

**SCOTTISH
MUSEUMS
COUNCIL**



Community Education Training Review

Centre for Community Learning and Development, Communities
Scotland

Submission by the Scottish Museums Council

15 August 2002

The Scottish Museums Council [SMC]

SMC is the membership organisation for around 350 museums and galleries in Scotland including local authorities, universities, regimental and independent museums. Our aim is to improve museum and gallery provision in Scotland for both local people and visitors. SMC combines strategic leadership for the sector with provision of professional information, advisory and support services to members. The current Museums Association definition of a museum is:

Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.

The term 'museums' includes art galleries.

Learning and Access at SMC

While Scotland's 362 museums and galleries preserve and protect our culture and heritage, they also operate as dynamic learning environments. From face-to-face interaction with real objects to online access to digital images, and outreach work within local communities, museums and galleries provide stimulating opportunities for learning. Given the variety of organisations, the quality of work undertaken, the exceptional use of volunteer workers, and the breadth and richness of collections, the sector is also uniquely placed to appeal to Scotland's diverse population. Learning and access are central to the success of museums and galleries.

The Learning and Access Team at the Scottish Museums Council promotes lifelong learning and access to both museums and external organisations. Our work includes providing advice on project and policy development in relation to audiences, social inclusion, lifelong learning and access. We conduct training and project work, assess grant applications, and undertake research and policy development. Additionally, we represent the work of museums to local authorities, government and other interested parties.

Museums and community learning

On 10 July 2002 SMC launched the first-ever national audit of Scotland's museums and galleries.¹ The audit establishes for the first time the full extent of museum collections, buildings and public services. It provides an authoritative picture of the museums sector and its importance to key aspects of Scottish life including tourism, learning, and community development.

¹ *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002.

The use of cultural and heritage resources is extremely popular within community and adult learning, for instance through history and archaeology groups, reminiscence classes, handling and loan boxes, museum tours and visits, story telling and interpretation workshops. Additionally, digital technologies offer unparalleled opportunities for delivering these resources to learners of all ages. Despite this, the audit reveals that under-capacity is having an adverse effect on the museum sector's ability to develop and deliver more effective community and educational programmes. Although Scotland has a remarkable heritage infrastructure, with "over 12 million objects held in trust for the people of Scotland", anecdotal evidence suggests that the educational potential of museums and galleries is under-utilised by community education providers.²

More effective partnerships between cultural/heritage agencies and the community learning and development sector would help to address this deficit. The appropriate training of community education professionals is also key to the successful realisation of museums as learning institutions. Failure to meet this potential will result in uneven access to these educational opportunities across the social spectrum. As such, museum education should be regarded as a matter of social justice.

Recognising and consolidating partnerships

We suggest that a broad definition of key community learning and development stakeholders is adopted. This should recognise that the responsibility for delivering community learning extends beyond the formal and community education sectors. Museums should be regarded as important partners in the delivery of these services. Drawing-in other providers will add breadth and vitality to this work. By so doing, the learning opportunities represented by Scotland's cultural and heritage sector will also become more readily accessible to a broader section of the population.

Although partnerships between museums and community education do exist, these are not as effective, widespread or consistent as they should be. Valuable learning opportunities are being lost as a result. There is a need to:

- Clearly identify and declare a commitment to the diversity of community learning and development providers
- Clarify relationships between providers
- Identify shared learning and developmental goals
- Establish practical guidelines for developing and consolidating partnerships between agencies/sectors
- Encourage coherent working practices (to avoid duplication, fragmentation, unnecessary competition)

² *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002: 1.

This integrated approach to service delivery has significant implications for professional practice as well as the content of HNC and degree-level training. These courses should explicitly identify and recognise the role of other community education providers. Students should receive guidance on how to approach and work with institutions such as museums and galleries.

Training Community Educators

As a precursor to the Community Education Training Review, the McCrone Report fully acknowledged the importance of adequately training Scotland's education professionals.³ SMC submitted a response to the Scottish Executive's *National Debate on the Future of School Education in Scotland* in which we argued that museums could contribute more effectively to children's education if teachers received more effective and coordinated support and training.⁴ This argument is equally pertinent to community learning and development. It is our contention that community education training should include modules on working with cultural and heritage resources.

The delivery of this training would ensure that community educators:

- Receive up-to-date information on Scotland's cultural resources
- Are informed about museum collections and their educational benefits
- Understand how to approach museums and undertake learning visits and projects
- Gain accredited skills in interpreting objects and conducting oral history and reminiscence work
- Adhere to agreed training standards
- Utilise Scotland's heritage resources more effectively for the benefit of participants
- Are able to ensure more equal access to Scotland's cultural resources

Research conducted by the Capital City Partnership revealed that many community education professionals and arts graduates working as community education tutors in Edinburgh have not received any formal training on working with cultural and heritage resources within a social inclusion context.⁵ As a result, provision tends to be patchy, standards are inconsistent and resources are not utilised as effectively as they could be. It is likely that similar patterns exist across the country as a whole. As the Scottish Council for Research on Education report suggests, more focus should be given to "putting skills into practice", to providing "opportunity for training with others" and to embedding learning through experience.⁶

³ *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century, Volume 1: Report, Independent Committee of Inquiry into Professional Conditions of Service*, Edinburgh, 2000.

