Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland
Case studies and discussion
Our aim
The Scottish Arts Council champions and sustains the arts for Scotland

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Preface

The happy synergy between culture, creativity, and citizenship, and the role of the school as a creative centre of the community are beginning to be recognised and acted upon in many areas of Scotland. Recent initiatives in Scotland, such as the Cultural Co-ordinators programme and the Scottish Arts Council funded Creative Links project, are clear signs of a renewed interest in the values of arts and culture in education.

This publication springs from one project, the Scotlinks project (described on page 7). Funded by the Scottish Arts Council as a three-year pilot, its original aim was to determine what effect additional arts input would have on the lives and learning of a cluster of schools and its surrounding community. Other examples of good practice are also described along with some challenges for the future.

The Scottish Arts Council is grateful to the Centre for Creative Communities, with whom we have had a long and productive working relationship, for undertaking the writing and preparation of this publication.

We hope it will inspire and inform in equal measure.

Graham Berry
Director
Scottish Arts Council

‘It is through engagement with culture in its widest sense that people are enabled and communities strengthened.’

Donald Dewar, Scotland's First Minister (1999-2000)
Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland

‘Culture and democracy share a dependency on one extraordinary human gift, imagination. Imagination is the key to diversity, to civic compassion and to commonality. It is the faculty by which we stretch ourselves to include others, expand the compass of our interests to discover common ground, and overcome the limits of our parochial selves to become fit subjects to live in a democratic community. It is only a mature democracy that fully appreciates these linkages.’

Benjamin Barber, Whitman Professor of Political Science and Director of the Whitman Center, Rutgers University, USA

Globalisation has opened up unprecedented opportunities for people to learn from each other, and it constitutes an important step for society as a whole.

Globalisation is a phase in the process of modernisation, driven by the advancement in communication, technology and transport, which allows the flow of trade, information and people across national borders. Among the main effects of this process have been the decreased importance of national boundaries and the spread of global mass culture.

The expansion of mass communication and new technology is largely a positive phenomenon which has brought far-away societies and cultures closer together. As technology has shrunk the world it is now possible to inhabit different communities simultaneously. However, since local belonging no longer forms the sole basis of identity and community, this has also created a feeling of cultural rootlessness.

Citizenship bears an essential relationship to culture, since all kinds of societies and forms of civil discourse and practice are ultimately determined by cultural factors.

On an individual level, culture represents a crucial means of self-definition, connecting individuals with values, traditions and continuity with the past. On a broader scale, it expresses the distinctiveness of particular social groups.

However, since culture is inextricably linked to the values, creed and beliefs of diverse social groups, culture is capable of dividing as well as uniting people.

Therefore a key challenge for Scotland today is to create an environment conducive to a peaceful expression of diversity, through emphasising local initiatives that reflect both the distinctiveness and the multiplicity of Scottish heritage.

The ability of the arts and culture to act as a catalyst for social change is documented in Use or Ornament, an influential piece of research by François Matarasso which clearly illustrates how the arts provide a means for people to share their cultures with others, as well as fostering tolerance, inclusion and civic engagement: ‘what matters so much about participation in the arts is not just that it gives people the personal and practical skills to help themselves and become involved in society – though it does

imagination
values
local initiatives
citizenship
community
public space

– but that it opens routes into the wider democratic process and encourages people to want to take part’.

Participation in the arts and cultural activities can foster people’s engagement in the wider civic process and lead to a dynamic advancement in the involvement of the public in social and political life.

Today, promoting creativity and participation in the cultural life of the community helps unlock human potential, promote shared understanding and provide opportunities for people to express their values in a rapidly changing world.

In the fragmented landscape of a global society, arts and culture have a crucial role to play in mediating the tension between the local and the global by reflecting the past and celebrating the future.
Making the Nation was a three-year project led by Glasgow-based TAG Theatre – supported by a Scottish Arts Council National Lottery award – which specifically addressed questions regarding community, identity and democracy through a range of initiatives using drama, theatre, creative activities and cultural exchange. Launched in 1999, Making the Nation comprised a range of projects, participatory initiatives and theatre performances aimed at engaging young people in Scotland with the democratic process.

