



Arts Council of Northern

**ART FORM AND SPECIALIST
AREA POLICY 2013-2018**

LANGUAGE ARTS



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Preamble

The Language Arts Policy has been developed in line with *Ambitions for the Arts*, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's five-year Strategic Plan for the Arts, 2013-18. The overarching priorities of the Plan – champion the arts, promote access, build a sustainable sector – are reflected across the set of the Council's Art Form and Specialist Area policies, 2013-18.

Introduction to Language Arts Policy

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement confirmed the establishment of a North South Language Body with funding for promotion and development of Irish language and Ulster-Scots language and culture; recognition of Irish under Part 3 and Ulster-Scots under part 2 of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*; the establishment of the Linguistic Diversity Branch within the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL).

The Arts Council has for some time recognised Irish and Ulster-Scots language arts as living elements of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage. Both language communities have developed many distinctive forms of artistic expression, and both have the ability to adapt and reinvent themselves.

Both languages benefit from recognition under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Irish under Part 3 of the Charter and Ulster Scots under Part 2. The Council is aware of their importance in enabling self-expression, independence of thought, and expression of, and reflection on, Northern Ireland's senses of identity and diverse cultural life.

Through funding, advocacy and promotion of these language arts, the Council aims to strengthen the language arts infrastructure, provide support for writers and practitioners, increase audiences for, and awareness of these arts, and expand the language arts community.

In October 2003, the Arts Council received the results of the Audit and Needs Analysis of the Arts of Irish and Ulster Scots, the product of an extensive programme of interviews and other research carried out during 2002 and 2003. The aim of the study was to provide a comparative review of the situation on the ground with specific regard to activities, audiences, boundaries and development needs.

The report formed the basis of further sectoral consultations through 2004. These were conducted on behalf of the Council by POBAL, the Irish-language development agency, and by Marketing Strategy & Planning among Ulster Scots groups. The aim of the consultation was to generate feedback on the findings of the report and its recommendations for action. The POBAL report was received in February 2005; MSP reported in June 2005.

By appraising the current level of development and the extent of activity 'on the ground' within those art forms, the Council hoped to establish a firm base for policy making and strategy development from which activity programmes might be created that would underpin sustainable art form engagement for the long-term.

Definitions

Irish language arts comprise those art forms that are directly related to the Irish language, with particular emphasis on creative writing in Irish and Irish-language theatre. Ulster Scots arts comprise those arts activities with mainly Scottish roots. This includes arts activities relating to the Scots language in Ulster and distinctive non-linguistic arts originating in the Scottish tradition but which may have developed differently in Ulster, which would be recognised by those who define themselves as Ulster Scots as part of their tradition. It also includes arts activities (irrespective of their roots) common within Ulster-Scots communities and important as a means by which the community defines itself.

The Council recognises that there is overlap between Language Arts and Traditional Arts, and that practitioners in related art forms may regard themselves as working in the Language Arts. However, the Council tries to demarcate clearly its specific support for Language Arts.

Associated with Language Arts are Traditional Arts - such as music, dance and storytelling - that have their genesis in the various cultural influences that have impacted on the arts activity practised by the people living on the island of Ireland over centuries and are clearly identifiable as being rooted in England, lowland Scotland, Gaelic Ireland and/or Gaelic Scotland.

Funding Objectives

- improve accessibility to the public for artists working in Irish and/or Ulster Scots by supporting relevant organizations;
- maintain and increase the number and frequency of arts activities taking place in the language arts communities;
- increase the occasions and opportunities for artists to develop a track-record of public work and build a career as an artist through supporting magazines, roadshows, tours and residencies;
- increase the number of joint projects and the scale of collaborative working within and, where appropriate, across the language arts sectors;
- enable new artists through supporting programmes of workshops, mentoring and master class delivery aimed at developing new work of quality;
- foster increased professionalism in the Language Arts by supporting individuals such as musicians, writers, dancers and editors;
- support the creation and development of new work in Irish and Ulster Scots;
- raise the profile of the arts within both language communities and in Northern Ireland as a whole by assisting initiatives aimed at presenting the best, both at home and abroad.

Additional Information

'Ambitions for the Arts' Five Year Arts Strategy, 2013-2018

www.artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/strategy

Art Form and Specialist Area Policies, 2013-2018

www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts

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