

CREATIVE HEALTH

Improving health and wellbeing through the arts



Northumberland
County Council

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2019

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FOREWORD

In a previous report, we highlighted the part that the social determinants, such as education, housing and employment have on improving people's health and wellbeing. The report highlighted that improving health and wellbeing wasn't just the preserve of health and social care. The arts are also social determinants but they're somehow seen differently by many - a 'nice to have' rather than a fundamental contributor to health.

The 2019 Director of Public Health's Report focuses on culture, the arts and the positive impact they have on health and wellbeing. This outcome will come as no surprise to the many people involved in the vibrant cultural community that has been thriving, and continues to develop, across Northumberland. From major arts venues and events, museums, galleries and festivals to local craft fairs, book and music groups. Many arts and cultural activities are crucial in ensuring people are not isolated or lonely; some programmes which engage people with the arts do so at a deeper level, leading to a profound and life-changing impact on their health.

Creative Health, the 2017 report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, concluded: "arts-based approaches can help people stay well, recover faster, manage long-term conditions and experience a better quality of life".

Making the case for investment in any intervention to improve health and wellbeing generally requires a good evidence base that demonstrates a measurable impact; this is particularly so when money is tight. There is good evidence that the arts can have a significant impact in some areas, particularly mental health but in other areas, there are gaps. Absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence and if we waited for several randomised controlled trials before introducing any new approach

we wouldn't be forging ahead with things like social prescribing. We do have an advantage; we have a flourishing arts and cultural scene and strong links into our local universities so one of the key recommendations is to develop a creative hub for arts, health and wellbeing research. Sometimes though, we just need to take a leap of faith.



Liz Morgan FFPH
Director of Public Health

"Arts and culture in our lives is vital to our wellbeing and health, whether accessing an e-book from our library service or experiencing a touring performance in one of our rural village halls. For local people and communities in Northumberland our cultural traditions of music and dance are the very essence of who we are and why people celebrate and want to visit and live in our beautiful County. It is in this context of inclusion and access we want to lead the way in innovative arts and health initiatives and build on the impact of the work that has been achieved to date."



Cllr Cath Homer
Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture, Tourism

"From a health perspective, the arts can have a real impact across the life course, from maternal health to end of life care and although we intuitively know that's the case, the evidence to support it is also growing. At the time of writing, we're in the grip of the COVID 19 pandemic. For many people and families, their situation will be made substantially worse because of the need to spend a majority of their time in home and social circumstances which were already less good for health and wellbeing. Being creative can play an important role in supporting mental wellbeing, whatever the circumstances, and this report explores the evidence and how we in Northumberland, can make that work better for our communities."



Cllr Veronica Jones
Cabinet Member for Adult Wellbeing and Health

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

'The arts' and 'culture' mean many things to many people. It includes the visual arts (painting, drawing, photography and sculpture), the performing arts (music, singing, drama) and crafts, literature and media. It encompasses a wide range of settings - museums, libraries, concert halls, galleries, heritage sites and community settings such as village halls and other shared spaces, both inside and outside but also digitally and in our own front rooms.

The Government's first Culture Paper in fifty years¹ states:

Culture no longer simply means being familiar with a select list of works of art and architecture, but the accumulated influence of creativity, the arts, museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage upon all our lives. When we talk about our 'cultural sectors', we are referring to an extraordinary network of individuals and organisations, that together preserve, reflect and promote who we are as a nation, in all our rich diversity.....each community has its own culture – its own history, museums and traditions. In this global, interconnected economy, what is local and unique has a special value and should be supported and encouraged. We should no more dictate a community's culture than we should tell people what to create or how to create it. The role of the government is to enable great culture and creativity to flourish – and to ensure that everyone can have access to it.

Why Arts and Health?

We're increasingly recognising that the arts can make a considerable contribution to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the population as a whole.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry²

This report identified some key messages:

- The arts can help keep us well, and our recovery and support longer lives better lived
- The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long term conditions, loneliness and mental health
- The arts can help save money in the health services and social care

Even more recently, the World Health Organisation has reviewed the evidence on the contribution the arts make to improving health and wellbeing.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/510798/DCMS_The_Culture_White_Paper_3_.pdf

² APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing.
https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. WHO³

PREVENTION AND PROMOTION

The arts can:

- affect the social determinants of health (e.g. developing social cohesion and reducing social inequalities and inequities);
- support child development (e.g. enhancing mother–infant bonding and supporting speech and language acquisition);
- encourage health-promoting behaviours (e.g. through promoting healthy living or encouraging engagement with health care);
- help to prevent ill health (including enhancing well-being and reducing the impact of trauma or the risk of cognitive decline); and
- support caregiving (including enhancing our understanding of health and improving clinical skills).

MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

The arts can:

- help people experiencing mental illness at all stages of the life course (e.g. by supporting recovery from perinatal mental illness and after trauma and abuse);
- support care for people with acute conditions (e.g. by improving the experience of and outcomes in care for hospital inpatients and individuals in intensive care);
- support people with neurological disorders (including autism, cerebral palsy, stroke, degenerative neurological disorders and dementias);
- assist in the treatment of noncommunicable diseases (including cancer, lung disease, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases); and
- support end-of-life care (including palliative care and bereavement).

In Northumberland, we've already made the link between the arts through our cultural strategy

³ Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

Our Creative Landscape. A Cultural Strategy for Northumberland⁴,

VISION

We want Northumberland to be internationally recognised for our exceptional arts and heritage and for local people to benefit fully from a range of cultural experiences that enhance quality of life, health and wellbeing making Northumberland an outstanding and special place to live, work and visit.