As one of the elements of Making the Nation, Sense of Community was designed to help young children from 25 Scottish primary schools better understand the political process as well as gain access to the political arena.

The project, which involved role-play and imaginative involvement in issues surrounding government and democracy, used the internet to enable participating children to exchange information and share ideas. A website acted as a forum for discussion and provided activities that encouraged and supported pupils and teachers in using and exploring the world wide web.

Between August and December 1999 over 600 pupils and their teachers from rural and urban communities, diverse socio-economic backgrounds and schools with special educational needs participated in this project.

The initiative was supported by in-school drama sessions, in-service teacher training in drama and IT, as well as resource materials both online and in print.

The project culminated in the Congress of Nations that took place in the Scottish Parliament’s main chamber in Edinburgh in December 1999. There, during three days, children, as ambassadors of imagined communities developed in school, together with teachers and MSPs, debated issues related to the life of young people. The Congress of Nations, which was held in partnership with the Scottish Parliament Education Service, was the first non-parliamentary event to take place within the chamber.

The Sense of Community project provided several benefits for all the parties involved, including young people, teachers and TAG. While pupils gained a greater knowledge of the new Scottish Parliament, a better understanding about other communities, and developed confidence and self-esteem, teachers benefited from developing new approaches to teaching and learning. The success of Sense of Community has enabled TAG to apply for and receive extra funding to carry out a similar project aimed at secondary school pupils.
Case Study 2

Save the Children Scotland
Consulting children and young people on education policy and legislation

Save the Children Scotland has been using the creative arts in a range of pioneering initiatives aimed at broadening children’s participation in citizenship issues.

In October 1999 Save the Children Scotland carried out a consultation exercise to ensure that the views of young people from across Scotland influenced the Scottish Education Bill. The initial consultation process was carried out through focus groups where 80 children and young people were able to feed in their ideas for improvement in education in Scotland. This process culminated in a national event in Edinburgh, involving around 30 young people from across Scotland, aged between six and 16.

The aim of the event was to present children’s and young people’s views on education to the Minister for Education. To help facilitate this process Save the Children Scotland asked the Edinburgh Puppet Company to work with three groups of 10 young people. Three areas of concern were identified from the initial consultation phase: relationships with teachers, making teaching and learning fun, and the school environment. Each group worked with a different arts technique: those on relationships with teachers used drama and created sketches about bullying and guidance staff in schools; the group looking at the school environment created a huge colourful painted mural of the ideal school showing all the services and facilities that it would offer; the group exploring fun ways of learning created a story about a school trip to the rainforest using shadow puppetry. The groups then presented their work to the Minister, education officials, the media, teachers and peers.

The findings demonstrated to Ministers and others that young people have important and useful things to say about their education which could be used in developing local and national policies and practice. Ministers decided to make changes to the Bill and to encourage further consultation with young people at school on an ongoing basis. The Bill was passed in June 2000 and young people’s right to be consulted is now enshrined in Scots Law.

In 2000 Save the Children produced Partners in Rights, a resource pack that uses a range of engaging and creative approaches to explore children’s rights and citizenship issues with pupils aged seven to 11. Funded by the National Lottery Charities Board, and based on Partners, an international arts and cultural exchange programme involving four countries, the pack is a valuable example of the ways in which the creative arts can be used with children to explore complex, yet fundamental issues.

Photo: Alasdair Macfarlane
Case Study 3

Public Space in the Local Neighbourhood
Oslo, Norway

Created in 1997 by Kari Bjørka Hodneland, a Norwegian architect, in collaboration with the Municipality of Oslo, this project was designed with the aim of specifically addressing issues linked to children’s participation, democracy and citizenship. Under the former name of Small Ugly Places, the initiative involved primary schoolchildren with the untidy urban areas of the local neighbourhoods surrounding the school, which became the practical and educational references for the young people’s understanding of the environment. By providing them with experiences of their local environment the projects taught children their rights and obligations as citizens, strengthening the feeling of identity with their neighbourhoods and encouraging them to make informed choices for more responsible behaviour. In 1999 the project was showcased in an exhibition held at the Lighthouse in Glasgow.

