

National Council of Voluntary Organisations and  
All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing

# The Role of Arts and Cultural Organisations in Health and Wellbeing

Policy Briefing – September 2017

## Background

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW) has undertaken a major Inquiry into the role of the arts in health and wellbeing, with which the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has been involved. The Inquiry yielded a substantial report – *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* – providing strong evidence that creative and cultural activities can have a positive impact on people’s health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> Taking up the findings of the APPGAHW Inquiry, this briefing sets out a role for arts and cultural sector in facilitating health and wellbeing.

## Cultural Commissioning for Health and Wellbeing

The Five Year Forward View, published by NHS England in 2014, emphasised a need for rapid improvements in preventing health conditions from manifesting in the first place and worsening in the longer term. The Cultural Commissioning Programme (CCP), coordinated by NCVO, identified great potential for the arts and culture to address health and wellbeing issues.<sup>2</sup> Two of the pilots supported by the CCP – delivered by Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Kent County Council (KCC) – are considered in *Creative Health* alongside some of the key findings from the Programme.

The design and delivery of public services increasingly focuses on the needs and resources of local communities. This signals an important opportunity for the arts and culture to feature in local health and wellbeing strategies. This is particularly relevant to arts and cultural providers working as part of a local ecology and with other voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. In turn, there is increasing recognition that targeted support of the VCSE sector enhances place-based care. In some instances, this has led to decision-making and service delivery in the area of health and wellbeing being devolved to the sector.<sup>3</sup>

Under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, CCGs have the power to award small grants to VCSE organisations, enabling them to bypass the standard contract for procurement of services.<sup>4</sup> Integrated Personal Commissioning, which unites funding from health and social care sources, is being delivered in partnership with the VCSE sector.<sup>5</sup> There is scope for arts and cultural organisations to run programmes funded through personal budgets.<sup>6</sup>

Arts and cultural organisations will need to continue developing their skills in bidding for health and social care funding. KCC has developed an Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit to help the cultural sector bid for and deliver public sector contracts.<sup>7</sup> NCVO has produced a resource to help arts and cultural organisations demonstrate impact in this area.<sup>8</sup>

## Arts and Culture on Prescription

As part of a move towards place-based care, social prescribing seeks solutions to psychosocial problems in the community beyond the clinical environment. The most common outcomes of such community referral schemes are: increases in self-esteem and confidence; a greater sense of control and empowerment; improvements in psychological wellbeing; and reductions in anxiety and depression. Arts on prescription is a vital part of social prescribing, providing participatory creative activities that help to restore people’s wellbeing, reduce anxiety, depression and stress and aid in the management of long-term health conditions. In St Helens, an arts-on-prescription service has shown a social return on investment of £11.55 for every £1

*Investment in Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations in the Health and Care Sector: Final report* produced in partnership by representatives of the VCSE sector and the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England. London: DH.

4 NHS England. (2015). *A Bite Size Guide to Grants for the Voluntary Sector*. Leeds: NHS England.

5 Integrated Personal Commissioning: [www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/ipc](http://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/ipc)

6 As an example, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) TIN Arts in Durham offers a contemporary dance course for people with learning disabilities which is funded through personal budgets.

7 Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit: [artscommissioningtoolkit.com](http://artscommissioningtoolkit.com)

8 See: [knowhownonprofit.org/funding/cultural-commissioning/evidencing-the-socialvalue-of-arts-and-culture](http://knowhownonprofit.org/funding/cultural-commissioning/evidencing-the-socialvalue-of-arts-and-culture)

1 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. (2017). *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. Available at: [artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg/inquiry](http://artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg/inquiry)

2 New Economics Foundation. (2016). *The Art of Commissioning: How commissioners can release the potential of the arts and cultural sector*. London: New Economics Foundation.

3 Department of Health. (2016). *Joint Review of Partnerships and*

invested.<sup>9</sup> Many organisations offer such activities, whether explicitly termed arts on prescription or not, to people experiencing psychological and physical distress.<sup>10</sup> Organisations delivering participatory arts activities would do well to become part of the Social Prescribing Network so that they are included in any future databases of activity.<sup>11</sup>

Museums and galleries offer a non-clinical, non-stigmatising environment in which to undertake journeys of self-exploration. Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Our Museum initiative encourages museums and galleries to play a significant and enduring role in their community,<sup>12</sup> and the case is being advanced for them to be considered part of the public health landscape.<sup>13</sup> Cultural institutions could do much more to address health and wellbeing.

A research project led by Professor Helen Chatterjee at University College London (2014–17) is investigating the potential of museums on prescription as part of the wider social prescribing landscape for older adults. Interim findings show a progressive increase in psychological wellbeing across sessions and an upward trend in social inclusion.<sup>14</sup> A museum directory of social prescribing and wellbeing activity in North West England has been published by Health Education England, showing a £3 return on every £1 invested.<sup>15</sup> In seeking to expand their range of visitors, more cultural organisations might make it part of their strategy to reach older people in their communities who are at risk of social isolation.

As well as being repositories of knowledge and literature, libraries are accessible safe spaces that are essential to people's wellbeing and can play a central part in the happy, healthy lives of people of all ages. The library network encourages reading among children and adults, promotes health and wellbeing and offers creative sanctuary to community members and refugees.

### Recommendations

*Creative Health* makes a series of suggestions, aimed at improving practice, research and funding, and ten specific recommendations. Two explicit references to arts and cultural organisations are made in the recommendations that:

- Arts Council England supports arts and cultural organisations in making health and wellbeing outcomes integral to their work and identifies health and wellbeing as a priority in its 10-year strategy for 2020–2030.
- Healthwatch, the Patients Association and other representative organisations, along with arts and cultural providers, work with patients and service users to advocate the health and wellbeing benefits of arts engagement to health and social care professionals and the wider public.

### Information and Contact Details

The APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing is chaired by Rt Hon. Ed Vaizey MP and Rt Hon. Lord Howarth of Newport CBE, and the secretariat is provided by the National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing. *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* was researched and drafted by Dr Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt at King's College London.

For more information about anything in this briefing or for a copy of the report, contact Alexandra Coulter: [coultera@parliament.uk](mailto:coultera@parliament.uk)

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<sup>9</sup> Whelan, G. (2016). *A Social Return on Investment: Evaluation of the St Helens Creative Alternatives Arts on Prescription Programme*. Liverpool: John Moores University.

<sup>10</sup> National Council of Voluntary Organisations. (2015). *Arts on Prescription: Arts-based social prescribing for better mental wellbeing* is available online at: [www.ncvo.org.uk/images/](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/)

<sup>11</sup> The Social Prescribing Network is a collaboration between the College of Medicine, the University of Westminster and Wellcome: [www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/Comment/what-is-the-national-social-prescribing-network](http://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/Comment/what-is-the-national-social-prescribing-network)

<sup>12</sup> Our Museum: [ourmuseum.org.uk](http://ourmuseum.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> Camic, P. & Chatterjee, H. (2013). Museums and Art Galleries as Partners for Public Health Interventions. *Perspectives in Public Health*, 133 (1), pp. 66–71.

<sup>14</sup> Chatterjee, H. J. & Thomson, L. (2015). Museums and Social Prescribing. In H. L. Robertson (Ed.). *The Caring Museum: New models of engagement with ageing*. Edinburgh and Boston: MuseumsEtc, pp. 304–41.

<sup>15</sup> Health Education England. (2016). *More than Heritage: A museum directory of social prescribing and wellbeing activity in north west England*. Manchester: Health Education England.



Supporting arts and cultural organisations to engage in public sector commissioning