GOALS

1. *Placemaking and Identity*
We will celebrate our landscape and built heritage for the future
2. *Education and learning*
We will develop talent and skills progression for our children and young people
3. *Health and Wellbeing*
We will ensure access to arts and heritage to support our residents' fulfilment
4. *Economy and Growth*
We will invest in a strong and dynamic cultural sector together
5. *Partnership and collaboration*
We will raise our cultural profile regionally, nationally and internationally

The obvious link between 'Our Creative Landscape' and this report is with health and wellbeing, but other goals relate to the wider determinants of health:

- Using the arts to provide people with a renewed feeling of love, passion and pride for their 'place';
- Education has become one of the clearest indicators of life outcomes such as employment, income and social status, and is a strong predictor of attitudes and wellbeing;
- A growing cultural economy is likely to mean more jobs and more income into the county. Although the quality of those jobs is important, it's a fundamental way of getting a level of income that provides us with our most basic material needs and many indirect benefits such as a sense of purpose, self-esteem and social networks and support.

Although there is a growing body of research demonstrating the potential contribution of the arts to improving health and wellbeing, arts programmes can suffer from a lack of financial commitment. In Northumberland though, we do have a long tradition of funding such initiatives. Many of these projects have benefited from joint resources from a range of stakeholders, which demonstrates the importance of working in partnership. Many of the examples and case studies included in this report demonstrate the commitment of the people of Northumberland to embracing the arts to improve the lives of our communities.

This report aims to demonstrate the evidence of the positive impact the arts, culture and heritage has on the population; provide examples of where this is working; and further the argument to continue providing support.

4 <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Libraries-and-archives/FINAL-cultural-Strategy-2018-30-1.pdf>

Place, Environment and Community

All the cultural organisations (arts, museums, theatres etc) reach out to work with a diversity of people and are continuing to seek out people who have not engaged with the arts. It is a fundamental part of their work and it is often co-created and co-commissioned with the people they are working with. That engagement process on its own has a positive impact on health and wellbeing, skills improvement and the development of social and cultural capital. At the moment though, many of these projects are funded by applications to trusts and foundations that are part of a relatively small pool of organisations in a position to support cultural activities.

CASE STUDY 1

MUSEUMS NORTHUMBERLAND BAIT PROJECT (Arts Council England's Creative People & Places programme)

We asked people 'why does art matter'?

"Art matters because ...it gives me more confidence and improves by life"

Tom, Cramlington

"....it enables people to express their innermost thoughts and emotions in a creative way"

Anna, Blyth

"... it gives us ways of looking at the world and makes us feel emotionally attached"

member of Education Other Than At School group

Research over the decades has indicated the positive impact of education in the early years on children's learning, cognitive, behavioral and social outcomes⁵, and the arts play a key role in this⁶. Education continues to be vitally important as children grow older, with many demonstrable and positive consequences, not least in terms of future earning potential and good health⁷. Continued learning enhances personal development and social inclusion, as well as increasing life expectancy⁸.

Cultural and arts related activities have a direct relationship with happiness and wellbeing. They are a means of engaging a wide variety of individuals and communities in activities which cultivate positive feelings, which then have an impact on both mental and physical health.

'Arts engagement may be envisaged as a factor that can mitigate the effects of health inequalities while policies are implemented to eradicate their causes'⁹

Encouraging and supporting engagement in activities is central to avoiding the poor health outcomes of loneliness and social exclusion¹⁰. The arts are an important component of enabling people to fulfill their potential and lead healthy, meaningful lives.

The arts have a demonstrable impact on social cohesion demonstrated through the Northumberland Cultural Fund which provided small grants to community groups. The Fund supported an events programme Great Northumberland and evidenced how being involved and experiencing an arts event made people feel better and connected particularly in rural communities. In Hebron, one of many rural villages, the Fund supported the community to stage a jazz musical evening. As a case study in the evaluation, the event brought together older people who were isolated, a young family who had experienced recent trauma with their father becoming paralysed and were inspired to come as a family and families that wouldn't normally attend because of price barriers. In response to being asked about the importance of the event to the community, the organiser responded "it was a lifesaver, really."

- 5 Melhuish, E and Gardner, J. (2018) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/738725/SEED_Impact_Age_4_Report_September_2018.pdf
- 6 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf
- 7 Marmot, M., Goldblatt, P. and Allen, J. et al (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>
- 8 Ates, H. & Alsai, K. (2012) The Importance of Lifelong Learning has been Increasing. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812019416#!>
- 9 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf
- 10 Public Health England (2015) Local action on health inequalities Reducing social isolation across the lifecourse. London: Public Health England. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461120/3a_Social_isolation-Full-revised.pdf

The Setting

'Northumberland is a place with a unique and distinct identity. It is set on an international stage with Hadrian's Wall part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site...'¹¹

Northumberland is a unique part of the UK. It covers an area of nearly 2000 square miles and is a place of contrasts, from historic market towns to deserted beaches and deep forests. It has a dramatic history with castles and Roman forts, including UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hadrian's Wall. The wild and remote moors of the North Pennines and the rugged cliffs and wide dunes of the coast form two Areas of Outstanding Beauty. This all provides a magnificent setting for the lives of people living in Northumberland. However, it comes at a price. The remoteness and rurality of some places means that walkers can enjoy days with hardly a soul to be greeted, but also that individuals struggle to get to meet others for social activities, may have more difficulty accessing services and can become geographically isolated. There are thriving towns, but also areas of deprivation, especially in the ex-mining communities, where unemployment remains stubbornly high.

Spending across England on the arts has decreased by 26.5% between 2010/11 and 2016/17, with the greatest decline being in

rural communities. Despite this, Northumberland has maintained an internationally renowned arts and cultural sector with eight Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations.

We need to recognise the powerful contribution the arts can make to our health and wellbeing. People have always sought to express themselves through the arts from the earliest cave paintings; and through culture by the vast evidence of custom and practices across different communities. This demonstrates the deep need for different ways of self and cultural expression.

