

Culture Minister visits Craigmillar arts group

Culture Minister Neil Gray met young artists on Wednesday during a visit to performing arts organisation Lyra in Craigmillar, Edinburgh.

For the past 10 years Lyra has built a world-class professional arts community for children in one of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

By seeing shows, taking classes in drama, music and dance and being empowered to make their own work based on what they care about, Lyra improves the quality of daily life for children impacted by poverty, engaging an average of 2,000 children per year.

Every week during term-time local children receive free afterschool and Saturday classes in theatre, music and dance. Children audition and commission professional artists that they work with over the course of a school year to create a new music, theatre or dance piece. The new commissions are presented in the annual Bright & Wild festival in May for audiences of friends, families and local people.

Throughout the year Lyra's Culture Crew programme brings professional companies to present their shows in the theatre at Artspace – giving young people the chance to learn skills in marketing, box office and front of house. Lyra also works outside its building with other local community groups and presents professional shows in other cultural venues.

The Minister met and chatted to young people benefitting from the organisation, had the opportunity to watch and take part in some of the workshops, and tour Lyra's theatre and studio.

The visit celebrated 10 years of Lyra being resident in Artspace at Craigmillar, housed in the SPACE development, owned and managed by Places for People Scotland who provide commercial spaces to local organisations and charities.

Jo Timmins, Lyra founder and artistic director said: "It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to meet Mr Gray and introduce him to some of the many young people who come along each week to enjoy theatre, music and dance.

"Working in Craigmillar and Niddrie is a privilege, bringing the magic of the arts to children and young people who otherwise may not get the opportunity. Lyra builds confidence, raises aspirations, increases creative skills and helps overcome low self-esteem in children disadvantaged by inequality."

Culture Minister Neil Gray said: "It's been a pleasure to take part in Lyra's birthday celebrations and to see at first hand the performing arts organisation's impressive range of activities.

"Our children and young people have experienced significant disruption to all aspects of their lives as a result of the pandemic and the activities of cultural organisations, like Lyra, play an important role in helping them to recover and reconnect.

"The Scottish Government is keen to support children from a diverse range of backgrounds by broadening the opportunities for them to take part in cultural activities."

