Young Audiences
Network Scotland

29th June 2026

Ben Torrie – Head of Theatre
Vanessa Boyd – Head of Dance
Colin Bradie – Head of Creative Learning and Young People
Creative Scotland
Waverley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

Dear Ben, Vanessa and Colin

A Call for Collective Discussion and Action on the Future of Touring Work for Young Audiences in Scotland

Young Audiences Network Scotland, established with support from Creative Scotland to champion a diverse community of practitioners, is writing to express deep concern about the current Touring Fund criteria, which continues to exclude nurseries and schools as eligible settings for supported touring. This decision is having an ongoing, significant and detrimental impact on Scotland's artists, producers, educators, and—most importantly—the babies, children and young people whose cultural rights we collectively have a duty to uphold.

For decades, Scotland has been internationally renowned for the creation and touring of high-quality work for young audiences. This success has depended on a flexible mixed-venue model - encompassing public venues, community spaces, schools and nurseries - that allows children from all backgrounds to experience culture in the places where they live and learn. The continued removal of nurseries and schools as eligible settings dismantles this model at its foundation.

Children's Cultural Rights and Creative Scotland's Duties

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), now incorporated into Scots law, every child has the right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life (Article 31). As a duty bearer, Creative Scotland is required to remove barriers to participation, ensure equitable access, and actively support cultural provision for all children.

Creative Scotland identifies three obligations:

- Protection – keeping children safe
- Provision – ensuring children can access arts and culture
- Participation – involving children in the decisions that affect them

Current Touring Fund restrictions and changed criteria for the Open Fund run counter to these obligations. They reduce provision, particularly for children who already face the greatest barriers to attending cultural events—those living in rural areas, from low-income households, with disabilities or additional needs. Moreover, there is no evidence that children and young people were meaningfully consulted before this decision was reinforced, a breach of Article 12 of the UNCRC.

Impact on Access, Equity and Scotland's Cultural Infrastructure

Schools and nurseries are not "closed settings" in the cultural sense. They are often the most significant and equitable access point for babies, children and young people's cultural participation. A model that relies solely on public venues places the onus on families and schools to navigate transport, time, cost and logistical challenges. This inevitably excludes many children—precisely those whom public funding is meant to support.

Multi-Year Funded organisations can still produce using the flexible mixed-venue model. All other practitioners are being channelled through the current funding criteria, narrowing creative possibilities, creating an unequal playing field and exacerbating the equality, diversity and inclusion issues we are all committed to addressing.

An Opportunity for Collaborative Action

This moment is an opportunity - not simply to address a single funding rule, but to rethink, together, how Scotland can honour UNCRC Article 31 and ensure that every child has the right to 'participate fully in cultural and artistic life'.

Young Audiences Network Scotland requests a meeting urgently to discuss:

1. an evaluation of funding criteria through a UNCRC rights-based lens, exploring our duties and Creative Scotland's
2. flexible touring and funding models that support funding across diverse settings
3. the impact the current situation is having on artists, audiences and on the pipeline of work, with a view to ensuring sustainable and equitable pathways for artists, producers and companies
4. methods for meaningful consultation with children and young people

Signed:

Jo Timmins, James Preston, Anna Plasberg-Hill, Iain Reekie, Jenny Noble: Lyra
Rhona Matheson: Young Audiences Network Scotland/Freelance
Alexander Zawalnyski: Apropos Theatre
Jordan Blackwood: Aberdeen Performing Arts
Greg Sinclair: Freelancer
Belinda McElhinney, Fiona Ferguson, Marion Bourbouze, Julien Almeida, Lou Brodie, Pamela Walker, Marisa Hopwood: Imaginate
Ida Casilli: Freelancer
Vicky Rutherford-O'Leary: Curious Seed
Katrine Turner: Freelancer
Sarah Gray: Scottish Theatre Producers
Heather Fulton, Brenda Murphy: Frozen Charlotte
Annabel Lunney: Light the Blue Festival
Svetlana McMahon: Everyday Miracle Productions
Fiona Ferrier, Rachel Colles: Dirliebane Theatre Company
Natasha Gilmore: Barrowland Ballet
Susan Hay: Marc Brew Company
Joanna Avi-Iorie: Freelancer
Laura Penny, Dougie Irvine, Sophie Ochojna: Visible Fictions
Ellana Gilbert: Freelancer
Edviges Lima: Freelancer
Carolyne Latham: Puppet Anima
Jennifer Phillips, Gemma Smith, Lauren McGill: Starcatchers
Gill Robertson, Louise Gilmour-Wills, Tony Reekie: Catherine Wheels
Hayley Earlam: Freelancer
Andrea Cabrera Luna: Freelancer
Lisa Wilson: Freelancer
Chloe Jacobs, Tommy Roberts: Proscenium Stage School

Laura Fisher: Freelancer
Sarah Rose Graber: Freelancer
Adam Ryan: Freelancer
Elizabeth Fuller: MacRobert Arts Centre
Alexandra Borghino: Singing Willows
Sian Mitchell MacGregor: Freelancer
Tanya McLaughlin: Freelancer
Claudia Cawthorne: Freelancer
Steve Small: Strangetown