The arts can provide the setting and engagement required to build resilience and ensure people are able to make positive changes in their own lives and beyond¹². If we are to support people in fulfilling their potential, then we need to ensure we provide the means to do this.

¹¹ <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Libraries-and-archives/FINAL-cultural-Strategy-2018-30-1.pdf>

¹² White, M.(2009) Arts development in community health. Oxford: Radcliffe

CHAPTER 2. BEST START IN LIFE



CHAPTER 2. BEST START IN LIFE

The 2010 Marmot Review¹³ provided the evidence that the foundations for human development, be it physical, emotional or intellectual, are laid down in the early years of life, starting before conception. Young children's experience has a lifelong impact on health and wellbeing, including educational achievement, economic status, heart disease, mental health and healthy weight¹⁴. Children's opportunities are improved by reducing the inequalities their families experience and this leads to better educational attainment¹⁵; improved personal, social and emotional development, with communication, language and literacy skills¹⁶; and a reduced likelihood of developing mental health problems like depression¹⁷.

Before and after birth

Arts programmes in the antenatal period have been shown to support psychological readiness for parenthood¹⁸, as well as reducing depression and anxiety^{19,20}. Music can have a positive effect on the experience of childbirth and reduce anxiety. It can also reduce pain scores and the need for painkillers. This improves recovery and allows early contact between mother and baby in hospital. Some types of music may improve the vital signs and wellbeing of premature babies, reducing the length of hospital stays.²¹ After birth, music has been found to be particularly effective in bonding, partly thought to be related to the facilitated social interaction between parent and baby²². Group singing has been associated with a faster recovery from moderate to severe postnatal depression than usual care or creative play²³; providing immersive 'me time' for mothers; facilitating a sense of achievement and identity; and enhancing mother-infant bond.

- 13 Marmot, M., Goldblatt, P. and Allen, J. et al (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf>
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- 23 Perkins et al. *BMC Psychology* (2018) 6:41 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-018-0253-0>

Pre-school provision

Arts and crafts for mothers of babies and young children can help to reduce anxiety, stress, depression and improve attachment. Through Northumberland's Sure Start Children's Centres, the Early Years team work closely with childminders, private, voluntary and independent nurseries, and schools. The team supports practitioners to provide a holistic educational offer, where children are given opportunities to develop and express their creativity. One particular nursery in the north of the county has prioritised art within their curriculum offer. To support children's artistic development, the nursery has worked closely with a local artist and parents who have specialist skills. Children have daily opportunities to explore media and materials, expressing their feelings

and thoughts in their own way. Within each room, an 'art specialist' has been established. This has helped to ensure it remains a key focus within children's learning and the experiences offered.

Children's Centres provide a strength based approach to enabling children, young people and families to build their capacity, so that they are more able to take control of their lives, equipping them with the skills to cope more effectively with potential challenges to their health and wellbeing. Evidence demonstrates that accessing such activities can help reduce inequalities: participation in arts encourages self-expression and empowerment; reading aloud encourages language skills; playing an instrument enhances literacy and spatial awareness²⁴.

24 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing.
https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

CASE STUDY 2

THE ARTS IN THE EARLY YEARS: 'Learning Together Through Play' provision in Children's Centres

The benefits of bringing the arts to the early years is well known and creative development sits firmly within the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. Families with younger children, babies and toddlers tell us they struggle to offer or access the arts due to finances, lack of interest, lack of creative ability and avoidance of mess. Many families are unaware of how early they can introduce arts and have not yet been introduced to the benefits.

Learning Together Through Play sessions lie at the heart of Northumberland Children's Centres offer to local families with young children. Early Years Practitioners plan a play based curriculum with high quality opportunities and experiences alongside encouragement and support to families to understand the benefits of play and to play with their children.

Over the 2019 Spring Term, 287 children accessed Learning Together Through Play in the West Locality. Children were introduced to a range of art activities including playdough, mud, leaves, paint and clay. Children were supported by their parents to explore and experiment with a range of media through sensory exploration, often using their whole body, for example being covered in leaves to feel and hear all of the senses. Parents of children with additional needs and disabilities have valued the support they have had from practitioners to introduce their child to creative activities.

About two in three parents said that they had a better understanding of their child's development... 'She now loves playdough as a result of coming to the session'

Three in four parents said that they had new ideas to try at home. 'I enjoy being able to show my son new experiences then sharing it with his dad at home'

Northumberland's Children's Centres focus on creating 'communication friendly spaces', which are designed with attractive and comfortable places to sit, and interesting wall hangings and simple playthings, geared to talking and sharing stories. Despite financial constraints, the Centres manage to maintain a strong arts dimension to their work, in both everyday activities, as well as in special events, such as community events, storytellers and artist residencies.

CASE STUDY 3

THE ARTS IN THE EARLY YEARS: 'Learning Together Through Play' provision in Children's Centres

Voice of the Creative is an Action for Children arts programme funded by Arts Council England and Cultural Services, Northumberland County Council. It aims to increase curiosity in the arts and creativity and impact positively on wellbeing in participants, using a child led approach to learning and play. This is a legacy of partnership work with Museums Northumberland bait.

Artists in residence and Centre Staff worked together to plan sessions to encourage curiosity in children and their parents through arts activity and play, as well as skill development. Activities include pop up arts workshops in parks, visits to places like Woodhorn Museum and Alnwick Garden, involvement with theatre companies such as Unfolding Theatre. Further plans include working with older young people to explore space transformation with a local artist, Amy Lord. Over the summer of 2019, the programme worked with over 500 participants, working with six artists.