Since 2000 over 260 children and their teachers have taken part in the project every year.

Kari Bjørka Hodneland has been using the main elements of the initiative to design the Manual for Increasing Awareness of the Built Environment (MIABE), which currently forms the basis for her PhD. Her research suggests that with projects aimed at increasing children’s participation, personal growth should be put at the top of the agenda. Kari hopes that, once completed, her MIABE could offer an initial description of the elements necessary for achieving children’s effective participation.

Since 2000 the initiative has acquired a new name, Public Space in the Local Neighbourhood, which currently involves six primary schools outside Oslo city centre, where local neighbourhoods encompass everything from wild forests to shopping precincts.
Active citizenship

‘Being an effective citizen means being able to demonstrate the capacity for thinking and acting creatively in political, economic, social and cultural life. Creative and enterprising citizenship involves making thoughtful and imaginative decisions and being enterprising in one’s approach to participation in society. A creative citizen is able to make connections and use knowledge and skills in ways that add cultural, social and political, as well as economic, value to society’s efforts to meet contemporary challenges.’

*Education for Citizenship in Scotland, a paper for discussion and consultation, Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2000*

The Scottish Parliament provides Scotland with new opportunities and unprecedented challenges. One challenge in Scotland lies in the question of citizenship.

If young people are to learn that being citizens requires the ability, knowledge and understanding to play an active role in a democratic society, then the concept of citizenship must be broadened to reflect all the concerns of local, national, and global communities.

Because the individual citizen is an integral element of our modern democracy, being a citizen in the 21st century requires more than political literacy alone. An active and responsible citizen should possess the ability to think not only critically but also creatively, as well as having the will to understand and respect other cultures and a sense of responsibility for the environment. Therefore, a new concept of citizenship should be based on service and on ways of thinking concerned with peace, sustainable development, and the care of self and others.

Culture is a key element of this perspective. Culture can ensure respect for the individual, the protection of minorities and the safeguarding of diversity.

Cultural participation is fundamental to the development of a responsible citizenship, as it awakens those skills which are all desirable to the effective engagement of citizens in a modern democracy: creativity, a love for learning and critical thinking.

Since the arts can stimulate community debate on the values and aspirations that must inform our future, they should play a vital role in encouraging people to become active participants in their communities.

In order to sustain a society where democracy and civic discourse thrive, opportunities to engage in the arts should be widely available. Therefore schools should learn to nourish creativity and encourage in young people the habit of active citizenship, through providing them with the opportunity to participate and positively engage with their community.
Case Study 1

Scotlinks

Scotlinks is an initiative that took place in the community of East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire, between September 1998 and June 2001. Scotlinks was funded by a grant from the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery Fund. The project explored the role that arts and education can play in developing the capable, caring people needed to sustain the surrounding community, at the same time as enhancing the professional development of teachers, artists and staff of the participating organisations.

Scotlinks was designed to initiate a programme of community learning involving schools, community groups and adult training centres, using a dramatist-in-residence to facilitate learning in and through the arts. Three primary schools, one secondary school, a community centre and an arts centre participated in the project, co-ordinated by the links officer of South Lanarkshire Council Education Advisory Service.

An open space meeting, held at the beginning of the project, enabled participants to think together of ways to strengthen the community of East Kilbride and to design initiatives based on their individual aims and needs. Artists collaborated with teachers and students to explore how the arts and other creative activities could enhance educational performance as well as improve students’ understanding of the community.

One of the primary schools’ projects, the Changing Face of Greenhills, explored social issues associated with the local community. Using drama and visual arts, children focused on the ways in which things are changing for the better within the area and explored positive aspirations for the pupils and the Greenhills community. The school set up a website to feature the outcomes of a survey led by the children.

The secondary school collaborated with one of the primaries, designing ways to make the local underpass connecting the two schools safer and less likely to attract vandalism and crime. Pupils worked with artists from the Glasgow School of Art and held a seminar analysing the environmental impact of the underpass. Due to technical and financial reasons it wasn’t possible to implement fully the pupils’ design, although many aspects of their work were included in the restoration of the underpass.

In June 1999 a community festival, the Spring Fest, was held at the East Kilbride Arts Centre. The festival included performances by each of the four participating schools.

