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**From:** Alex Cole-Hamilton [acole-hamilton@youthlink.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 29 March 2007 17:06  
**To:** Cultural Bill Consultation  
**Subject:** YoutLink Scotland's response

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Respondee Information

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Responding on behalf of an organization

Happy for response to be made available

Happy for all to be made public

Happy to be contacted again.  
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## **YouthLink Scotland's response to the Draft Culture (Scotland) Bill**

Culture in Scotland is of huge importance to all young people and many young Scots benefit a great deal from culture in their attempts to gain new skills, tackle personal barriers and issues and to build lives for themselves in our society. As Scotland's National Youth Work Agency YouthLink Scotland warmly welcomes this piece of legislation and applauds its aims to increase participation in the cultural activities, particularly amongst young people.

Youth Work utilises an almost inexhaustible range of courses and activities to enable young people from all walks of life to develop skills, coping strategies and ambition for the future. Cultural activities are no different. A great many messages and skills can be imparted in the subtext of participation in activities such as drama, the arts and courses which explore national and social identity. The value of cultural activities in youth work can not be understated as they can help to give young people a sense of belonging in communities which they had become disengaged with and can help young people identify the path they wish to take throughout their lives, one of the key aims of youth work.

There is very little, if anything about this Bill which we would find fault with and only small sections of the Bill apply directly to our work however, we felt it appropriate to respond to this consultation and suggest issues which should also be considered in the framing of this legislation which otherwise may have been omitted.

### **Local Cultural Entitlements and Cultural Planning**

#### **Local cultural entitlements**

We are broadly supportive of the concept of local cultural entitlements, but would query whether the word 'entitlement' is an appropriate definition as Section 2.5 of the consultation document states that entitlements will not represent a guarantee of access to any particular service. We have been calling for a national minimum entitlement to youth work for all young people in Scotland by which we mean just that- a guarantee of access. If this is not to be so in the case for cultural entitlements then perhaps some other terminology should be found such as 'provision' or 'opportunity'.

We would like to suggest that youth work providers offer a perfect vehicle for the delivery of cultural entitlements to young people. As mentioned previously, and as recognised in section 2.10, culture can play a role in helping to tackle social difficulties such as crime reduction and low ambition. Youth work providers already deliver cultural experiences to young people as a means to helping them to address difficulties in their lives. One of our members, Fairbridge in

Scotland, who work with some of Scotland's hardest to reach young people, recently delivered a drama course focussed on drugs misuse and the physiological effects of narcotics on the human body. Young people scripted, produced and performed in a production entitled '*In the bag*' with the aid of a street theatre company. The young people performed the production initially to referral agents, parents and teachers and then were invited to perform during the Edinburgh festival. This is an example of many such initiatives and projects which use cultural activities to tackle some very serious social problems.

The *Sense over Sectarianism* initiative works with youth work providers to run courses which examine issues of racial and religious bigotry through explorations of personal identity which involve visits to local museums and places of worship such as Mosques and Temples.

Youth Work providers should be considered as key partners in the cultural agenda but exist in an extremely hostile financial climate where funding and resources are such that many providers exist on a hand to mouth basis. If youth work providers are to act as agents in the delivery of these cultural entitlements, then their role must be recognised with commensurate financial provision and resources including full cost recovery.

### **Cultural planning**

Section 2.8 suggests that local authorities to decide what the entitlements for their area should be, deciding what new facilities and services to make available. We would suggest that as natural agents in the delivery of such entitlements, that youth work providers be fully consulted on all such decisions.

We would therefore suggest that to ensure Local Authorities are working closely with youth work providers in the provision of cultural entitlements that Section 2.12 reflect this relationship with Ministers having the power to collect information from Local Authorities about their engagement with the youth work sector in the delivery of these entitlements.

### **Section 3: Creative Scotland**

YouthLink Scotland have no objection to the formation of Creative Scotland and look forward to working with it to promote participation in cultural activities through youth work amongst young people. We would also be delighted to welcome them as associate members of YouthLink Scotland.

Section 3.3 sets out several key roles that Creative Scotland must fulfil. We would contend that added to this should be a clause specifically mandating Creative Scotland to promote and encourage participation in cultural activities by young people.

Section 3.8 suggests that Creative Scotland will '**work with the Executive and other partners to encourage greater appreciation across the public sector of**

***culture and cultural activity to help achieve public policy objectives, like for example improving the confidence and skills of the most disadvantaged children and young people.*** As stated above, many youth work organisations are already using culture in their work to reengage with exactly this group of young people. Creative Scotland should therefore use the work of the youth work sector as a blueprint to encourage similar work in the public sector.

### **Governance and powers of Creative Scotland**

We are supportive of Creative Scotland's proposed power to make grants and loans in the pursuit of its remit. We would hope that as a key partner in the promotion of cultural activity amongst young people that the youth work sector would qualify for such funds in order to sustain its culture based activity.

### **Cultural Internationalism**

One area which fails to receive much attention in the Bill is international cultural activities. Many youth work organisations and YouthLink Scotland through its EuroDesk facility promote cultural exchanges which are an important tool in the establishment of cultural awareness and identity in young people. We would contend that the promotion of international links and culture should be considered part of the remit of Creative Scotland and be established as a tenet of this Bill

Another membership organisation, the YMCA provides a good example of this: YMCA Scotland is part of a global youth movement of over 100 million members operating in over 120 countries. This becomes a huge resource in terms of learning for Scottish young people alongside their peers from other countries. In May of this year for instance YMCA Scotland will lead a team to the European Alliance in Kiev and as is subsidizing four places for young leaders.

Last year Paula (20) from Perth was part of the team that spent a week at the European conference in Portugal. It was the first time she had left Scotland and she brought her video camera to record the experience. The reception she found was so warm that she conducted personal interviews with the YMCA World President, European Secretary and a series of other VIPs. In group work sessions Paula was able to share personal experiences and youth programmes with young people from over 20 European countries.

Similar international learning is channeled through the Scotland – Belarus YMCA national partnership where exchanges and partnership projects actively move between towns and cities in the two countries. Many individual YMCAs run active international partnerships offering numerous opportunities to Scottish young people to travel to learn how others address youth issues and deliver youth work in widely different circumstances. Glasgow to and from India, Aberdeen to and from Germany, Dumfries to and from Romania, Levenmouth to and from USA ...the opportunity for cross cultural learning and development is a core element of YMCA youth work in Scotland.