Providing staff with appropriate training is key to ensuring that arts remain central to the work of Children's Centres. Funding to maintain the work is crucial because work in the arts makes a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

School education

School education is also a stage in a child's life where the advantages are unevenly distributed across the social spectrum²⁵. It is also where huge benefits can be gained from the additionality brought by the arts. Education ensures that individuals have the ability to secure resources for living the life they choose.

Arts education has been shown to improve academic achievement and school attendance, as well as promote social and emotional wellbeing²⁶. Creative activity in school can enhance children's sense of responsibility, improve confidence, increase self-esteem and promote better mental health²⁷.

Not only can the arts be of clear benefit to education and through that to future health, they can have a direct impact on children's and young people's health. Almost 1 in 5 children are overweight or obese on entering school – lower than the average for England in 2018/19 but still a significant number of children²⁸. This affects health and mortality, and also behaviour and emotional development²⁹. Although emphasis has been placed on encouraging physical activity, there is evidence that participation in arts and cultural activities can protect against obesity³⁰. For example, the arts are effective in getting health messages across to young people³¹ and in improving resilience³².

25 Perry, E. & Francis, B. (2010). The Social Class Gap for Educational Achievement: A review of the literature. London: Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

26 Vaughan, T., Harris, J. & Caldwell, B. J. (2011). Bridging the Gap in School Achievement Through the Arts. Victoria: The Song Room, p.3.

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28 Public Health England Profiles <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/childhood%20obesity#page/4/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/202/are/E06000057/iid/20601/age/200/sex/4>

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30 Cuypers, K., De Ridder, K. and Kvaløy, K., et al. (2012). Leisure Time Activities in Adolescence in the Presence of Susceptibility Genes for Obesity: Risk or resilience against overweight in adulthood? The HUNT study. BMC Public Health, 12, 820

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32 Zarobe, L. and Bungay, H. (2017) The role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people. A rapid review of the literature. Perspectives in Public Health;137(6):337–47. doi: 10.1016/j.ctim.2016.03.017. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1757913917712283>

CASE STUDY 4

MELVA

MELVA³³ is a creative intervention which centres around a play for 7-11 year olds. It is a partnership between theatre company, Mortal Fools, and Children North East. MELVA has been produced as a direct response to the Government's 2017 Green Paper Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision. It is designed as a creative resource to support schools, teachers and children to improve their health outcomes.

It tells the story of Melva, a 10-year-old girl whose struggles with anxiety keep her from leaving the house. What follows is an adventure which focuses on how she learns how her 'worrits' affect her and new ways to tackle them. This is a creative intervention at a sub-clinical and prevention level. It aims to:

- Give positive role models of children and adults developing their mental health;
- Reduce mental health stigma by encouraging conversations about day-to-day challenges;
- Improve emotional intelligence – which supports social and health issues and educational outcomes;

- Teach coping strategies to deal with worries and anxiety;
- Support the development of positive relationships (with teachers, parents and peers) – because we know the single-most important factor in supporting children's emotional health is at least one stable relationship with a committed adult.

In case studies of children who participated in Melva, the evaluation showed that afterwards, they were much more likely to:

- Try new things or take on tasks that they may not excel in.
- Support others in their work and interactions
- Think more deeply about what they are asked to do and consider a range of approaches and responses.
- Show confidence when asking questions and carrying out actions.

In Mortal Fools Youth Theatre, young people work as co-creators with professional theatre artists to produce high-quality, full-scale productions which explore contemporary topics and the realities of the world we're living in right now.

Children in healthcare settings

Increasingly, research is demonstrating the impact of the arts in improving the experiences of children and young people in healthcare settings. Children with chronic conditions can be supported in many ways by the arts. Art therapy has been found to reduce fear and stress³⁴, providing an opportunity for them to express themselves freely, which becomes part of the healing process, as well as allowing parents to relate to their children in positive ways³⁵. Music, storytelling and clowning have also been demonstrated to improve outcomes for children³⁶.