Scotlinks was successful in raising the confidence of the students and the ability of the teachers to use the arts as a resource for learning. The project demonstrated the benefits of using the arts to engage young people with the local community and to raise their understanding of social, environmental and safety issues. Teachers observed a positive impact of the initiative on students’ learning. Scotlinks also raised the profile of the schools involved and brought them closer together.

Student paintings from Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School.
Students practising theatre piece, St Andrew’s High School, East Kilbride.
Photos: Brian McGeoch
In Lithuania an arts and environmental project is helping to reform notions of civil society through teaching young participants the importance of addressing common issues.

A family of artists concerned about the environment invented *Nature’s Fairytale*. In 1992 they started a newsletter about arts and nature using the slogan: ‘take care of nature, think of the future’. Now international in scope, the programme aims to help participating children to develop both an aesthetic knowledge and a scientific appreciation of nature. Art and biology teachers, along with professional artists, work with children in schools and youth centres throughout the country, promoting a theme each year. The theme for the year 2002 was My Experience.

*Nature’s Fairytale* has become an anticipated and important event in Lithuanian pupils’ lives; every year the children spend several months preparing for the project, holding surveys and exhibitions at their schools. Students from Polish, Russian, Byelorussian and Jewish schools are involved in the creative process along with Lithuanian students.

Through the visual arts the project addresses broader questions related to multiculturalism, the environment and civil society. Pupils who participate in the initiative become more knowledgeable about nature, develop a range of artistic skills and are stimulated in learning more about other cultures.

A main aim of the project is to raise children’s awareness of the surrounding environment and to promote co-existence among different ethnic groups through direct involvement with ecology and the arts.

*Nature’s Fairytale* has become an established annual international event attracting over 14,000 participants each year. Since 2000 the annual exhibition has been shown in different localities in Lithuania and then in Japan, in collaboration with the Learning Environmental Activities Foundation in Nishinomiya City.
Case Study 3

Castlemilk Youth Complex

Castlemilk Youth Complex opened in 1994 following a consultation process involving local young people that culminated in a major conference. Located in Castlemilk, a peripheral housing estate on the southern edge of Glasgow, the Complex has become a youth action model of community development. The premises include a theatre, recording studios, radio broadcast facilities, darkrooms, a café, a disco and a project/work space.

The very specific organisational culture of the place, based on a youth-led board of directors, not only puts young people at the centre of creative activities but also in complete control of the agenda. This gives young people a strong sense of empowerment and enables them to take ownership of the project. The Complex essentially operates as an agent for informal learning with lifelong learning underpinning all of the work carried out with local young people aged between 12 and 25 years, who live, work or study in Castlemilk.

Among the many creative and educational activities led by the Complex there is an annual performance showcasing work from members involved in drama, dance and music. 2001’s performance was Live ‘n’ Complex, a show exploring past and present attitudes to themes such as HIV, teenage pregnancy, homelessness, war, drugs and genetic engineering. The event sold over 250 tickets and offered young people the opportunity to perform in front of the local community. Culture Pops, a major theatre production, was performed over four nights in April 2002. The Complex, which is currently supported by the Castlemilk Partnership, also generates some income through its activities.

Buzzing with energy and exploring cultural initiatives addressing contemporary issues, Castlemilk Youth Complex is a very good example of how young people, if respected and listened to, can engage as active citizens in the local community.

Photos: Isabel Maguire
Education and learning in the information society

‘A community should be judged good not because it is technologically advanced, or swimming in material riches: it is good if it offers people a chance to enjoy as many aspects of their lives as possible, while allowing them to develop their potential in the pursuit of even greater challenges. Similarly, the value of a school does not depend on its prestige or ability to train students to face up to the necessities of life, but rather on the degree of the enjoyment of lifelong learning it can transmit.’

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago and author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*

We are living in a time of profound social, economic and technological change, which is having a dramatic impact on the way we live, work and learn.

The labour market of the ‘Knowledge Economy’ needs highly skilled workers who are capable of keeping up with continuous technological advances. Because in the information society skills and knowledge soon become obsolete, individuals – both as citizens and workers – are increasingly required to be flexible, innovative and adaptable.

