

## **Exciting new project to improve access to galleries for disabled and deaf people in Scotland**

**Thanks to funding from the National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council, engage Scotland will be undertaking an ambitious new project over the next two years with the aim of exploring how art galleries in Scotland can work in partnership with disabled and deaf people to improve access.**

Our new project will offer opportunities for research, consultation, partnerships, collaboration and training across the gallery and visual arts sector with the ultimate aim of creating galleries which are truly accessible to everyone. This is an exciting way for engage Scotland to build upon engage and Shape's recent Explore project in England and Wales which addressed similar issues.

The project will develop in two phases. In the initial research and scoping phase we will reflect on existing good practice and expertise in Scotland and consult with disabled and deaf people, the organisations who work with them and the gallery sector to establish what support they need to create accessible galleries. The second phase will respond to these findings and give four Scottish galleries the opportunity to develop participatory projects which look at how their whole organisations can work in partnership with disabled and deaf people.

A freelance project coordinator will be recruited to manage the project from Spring 2010.

### **Jane Sillis, Director of engage said:**

"We are delighted to be launching this exciting project which will encourage the gallery sector in Scotland to adopt strategies, policies and programmes which accommodate the needs of disabled and deaf people and engage with them not only as audience members but also as artists, employees and volunteers."

### **Amanda Catto, Head of Visual Arts, Scottish Arts Council said:**

"Equality and inclusion are intrinsic elements of all Scottish Arts Council activities and we are delighted to have developed this project alongside engage Scotland. This project will begin by mapping the good work already happening throughout galleries across the country and will then work towards developing strategic interventions which will ensure that the visual arts sector maintains its momentum towards promoting equality for all of Scotland's communities."

Ends

# engage Scotland

## Notes for editors:

1. **engage** is the National Association for Gallery Education promoting greater access to, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts in the UK and internationally, through professional development opportunities, including conferences and training events, research projects, grants schemes and the engage Journal. <http://www.engage.org>

**engage Scotland** represents the Scottish body of engage members, responding to training and networking needs within gallery education with a Scottish focus. <http://www.engagescotland.org.uk>

2. The majority of the funding for this project is from the National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council's Equalities Department <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinscotland/equalities.aspx>
3. **Explore** was a temporary initiative to improve access to galleries by disabled and deaf people. It was funded by the Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust through the Ann Rylands Special Project and ran between July 2007 and January 2009. The programme was jointly developed and managed by engage, the National Association for Gallery Education and Shape, a London-based disability arts organisation.

The project introduced disabled people to the enjoyment of visual art and galleries, while educating and supporting galleries and artists to adopt good practice for disabled and deaf visitors.

The eight participating galleries in England and Wales

- Provided a programme of creative visual arts workshops for disabled or deaf people;
- Received a programme of training and support for their staff and artists including Disability Equality Training, an access audit for each venue, training for artists and a workshop on Disability Action Planning

[http://www.engage.org/projects/explore\\_english.aspx](http://www.engage.org/projects/explore_english.aspx)

<http://www.shapearts.org.uk/>

4. **Contact: Sarah Yearsley**, engage Scotland Coordinator

[scotland@engage.org](mailto:scotland@engage.org)

<http://www.engagescotland.org.uk>

Tel 01738 787137, (Mon – Thurs)

**Laura Cherry**, Publications, Website and Marketing Officer, engage

[laura.cherry@engage.org](mailto:laura.cherry@engage.org) Tel. 020 7729 5858 (Mon – Fri)