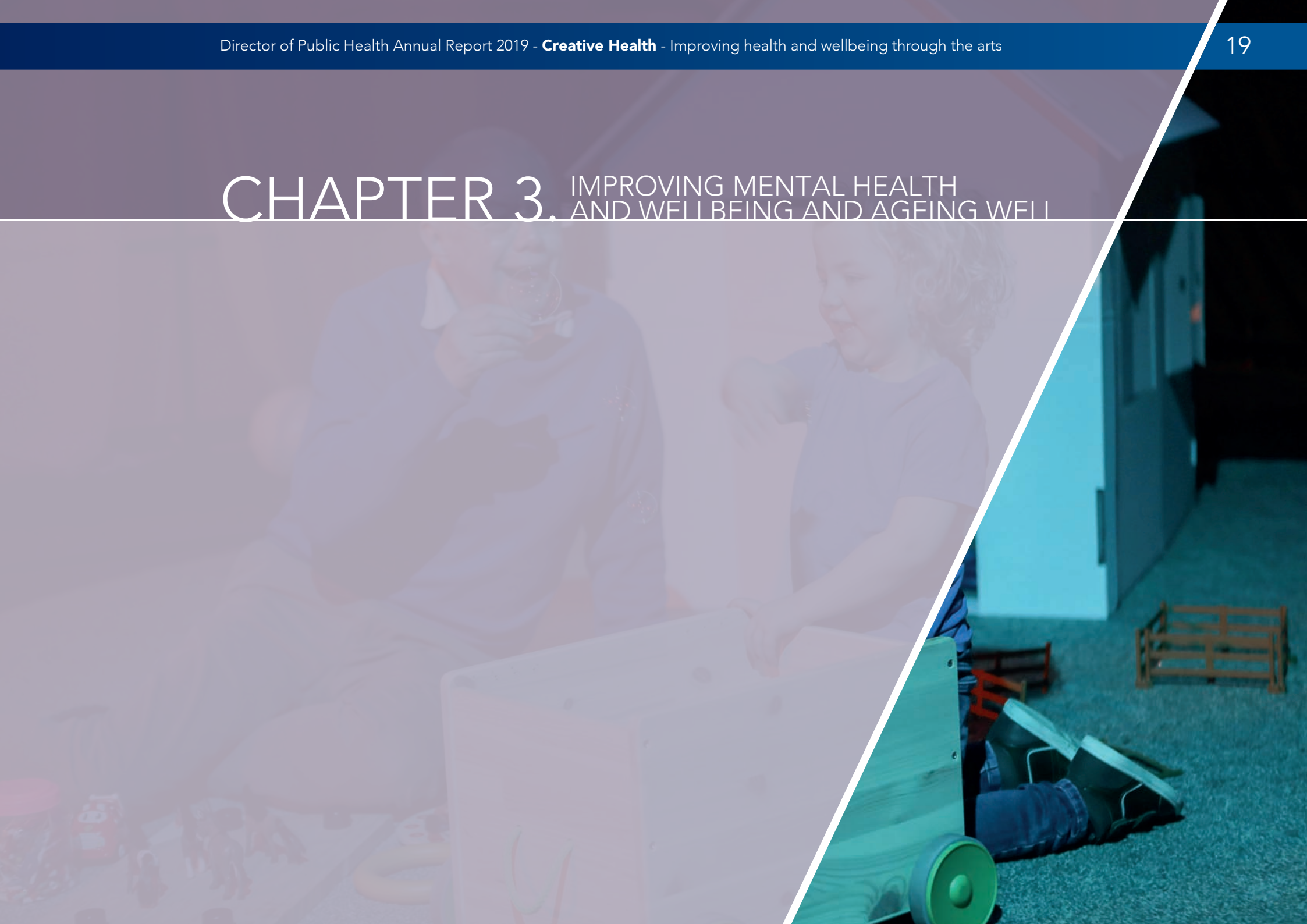
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34 Siegel, J., Lisa, H. and Rachlin, K. (2016) Expressive Arts Therapy with Hospitalized Children: A Pilot Study of Co-Creating Healing Sock Creatures. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, Vol 31, Issue 1, Pages 92–98. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0882596315002730>

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CHAPTER 3. IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND AGEING WELL



CHAPTER 3. IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND AGEING WELL

The creative arts and mental health

As we highlighted in last year's report, people with a mental illness are more likely to experience poor physical health and die up to 20 years earlier than those with good mental health³⁷.

The brain develops most rapidly in the early years of life, setting the scene for future health outcomes³⁸. As people get older, poorer physical health becomes more common and increases the risk of poorer mental health e.g. depression³⁹.

FACT!

An estimated one in ten children have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and 50% of all mental health problems develop before the age of 14 years⁴⁰. By the time people reach adulthood, 15% experience a common mental health disorder each year⁴¹.

Access to effective services is important, but investment in public mental health is key to preventing mental illness and improving and maintaining good overall wellbeing. One of the most significant differences between those with and without mental health problems is the degree of social engagement, which gives a clear direction to where public mental health interventions should be focused⁴². Given the significance of social connection to wellbeing and resilience, engaging individuals and communities is critical in maintaining those networks.

The arts have a long history of supporting people with mental health problems and there is plenty of evidence that they can keep individuals well, aid recovery and promote engagement⁴³. Arts and humanities programmes can impact on a variety of health outcomes including:

- Positive physiological and psychological changes in clinical outcomes;
- Reduced drug consumption;
- Improving doctor-patient relationships;
- Improving mental healthcare.⁴⁴

37 Liu, N., Daumit, G. and Chawdhary, N. (2016) Excess mortality in persons with severe mental disorders. Geneva: WHO

38 WHO 10 facts about early child development as a social determinant of health https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/

39 Geerlings SW, Beekman AT, Deeg DJ, Van Tilburg W. (2000) Physical health and the onset and persistence of depression in older adults: an eight-wave prospective community-based study. *Psychological Medicine*. Mar;30(2):369-80.

40 Public Health England (2015) Measuring Mental Wellbeing in Children and Young People. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/768983/Measuring_mental_wellbeing_in_children_and_young_people.pdf

41 McManus, S., Meltzer, H., Brugha, P. et al (2007) Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007. Leeds: The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sally_Mcmanus2/publication/266299241_Adult_psychiatric_morbidity_in_England_2007_Results_of_a_household_survey/links/542bff4d0cf27e39fa91d5d4/Adult-psychiatric-morbidity-in-England-2007-Results-of-a-household-survey.pdf?origin=publication_detail

42 Jenkins, R., Meltzer, H., Jones, P.B. et al (2008) Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. Mental health: Future challenges. London: The Government Office for Science <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17341.pdf>

43 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

44 BMA (2011) The physical and psychological needs of patients. BMA Science and Education <https://docplayer.net/12424522-The-psychological-and-social-needs-of-patients.html>

CASE STUDY 5

Visual and performing arts have been found to reduce anxiety and depression⁴⁵. NICE guidelines recommend arts therapy for those with psychosis to alleviate negative feelings; to enable them to experience themselves differently and to develop new ways of relating to others; helping people to express themselves and to organise their experiences into a satisfying creative form; helping people to accept and understand feelings that may have emerged during the creative process (including, in some cases, how they came to have these feelings) at a pace suited to the person.⁴⁶ The National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing has a database of a huge range of examples of projects demonstrating the positive impact of the different arts approaches to improving mental health, including visual arts, such as painting and drawing, drama, making and listening to music, crafts and more⁴⁷. The Box describes just one of the many initiatives across Northumberland that work to improve mental wellbeing through the arts.