The rapid pace of change is also radically altering both the function and the significance of learning in contemporary society. Moreover, the raising of standards and achievements in the workforce of the future is dependent on the capacity of the education system to create a culture of ‘lifelong learning’, and to develop in every individual the ability to be creative.

Schools can find ways to broaden approaches to learning by encouraging children to be creative. Placing the arts at the centre of the educational process can act as a vehicle for the promotion of inclusive and dynamic routes to learning.

Furthermore, the arts are also capable of widening the participation of those learners who are often least able to benefit from conventional educational opportunities. Around the country, a wide range of initiatives is using the arts to bring learning to the lives of individuals and to build the capacities of marginalised communities. In this way the arts also contribute to the development of a community’s social and cultural identity.

School and community-based arts education can provide ways to offer every young person appropriate opportunities to grow, at the same time as fostering the development of creative skills which are critical to the cultural advancement and economic competitiveness of Scotland.
Based in Wester Hailes, a peripheral housing estate on the outskirts of Edinburgh, WHALE (Wester Hailes Arts for Leisure and Education) was established in 1992, as part of the regeneration plan for the area.

Using the arts to enable individuals to gain access to skills and training, WHALE works in partnership with other agencies through an outreach programme, which extends resources into schools, youth and adult centres.

With a strong emphasis on lifelong learning, training, employment and social inclusion, WHALE regards the arts as integral to the process of community development, and as an effective tool for engaging the interest of young people. Committed to creating a culture of lifelong learning through participation in arts and cultural activities, in 1998 WHALE started Fireworks, a three-year youth arts training programme aimed at people aged between eight and 30. Funded by the Scottish Arts Council New Directions Lottery Scheme, Fireworks targeted excluded young people offering them personal and educational development through a range of projects and training opportunities, including visual arts, sculpture, drama, theatre set design, photography and mosaic tiling.

Geared towards the development of explicit links between arts and formal education, Fireworks was built on a three-level approach to learning: building life skills, skills-based training and formal education. Through this innovative programme local young people were offered the opportunity to train alongside professional artists.

Fireworks helped all participants to gain new skills and to become more confident. Following the training many young people enrolled on further education and higher education courses while some others secured employment.

The end of the Fireworks programme was marked by Big Bang-Seeing Stars, a three-day performance and exhibition that took place in April 2001 in the WHALE Learning Centre, attended by an audience of 800.

WHALE secured grants from the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery Fund and from the Education Department of the City of Edinburgh Council for a new project begun in April 2002. ARTiculate, a programme of combined arts targeting children facing exclusion from school and society, is based in primary and secondary schools and at the WHALE Learning Centre.
Over the past two years Fife Council has been working in partnership with Scottish Arts Council supported TAG Theatre to explore the impact on young people of participation in creative learning opportunities.

In order to explore how best the arts might be used within the context of community learning, specifically within the framework of youth access and participation in the arts, two pilot projects were developed. The aims of these projects were identified through a six-month process of consultation involving young people and youth workers.

The first pilot project based on the theme of ‘one moment in time’ offered the participants the chance to develop and tell their own story, through the combination of film and theatre. The young people actively participated in the process, selecting video-diaries and daily open group discussions as evaluation and planning methods. The pilot culminated in a highly innovative theatre/film fusion, which used outside footage presented on four screens wrapped around the theatre space and incorporated as an integral part of the play.

Fife Council used this experience as one of the foundations for ‘At the Heart’ – Creative Learning: Children and Young People – a Scotland-wide conference exploring the role of creativity in learning, which took place in March 2001.

The second pilot project engaged 60 young people, along with a wide range of local agencies and organisations, including Fife Police, Fife’s Head Injury Project and Fife Council’s Social Work Service. The content and the creative tools used within the project were decided by the participants during their application process, which sought to help the young people to identify their own personal and creative learning goals. The focus was aspirational and used the open phrase ‘I want to be...’ as the inspiration for thought, debate and discussion within the participants’ groups. The project culminated in a large-scale performance experience, entirely designed, developed and delivered by the young participants themselves.

