this project.

¹ <https://childreninScotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Strategic-Plan-A3.pdf>

² <https://childreninScotland.org.uk/heritage-lottery-fund-project-2018/>

The project is underpinned by our *Principles and Guidelines for the meaningful engagement of children and young people*.³ As part of the project we facilitated a session with heritage professionals on our approach to working in a participative way with children and young people to help shape their future approach.

As a result, we welcome this opportunity to contribute to the discussion around the development of the new Culture Strategy for Scotland. Initial learning from this project will be used to inform our response to this strategy. We don't feel best placed to answer every question, but we hope that our response is comprehensive and touches on the most important themes.

Defining Culture, Creativity & Heritage

We would like to start by saying that we are pleased that the strategy does not seek to provide a definition for 'culture, creativity or heritage'. Core to our Heritage Lottery Funded 'Heritage Hunters' project is that heritage is something that is very individual and personal to the children and young people we are working with:

"Heritage is something from the past that is special to you" Dumfries Project

"To tell people that you can think anything you want about heritage and that it's cool to work with!" Kirkcaldy Project

For example, what represents culture and heritage to one child or young person may be different to another depending on their own interpretation or life experiences.⁴ For example, children may have lived in different places or experienced cultural traditions from other parts of the world.

We are pleased that the strategy recognises that culture and heritage are all-encompassing concepts, constantly evolving in response to the current context.

Empowering through culture

We welcome the ambition which seeks to 'open up and extend culture' allowing for all to be able to access and enjoy culture. We are pleased that the strategy states a commitment to developing approaches that support long-term partnerships with a range of organisations based within Scotland's most deprived areas.

We would draw your attention to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that children have the right to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. As a result, ALL children and

³ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Principles-and-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/what-does-heritage-mean-to-you/>

young people should be able to participate in cultural activities. Although we recognise that a reference to children's rights has been made within the strategy, we think it would be beneficial if children were referenced more explicitly.

Additionally, we welcome the recognition of the ways people can be involved in shaping the cultural life of their communities including participatory models of decision making. However, we would like to see an acknowledgment that children and young people can also play a role in this process.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that children have the right to have a say and be taken seriously in all decisions which affect them.⁵ This is core to our 'Heritage Hunters' project and through this project children have had the opportunity to use their voice to shape the direction of the work at each step of the way. Additionally, they have shared what they have learned and their thoughts with the local community through sharing events, activity days and by contributing to museum exhibitions.

We would also draw your attention to the following resources which provide advice on how professionals carry out their own participative heritage projects involving children and young people: *Engaging Young People in Heritage*⁶ and *How to Involve Young People in Heritage Projects*⁷

Wellbeing

We are pleased that the strategy recognises the importance of culture and heritage in supporting health and wellbeing. For example, the strategy recognises that cultural opportunities allow children and young people to make new social connections, develop creative skills and improve their self-confidence.

A recent Children in Scotland consultation with under 12s, to inform the mental health strategy, showed that children felt that having close personal relationships was very important for promoting their wellbeing.⁸ Within our current heritage project, close relationships have been identified as of key importance for children and young people. This includes within their community where they were able to identify a range of places where they made social connections: community groups, sports centres, schools, libraries and local museums etc.

⁵ <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/full-uncrc>

⁶ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/resources/engaging-young-people-in-heritage/>

⁷ <https://www.hlf.org.uk/how-involve-young-people-heritage-projects>

⁸ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Report_MentalHealth_Consultation_Oct_2016.pdf

We are pleased that this strategy recognises that culture is cross-cutting and should be at the heart of all policy areas including children's rights and health and wellbeing. The recognition that culture, creativity and heritage should be shaped by children and young people is of particular importance and we believe that a commitment to children's rights should be embedded within the strategy document itself.