BRIDGE GROUP

"I never used to leave the house. Now, I don't want to stay in"

In 2018 Museums Northumberland bait partnered with The Bridge, an employability programme involving people who face the biggest barriers to connecting with education, training, volunteering and paid work.

After a series of taster workshops exploring different art forms, the group of 12 people decided to continue their creative journeys together. They developed a brief, then shortlisted, interviewed and selected four artists they wanted to work with over several months.

In spring 2019 members of the group, with writer Bob Beagrie, co-delivered a training session for the Northumberland Public Health team and Northumberland Sport. After sharing their own creative writing,

the group led a series of creative exercises to demonstrate the positive impact on the sense of wellbeing of everyone in the room.

In summer 2019 the group co-curated and presented an exhibition of their work in the Hirst Park Pavilion in Ashington. Called 'A Picture of the Mind' the exhibition explored the theme of mental health and wellbeing.

Having completed The Bridge programme, members of the group were keen to continue developing creative skills and under the group name 'Blast' continue to meet regularly. They have also started working with another voluntary group, The Heart of Hirst, planning the creative offer within family events in Hirst Park during 2020.

45 Staricoff, R. L., Duncan J.P. and Wright, M. (2003) A Study of the Effects of Visual and Performing Arts in Health Care. <http://www.artshealthresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2003-Staricoff-A-study-of-the-effects-of-visual-and-performing-arts-in-health-care.pdf>

46 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). (2014) Psychosis and Schizophrenia in Adults: Prevention and management. London: NICE, p24

47 <http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg/inquiry-submissions?page=1>

CASE STUDY 5

cont.

BRIDGE GROUP

Diane Redhead - *"Before Bridge I was in a really dark place, I wouldn't leave the house and was depressed."*

Diane self referred to the Bridge Project in February 2019 after hearing about the project from one of her friends who was an existing beneficiary and invited her along to one of the creative writing sessions to see if the project was for her.

Having moved to Scotland, Diane was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and slowly her marriage broke down and she returned to Northumberland. She wouldn't leave the house and couldn't speak to people as she felt she was being judged and was in a really dark place and had trouble sleeping. Diane left school with no qualifications, just life experience. During her life she has worked as a shop assistant, pack house manager in a factory and a bakery shop manager

Diane took part in a creative programme commissioned by Museums Northumberland and The Bridge from spring 2018 to summer 2019.

How has being involved in creative activity impacted on your wellbeing?

Amazingly. I see and reflect on things a lot more. I'm more positive. Starting creative writing brought so much out of me. I went from sitting in the corner to speaking out loud and getting the message across. If it uplifts you, you want to shout out loud to the world. You can help others and mix with other people without feeling you're not up to expectations. Whatever comes out of what you've done is right; nothing's wrong.

What have you learnt from working with different artists?

I loved the writing and sculpture. Through the writer's techniques I found a love for writing again. I hadn't written for years. He awoke what has been lying dormant. I can't switch it off! The appreciation people give me for my writing, it's daunting but I'm getting used to it.

How have you progressed since the exhibition in June 2019?

I still write and paint. I'll put my poetry online and I'm humbled by people's comments. I keep writing the ongoing drama and people keep asking 'what's next?!' I've painted a couple of pictures and they're on friends walls now. I'm looking forward to new projects. I've got a head full of magic and it's got to come out.

Where do you see yourself in 2020?

Involved in as many projects as are thrown at me! With Blast we're doing activities in Hirst Park this year and in December 2019 we did the Christmas Party decorations. Hopefully we can do more activities with artists and create new artworks to show at Hirst Park so more people get involved. The arts are uplifting, doing things you normally wouldn't do. If one person thinks – I can have a go at that – it's worth it and it's amazing. It's our work done.

Supporting people with long term conditions

A long term condition (LTC) is a condition that cannot currently be cured, but is managed through medication, therapy or other treatment, including self-management. There is an increase in the number of people with LTCs, especially those with two or more, mainly due to the increasing age of the population and improvements in healthcare. According to Public Health England⁴⁸ 20.7% of population of Northumberland have a reported limiting long term illness or disability compared to 17.6% of population of England and this accounts for 70% of the total health and social care spend⁴⁹. People with LTCs have the added burden of being at risk of mental health problems⁵⁰. However, people with LTCs consistently say that they do not want to be just passive recipients of care; and they do not want to be in hospital unless absolutely necessary. They want to maintain their independence and wellbeing, to live fulfilling lives⁵¹. Supporting individuals and their families to do this requires innovative thinking, which is where the arts can help.

Almost 16% of children under 16 years old have a LTC in Northumberland compared to 14% in England⁵². Art therapy has proved helpful for children with chronic conditions, reducing perception of pain and helping with relaxation⁵³, and dance has been demonstrated to improve movement⁵⁴.

Age is the most significant factor in the development of LTCs. The number rises as age increases, with 58% of 60 year olds having a chronic condition, 1 in 4 of whom have two or more⁵⁵. The work of health trainers, support planners, navigators and Ageing Well can support people to make positive behaviour changes. Part of this will include supporting or signposting individuals to activities which are arts based. As already demonstrated in this report, the arts are effective means to engage people, which then can lead to improvements in health and wellbeing. The growing population of older people, particularly those with LTCs, tends to have increased needs around mobility, confidence, purpose and vitality, and the arts have been shown to stave off frailty and foster healthy ageing. As in all stages in life, engagement in arts helps reduce anxiety and depression.