⁴ *The National Debate on the Future of School Education in Scotland: Submission by the Scottish Museums Council*, Edinburgh, 12 July 2002: 8.

⁵ *One-City: Edinburgh Arts for Social Inclusion Strategy*, Capital City Partnership, Edinburgh, 2002.

⁶ *Working for Democracy: Review of Community Education Training*, Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh, 2001: xi/87.

The quality of cultural and heritage teaching should be examined and standards should be established and applied more consistently across the sector. Attention should also be given to training volunteers who are “less likely to have professional community education qualifications than paid workers”, but are nevertheless involved in delivering community learning.⁷ Similarly, the National Audit reveals that 53% of those working in the museums sector are volunteers.⁸ Community educators should not have to rely on their own enthusiasm or be abandoned to their own intellectual devices in order to undertake such work. Further training will transform their ability to deliver excellent learning programmes.

Supporting other training providers

It is our contention that the successful incorporation of cultural and heritage education courses into community education training is in part dependent upon the involvement of alternative training providers. The colleges and universities conducting community education training should work more closely with museum educators and organisations such as the SMC to devise cultural and heritage education courses.⁹ This coincides with recommendation ten of the *Communities: Change Through Learning* report. This states that the development of inter-disciplinary in-service training should be maximised.¹⁰ An inter-disciplinary approach to training would ensure that course content:

- Draws on current models of good community and museum education practice
- Is built around existing museum collections and is appropriate to these
- Utilises the skills and experience of curators and museum educators within a community learning context
- Is appropriate to the needs and opportunities of existing museum facilities

Rather than simply provide training at the start of an individual's career, it is suggested that training should incorporate:

- Initial training levels (HNC and degree courses)
- In-service training for practitioners
- Continuous Professional Development [CPD]

Providing in-service training would ensure that community educators' skills remain current and are responsive to changing museum education practice.

⁷ *Working for Democracy: Review of Community Education Training*, Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh, 2001: vii.

⁸ *A Collective Focus: Scotland's National Audit (Summary Report - The Main Findings and Conclusions from the National Cultural Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries)*, Scottish Museums Council: Edinburgh, 2002: 8.

⁹ *Community Education Training Review: A note from the Advisory Committee to Nicol Stephen MSP, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs*, Edinburgh, 2002: 2.

¹⁰ *Communities: Change through learning, Report of a Working Group on the Future of Community Education*, Edinburgh, 2000.

Volunteers would also benefit from this experience.¹¹ Ways of encouraging the cultural and heritage sector to become involved in the provision of this training should be investigated. Additionally, museum professionals should also participate in designing/delivering CPD programmes for staff at the training institutions.¹² This would help such staff to update their knowledge of the field.¹³ The creation of more active partnerships between the relevant teaching colleges and universities, museum professionals and the SMC is key to the success of this work.

Conclusion

Creating our Futures ... Minding Our Past ..., Scotland's national cultural strategy states that "Culture is at the heart of education... The creativity of our citizens is a key national resource, vital to the individual's quality of life and to society's well being".¹⁴ The strategy also recognised how culture can combat social exclusion and enhance people's quality of life. Access to Scotland's cultural and heritage resources should be made equally available to learners of all ages and backgrounds. It is important, therefore, to ensure that community educators are properly trained to utilise the considerable learning potential represented by Scotland's cultural and heritage infrastructure.

The Scottish Office report *Communities: Change through learning*, emphasised the need for imaginative and relevant learning experiences which are tailored to learners' needs.¹⁵ The report also highlights how services and opportunities should be brought together to combat "territorial" tendencies and maximise accessibility and responsiveness to communities. Museums are uniquely placed to facilitate a shared sense of citizenship and entitlement to Scotland's heritage through the provision of exciting and relevant education programmes. While community educators have long realised this, the use of heritage as a community developmental tool has not been adequately accounted for within their professional training curriculum. Given this, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the *Community Education Training Review*, and urge Communities Scotland to recognise the invaluable place of museum education in combating social exclusion and delivering lifelong learning. The cultural and heritage sector should be encouraged to take its place alongside "other professions such as social work, teaching, health and

¹¹ *Community Education Training Review: A note from the Advisory Committee to Nicol Stephen MSP, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs*, Edinburgh, 2002: 7.

¹² *Community Education Training Review: A note from the Advisory Committee to Nicol Stephen MSP, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs*, Edinburgh, 2002: 5.

¹³ *Working for Democracy: Review of Community Education Training*, Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh, 2001: 90.

¹⁴ *Creating Our Future... Minding Our Past...: Scotland's National Cultural Strategy*, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh, 2000: 7.

¹⁵ *Communities: Change through learning, Report of a Working Group on the Future of Community Education*, Edinburgh, 2000: 8.

housing” in the delivery of multi-professional training for community educators.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Working for Democracy: Review of Community Education Training*, Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh, 2001: 90. See also, *Community Education Training Review: A note from the Advisory Committee to Nicol Stephen MSP, Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs*, Edinburgh, 2002: 5.