For many of the participants and indeed the workers and creative apprentices involved it was the first experience of non-prescribed art development work. Self-decision, identification and monitoring of personal learning goals was also unique to the young people and the staff involved. Participants at every level of the project reported that their own skills, understanding and confidence in the creative process had grown, that professional, social and emotional skills and experience had been exchanged and that friendships, networks and solid partnerships for the future had been created.

A number of young creative entrepreneurs and activists have identified themselves and plans are underway for a third experience.

Young people learn about set design (top) and make-up, part of the ‘I want to be...’ project. Photos: © Fife Council Community Services

Case Study 2
Fife Council
Community Services
Arts and Celebrations (2000-2002)
The Highlands make up a third of the landmass of Scotland, yet are very sparsely populated with only 200,000 people living in 25,900 square kilometres. In the past, it was the children and young people of the Highlands who suffered most because of the remoteness of the region, which made it particularly difficult for them to participate in arts and cultural activities.

Eden Court in Inverness offers children and young people (34,000 young people of school age) in the Highlands, access to the arts in three lottery- and privately-funded outreach projects. Every year about 5,000 children take part in Eden Court outreach workshops and other participative events in their own localities.

At present Out of Eden is a two-year project, funded by trusts and foundations, that covers the areas of Skye and Lochalsh, offering local young people the opportunity to take part in theatre arts workshops.

As these projects come to an end Eden Court has already secured funding from Highland Council Education Service for a new outreach programme, which started in August 2002. Eden Court will bring all its outreach work under the banner of Highland Out of Eden to target those at most disadvantage by remoteness or deprivation. The new programme will offer a wide range of creative activities with the aim of increasing confidence and social skills. Highland Out of Eden will eventually encompass a wide scope of activities including mask- and lantern-making, large-scale sculptures, circus skills, dance, physical theatre and community music making. The programme will also include mini-partnership projects with Highland Council, focusing on environment, citizenship and healthy living.

The ACTivators, a two-year project funded by the Scottish Arts Council, finished in July 2002. It took place in Inverness-shire, Wester Ross, Badenoch and Strathspey. Four full-time drama workers have developed a programme in each area aimed at five to 13-year olds.

The After Schools Arts Projects (a.s.a.p.) is a three-year arts partnership programme between Highland Council Education Service and Eden Court, working in four areas identified as disadvantaged through deprivation or isolation: Lochaber, Caithness and Sutherland, Alness New Community Schools, and Inverness Community Schools. Funded by the New Opportunities Fund, the programme employs four full-time theatre arts workers to work with young people.

Case Study 3
Eden Court

Top right: young dancers in Inverness.
Right: street parade Lochcarron.
Photos: Eden Court
Diversity, creativity and citizenship

‘Cultural freedom, by protecting alternative ways of living, encourages creativity, experimentation and diversity, the very essence of human development. Indeed it is the diversity of multicultural societies and the creativity to which diversity gives rise, that make such societies innovative, dynamic and enduring.’

*Our Creative Diversity*, UNESCO, Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development

At present there is a great urgency to redefine citizenship and the meaning of civil society in a global context. In an age of pervasive uncertainty, young people must be empowered to participate actively in a society which can only thrive on an increased awareness of and respect for different cultures and cultural values.

A broader definition of citizenship should promote a greater mutual understanding and a sense of shared values through the acceptance of, and respect for, diversity. Therefore a new concept of citizenship should aim at providing opportunities for all people to express ethnic, cultural and individual diversity.

Similarly, the notion of diversity itself needs to be extended in order to embrace and reflect the whole spectrum of cultural, religious, ethnic, physical, sexual and social distinctiveness.

A multicultural country can gain great benefits from its pluralism, but it also runs the risk of cultural conflict. Therefore, it is essential for Scotland today to achieve respect for diversity and create a climate of mutual trust and tolerance, based on reciprocal knowledge. Since diversity can be a significant source of strength, every effort should be made to advocate and support cultural freedom, which is the very basis of a pluralist society.

By advancing freedom of enquiry the arts open up otherwise blocked passages of communication, enabling the exchange of ideas and values. In this way arts education can lead to an informed and aware citizenry in Scotland which will be capable of understanding and embracing both the diversity of our society as a whole and the individuality of Scottish cultural tradition and values.