48 Public Health England. Public Health Profiles. <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/long%20term%20conditions#page/0/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000057/iid/93276/age/1/sex/4>

49 Long Term Condition Team (2012) Long Term Conditions Compendium of Information. Third edition. Leeds: Department of Health. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216528/dh_134486.pdf

50 NICE (2009) Depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem: treatment and management <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/CG91FullGuideline.pdf>

51 Department of Health (2006) Our Health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services. Norwich:TSO

52 Public Health England Fingertip <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938133231/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000057>

53 Malchiodi, C.A. (2013) Art therapy and healthcare. New York: The Guilford Press

54 (Dowler, L. (2013) Improvising on the Ward: Exploring somatic dance and potential in paediatric healthcare. Journal of Applied Arts & Health, Vol 4, Number 2, pp. 163-178, 16

55 Long Term Condition Team (2012) Long Term Conditions Compendium of Information. Third edition. Leeds: Department of Health. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216528/dh_134486.pdf

Dementia

The recorded prevalence of dementia (65 years and over) in Northumberland is 4.16% (compared with 4.33% in England) and is the lowest rate in the North East⁵⁶. The experience of someone suffering from dementia varies, and is associated with memory loss, inability to learn, function or understand what is happening and can cause huge distress⁵⁷. Caring for someone with dementia can have an extremely poor impact on health, associated with high levels of physical and mental illness⁵⁸.

The economic burden of dementia is significant. If the onset of dementia could be delayed for 36 months, it is estimated that the saving could be £46 billion per year Nationally⁵⁹. So the social and economic reasons for addressing issues of dementia are significant. The arts and creative activities have been demonstrated to improve the quality of life for both those suffering from dementia and their families and carers⁶⁰.

DRY WATER ARTS CENTRE, AMBLE

Dry Water is a Not For Profit arts organisation run by professional artists Frances Anderson and Paula Turner. It runs a range of arts and crafts activities, including workshops, including silver work and batik, and courses, including yoga and tai chi. Below are two examples of the kind of interventions which have a direct impact on health and wellbeing.

Falling on your feet

In collaboration with Helix Arts, Falling On Your Feet is a dance and health programme for people aged 65+ who are living independently. This is a programme of ten classes that aim to:

- Increase strength and stability
- Improve balance and flexibility
- Improve coordination
- Enhance your sense of well-being

"I can't believe how much each person has improved but the best thing is that we have such a good time together, it really is a feel good class" Paula Turner, Course Facilitator

Curiosity Cafe - The art of not knowing

"When I'm here I don't have dementia, I'm free"

Curiosity Cafe is an arts project for people living with dementia and their carers. It puts people living with dementia, their carers and families at the heart of every activity. It is a dynamic programme developed via direct consultation with the people who live with dementia. The aim is to change the story and negative stereotypes often associated with dementia and to show what is possible in the here and now.⁶¹

56 Public Health England <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/Dementia#page/0/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000057>

57 WHO (2019) Dementia. Key facts <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>

58 Brodaty, H. and Donkin, M. (2009) Family Caregivers of people with dementia Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience. 11(2):217-228. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181916/#!po=3.84615>

59 Knapp, M., Comas-Herrera, A., Wittenberg, R., et al. (2014) Scenarios of Dementia Care: What are the impacts on cost and quality of life? <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57568/1/DP2878.pdf>

60 Cowl, A. L. & Gaugler, J. E. (2014). Efficacy of Creative Arts Therapy in Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia: A systematic literature review. Activities, Adaptation & Aging, 38 (4), pp. 281–330. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01924788.2014.966547?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

61 <https://www.drywaterarts.uk>

Falls

FACT!

Every year more than one in three (3.4 million) people over 65 years suffer a fall that causes serious injury, or even death (Age UK Stop falling: start saving lives and money). Dance improves flexibility, strength and aerobic endurance, with an increasing evidence base for the reduction of falls⁶²

Physical activity is important for cardiac health, and for older people balance, coordination and strength is important in preventing falls. Only 44% of people over 65 years reach the recommended level of physical activity⁶³. However, dance has been shown to be a form of physical activity that can be adapted to the different capabilities of older people. It is effective in improving balance, stamina, posture, gait and reaction time and is particularly successful in reducing falls, as well increasing a sense of wellbeing and as an antidote to loneliness and isolation^{64,65}.

The arts can have a major effect on preventing mental health problems, as well as mitigating against the impact of poor mental health. The lives of those with LTCs can also be significantly improved by the impact of arts activities.

