

A Manifesto



for Children's Arts

Our vision is that children and young people living in Northern Ireland have the right to engage in and enjoy age-appropriate and quality arts, and have the opportunity to explore and experience cultural life regardless of religion, background or geographical area.

Action for Children's Arts in Northern Ireland believe that more needs to be undertaken to ensure that children and young people living in Northern Ireland are provided with the opportunity to engage in and enjoy the arts.

"Our vision is that all children and young people living in Northern Ireland will thrive and look forward with confidence to the future." *A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016* (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister).

Action for Children's Arts in Northern Ireland are committed to ensuring that all children across Northern Ireland have access to quality arts and cultural experiences, and that they have a right to participate freely in the arts, from directly engaging in developing arts to experiencing professional work as audiences.

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child: "State Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity."

All political parties should:

- Make reference to children's arts in their manifestos and policy documents and commit to making Northern Ireland an international centre for excellence in the provision of the arts for children and young people.

The Northern Ireland Executive should:

- Recognise the value of the arts in achieving the outcomes set out in the Executive's *Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016*.
- Provide the resources and facilities to enable all children and families to take part in the arts outside school.
- Encourage and support partnerships between those who provide services to children and arts organisations.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) should:

- Further advocate for and support the inclusion of the arts for children and young people in government departments and other policy agendas that have an impact on children and young people.
- Continue to support children's participation in quality arts, particularly in a safe and enabling environment.
- Strive to develop a greater social awareness and understanding of the value and developmental power of the arts and creativity in relation to children and young people.

District Councils should:

- Ensure that all children and young people living in rural and urban communities in their district will have access to professional quality arts and cultural experiences that are appropriate to their age, interest and cultural tradition.
- Develop and adopt consistent long-term policies regarding the arts for children and young people and set strategic targets to achieve the aims of this document.
- Provide adequate resources and budgets to support the development and facilitation of quality provision for children as a priority throughout their districts.
- Follow the advice of the Forum for Local Government and the Arts (FLGA) and establish a local arts forum to explore and develop the artistic needs and existing talents of children and artists in their area.
- Engage in professional relationships with arts organisations and professional artists to enhance the lives of the children and young people in their area.

The Education, Health and Community sectors should:

- Place creativity and the arts at the heart of the curriculum and community life, especially for children in the early years and with disabilities.
- Ensure children are provided with a range of professional, age-appropriate arts experiences including theatre, music, dance, visual arts, literature and craft.
- Provide artists and teachers with training that enables them to evaluate their role when working directly with young children and when working in partnership with each other.
- Ensure that children and young people who spend part or all of their lives in healthcare settings have access to high quality arts experiences.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland should:

- Ensure that work for children and families has equal status with work for adult audiences.
- Develop specific policies for the arts for children across the 0-18 years age range.
- Aim to provide every child living in Northern Ireland with access to quality, age-appropriate arts and cultural activities within 20 miles of their home.
- Provide the necessary resources to enable appropriate research to be undertaken and distributed to relevant agencies and policy makers.
- Recognise the different roles of community and professional arts provision and ensure that children have access to participate as audiences as well as actively lead community programmes.
- Provide a higher level of funding for work aimed at children and families so that standards can be kept high and ticket prices low.

Arts Organisations and Artists who seek to work with children should:

- Aim for the highest possible standard in their work for children.
- Make children and families welcome and provide the facilities they need to enjoy their visit and keep coming back.
- Develop new audiences of children and young people and provide inspiring artistic experiences.
- Encourage participation from children and young people and aim to ensure that children from all backgrounds and geographical areas have the opportunity to engage in quality arts experiences.
- Devise meaningful ways of consulting with children and young people and ensure that their views and options are reflected in the work created.

WHY ADOPT THE MANIFESTO?

- The arts play a vital role in young children's lives.
- The arts provide the opportunity for children to think creatively and become innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership.
- Through engagement in the arts, children become equipped for their future lives as workers and citizens, contributing to the social, economic and creative future of Northern Ireland.
- Engagement in the arts empowers children, affirms and supports their right to make choices and enables them to discover their own solutions through play.
- Through the arts, children can develop naturally at their own pace and in their own way.

Sign up!

Action for Children's Arts in Northern Ireland are committed to fostering and developing a greater understanding and proactive acceptance of the value of the arts, and the part they play in the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.



Arts for Young Children

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