Because cultural participation can foster mutual respect among communities, as well as provide a safe arena for the peaceful expression of diversity, widening access to the arts and culture can encourage young people’s engagement in the community.
Case Study 1

Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians
FUSION

Founded in 1984, Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians is an arts organisation that promotes and supports the rights of people with disabilities to participate actively in the cultural life of the community. With a strong emphasis on community involvement, social justice and person-centred opportunities, Artlink works in partnership with individuals, communities and organisations through a range of innovative projects that stress the centrality of collaborative arts practice.

With FUSION, a two-year project funded by the Lothian Arts Consortium and the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery New Directions Scheme, Artlink used a collaborative approach to engage patients and staff in hospitals in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Centred on exploring the possibilities of collaborative relationships, and involving over 20 artists, FUSION encompassed two distinct strands: Collaborations and Commissions.

Based within psychiatric hospitals, FUSION Collaborations engaged over 200 patients in arts workshops, which evolved into collaborative partnerships expressed through guided tours, painting and video installations, sculptural installations, video portraits and photography.

Through FUSION Commissions, artists spent time with specialist hospital departments ranging from the Neo-natal Unit to the Eye Pavilion. This approach resulted in artworks that reflect the unique relationship formed between artists, hospital staff and patients.

Among the outcomes of FUSION is My Father is the Wise Man of the Village, a DVD and printed publication illustrating the results of the project, which were produced to coincide with a high profile exhibition held at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh in February and March 2002.
Launched in 1995 as a project of Glasgow Association for Mental Health, Survivors’ Poetry Scotland (SPS) became an independent company in 1998. In its first three years as an independent company, SPS has reinforced its identity, continued to produce a portfolio of high quality work and has given meaning, stability and encouragement to approximately 200 people in need of care and support within the community.

SPS aims to encourage and enable creative writing and other art-related activities by and for survivors, increase the confidence, communication and literacy skills of its members, and challenge public attitudes to mental health issues.

SPS uses the arts as valuable and effective means for aiding those in need of regaining their confidence, drive and self-esteem. Through creative writing workshops, performing events and publications, SPS aims to empower people who have, or have had, mental health problems or who have suffered abuse or trauma. The term ‘survivor’ also encompasses those with physical disabilities and individuals with drug and/or alcohol addictions.

Its members run the organisation, with professional writers and performers acting as visiting facilitators. Besides regular writing workshops, SPS offers its members a broad range of activities, including a performance group, training, computer facilities and a library of books about writing. Among SPS publications there is Nomad, a literary magazine written by survivors, and Sweet, Sour and Serious an anthology of poetry and prose, and volumes of work by individual members.

At the end of July 2001, SPS organised the first national Gaitherin’ of about one hundred people from across Scotland involved in survivor and therapeutic writing. The occasion, which centred on a programme of writing and arts workshops, seminars, a ceilidh and readings, provided participants with the opportunity to celebrate, learn new skills and share experiences.

SPS’s main source of funding is the Greater Glasgow Health Board. It also receives money from Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Arts Council.

Case Study 2
Survivors’ Poetry Scotland

The Gaitherin’. Photos: Jim McCann
In the Mastrick area of Aberdeen a local police sub-station has been turned into a youth café, with a £26,000 award from the Scottish Drugs Challenge Fund.

In 1994 a survey highlighted the high level of drug use, anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the area. Since then the Community Education Services based in Mastrick have initiated a number of youth work programmes aimed at attracting young people who have not in the past been interested in the existing youth provision. In 1997 a magazine group was set up as part of these projects and one specific article was written expressing the frustration felt by the young people at the lack of local facilities. The community police officer met with this group and from that came the idea of a youth café. A constitution was written and a Youth Committee was formed, supported by Community Education staff.

The local police sub-station was identified as possible premises in 1999 and since then young people have worked on several projects contributing to the design of the new building. A local architect worked closely with the young people to help turn the police sub-station into a café. The refurbishment included knocking down walls, soundproofing a music room, installing facilities for people with disabilities, building a new kitchen area, a cyber café and a work area designed to allow young people to take part in arts and crafts activities, discussion groups and homework.

Negotiations over the lease of the building were lengthy but finally on 27 October 2001 the refurbishment was completed and the building was opened.
Advances in information and communication technology are offering new opportunities for Scotland, particularly due to the development of the internet.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can change the delivery of education and training: it opens up opportunities for both distance and home learning, and it widens access for individuals and communities generally excluded from educational opportunities.

Because digital literacy is now a crucial element of people’s ability to participate effectively in the local, national and global community, it is vital for Scottish people to develop such skills. Access to new technology needs to be broadened to include disadvantaged and socially marginalised communities.

As ICT creates virtual mobility by connecting people to individuals and communities around the world, it can potentially increase participation in democracy as well as reduce marginalisation. New technology can offer the potential for greater equality and social inclusion, but there is a risk that it could reinforce rather than reduce existing inequalities.

The arts can be an effective means for the development and improvement of digital skills of individuals and communities.

Furthermore, multimedia projects offer a technological platform for new creative practices, as the interactive nature of new technology affects not only how art can be imagined, but also how it is produced and received.

ICT offers unprecedented opportunities for communicating, disseminating and making culture and it also acts as a vehicle for personal and collective self-expression. As a result, new technology has created significant new opportunities for people to become cultural producers, rather than mere consumers.

Creativity represents a decisive element in widening access to learning and new technology across society: it provides unique possibilities for those living in remote areas and opens up opportunities inside and outside formal education and training.

‘The effect of digital technologies is widespread and profound. They are changing the way we work, learn, shop and spend leisure time. Societies and economies which respond vigorously to the opportunities which digital technologies bring are likely to be more prosperous than those which are slow to respond.’

Digital Scotland, Task Force Report, May 2000
Located in the heart of Edinburgh, Stills Gallery, funded by the Scottish Arts Council, has been leading Scotland in the exhibition of photography and new media since 1977. The gallery has now 300 regular users and a wide range of award-winning education projects, which enabled over 200 people in 2001 alone to use traditional and digital photographic processes for the first time.

Stills education programmes, which are designed to increase opportunities for participation, learning and enjoyment in the arts, are primarily aimed at people who have previously had few opportunities to get involved with the arts or new media.

Among several exciting activities led by Stills is the Panmure House CD-ROM project, a one-year initiative involving 10 secondary school pupils who have experience of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The project was funded by Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership, and finished in April 2002. It enabled the participants to work with three digital artists using digital photography, video, sound, animation and text. The programme resulted in an interesting, fun and informative CD-ROM providing an introduction to what Panmure House (a day centre for troubled young people) can offer. Some further work has taken place with the young participants to design the cover of the CD before its launch.

In the Black and Asian Women New Technology and Textile Project, a six-month initiative which finished in August 2001, funded through the Stills core education budget, 12 young black and Asian women explored their own experiences of living in Edinburgh through digital photography, photo manipulation, printed textile beadwork and embroidery. A grant was secured from the Scottish Executive Ethnic Minority Fund to develop a further six-month new media project, starting in April 2002, aimed at supporting the groups in gaining further skills such as video, animation and web-design. The women will participate in a programme of workshops including video, photography, sound, digital camera, Photoshop, animation and web-design. The project will culminate in an exhibition to be held at Stills Gallery in early 2003. The website created by the young women involved will be launched around the same time.
Participation in arts and culture has a significant role to play in helping young people to engage actively with their community, opening up a route into the wider civil and democratic process.

Furthermore, participation in the arts makes learning a more meaningful and inclusive process, capable of reaching individuals often excluded from mainstream opportunities as well as promoting critical thinking, innovation and creativity.

Engagement in the arts can help people connect across social divisions, be they economic, cultural, educational or generational, helping them to express commonalities and value differences. It is because arts and culture can positively contribute to the personal development of individuals, as well as give voice to minorities and marginalised groups, that they have a special role to play in a pluralistic society.

Since the potential of the arts and culture to have a positive impact on local communities is linked to their ability to reach individuals, it is important to find ways to broaden access to and ensure participation in cultural activities throughout the country.