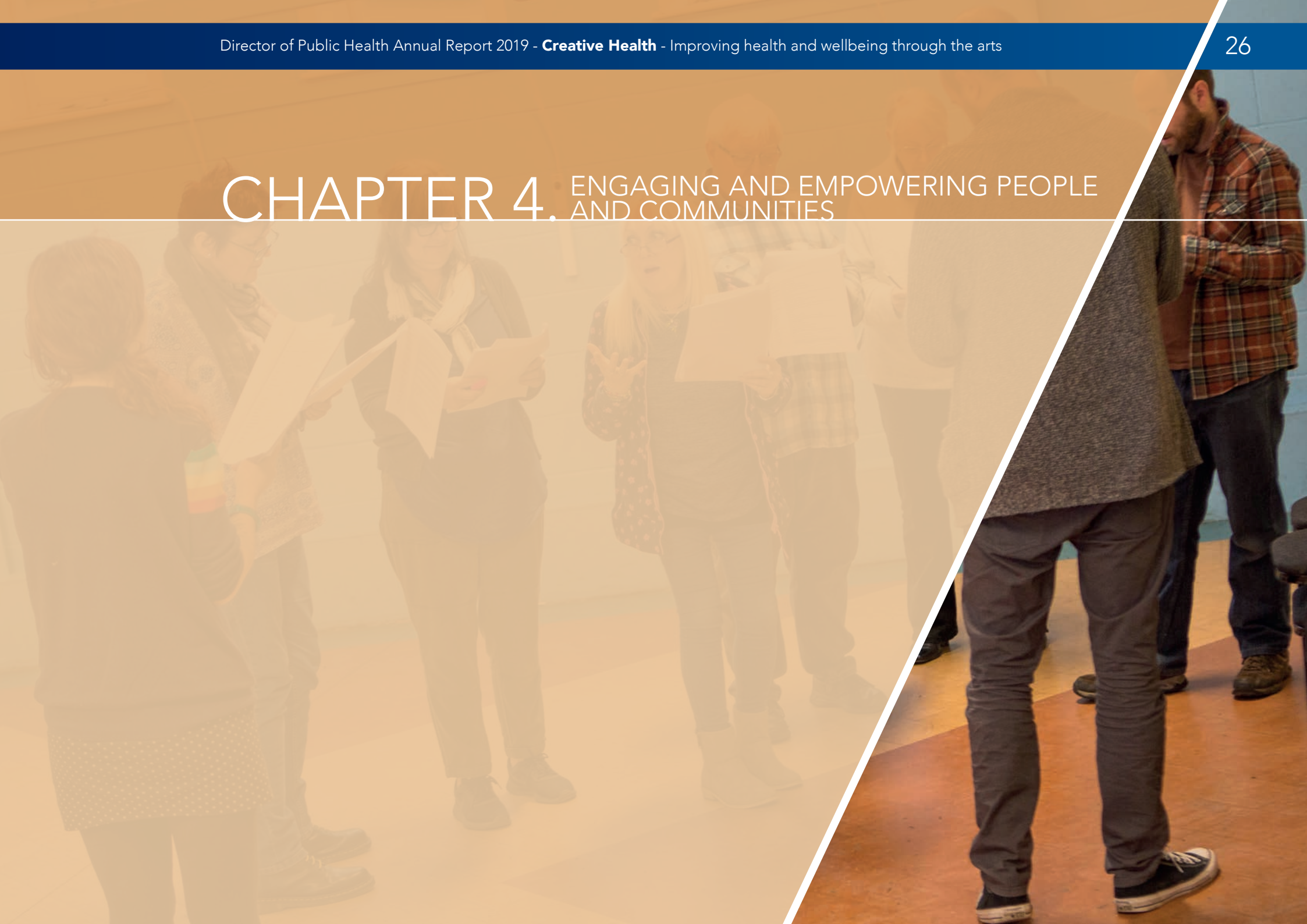
62 Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

63 Health and Social Care Information Centre (2017) Health survey for England 2016. Physical activity in adults <http://healthsurvey.hscic.gov.uk/media/63730/HSE16-Adult-phy-act.pdf>

64 The Centre for Policy on Ageing. (2011). Keep Dancing: The health and well-being benefits of dance for older people. London: BUPA; <http://www.artshealthresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2011-BUPA-Keep-dancing.pdf>

65 Connolly, M.K. and Redding, E. (2010) Dancing Towards Well-being in the Third Age: Literature Review on the impact of dance on health and well-being among older people. London: Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/media/315435/literature%20review%20impact%20of%20dance%20elderly%20populations%20final%20draft%20with%20logos.pdf>

CHAPTER 4. ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



CHAPTER 4. ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Enhancing resilience

Resilience is a term that is being used increasingly by people working in public health when talking about working with individuals and communities. It is a term used to refer to the ability to respond positively to stress and challenge. There is an element of being able to 'bounce back', to be able to tackle adversity in a positive way, adapt to uncertainties and changing circumstances in order to move on⁶⁶. A

significant part of this is associated with feeling a sense of belonging, participating in society, having strong and positive social networks⁶⁷.

Strong social networks are critical in developing pathways to good health and wellbeing. A positive method for building resilience is through arts activities⁶⁸. Music has been found to have a particular impact on promoting wellbeing and resilience⁶⁹.

BIG SING FOR DEMENTIA

The plan for The Big Sing in Northumberland was to get as many people, groups, organisations and places singing the same song at the same time one morning in September. The Locality Coordinators (part of the

Empowering Communities project - see Chapter 4) aimed to recruit local people to participate. In some areas, plans were already in place. In other areas, they were able to stimulate interest, with large and small groups, including sofa surfers and single, isolated men, people with learning difficulties and older people, coming together for the event. This was the first time some of them had received any positive encouragement, which was captured on BBC YouTube. In another area, care homes have expanded the singing to include carols at Christmas.⁷⁰

Projects like the Big Sing are an important way to start engaging with people / communities. Involvement with the arts / cultural organisations can ensure wider and more sustainable impacts.

66 Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2014) Resilience for Public Health: supporting transformation in people and communities. Glasgow: Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

67 Jenkins, R., Meltzer, H., Jones, P.B. et al (2008) Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. Mental health: Future challenges. London: The Government Office for Science
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/17341.pdf>

68 Zarobe, L. and Bungay, H. (2017) The role of the activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people a rapid review of the literature. *Perspective in Public Health*, 137 (6): 337-47.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1757913917712283?journalCode=rshi>

69 Shakespeare, T. and Whieldon, A. (2018) Sing Your Heart Out: community singing as part of mental health recovery *Medical Humanities*;44:153-157. <https://mh.bmj.com/content/44/3/153.info>

70 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&ved=2ahUKEwjeqoTyu-7IAhW5UBUIHUKDBFwQwqsBMAV6BAgJEAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DVsj0z6g3EzY&usg=AOvVaw2j9lU2r0SLam6dwmm11bal>

Art and asset based approaches

Our recent public health reports have focused on taking an asset based approach to improving health and wellbeing – focusing and building on the strengths in communities rather than what their problems are. This approach is entirely consistent with the arts which can often be a key individual and community asset.⁷¹ Arts and cultural activities often focus on what can be achieved and build on the strengths within individuals and communities. They can be a source of enjoyment and fulfillment, all of which are necessary for health and wellbeing, whether its a production at the Queen's Hall in Hexham, or a wild walk in Kielder Forest to experience their award winning art and architecture programme.

They also focus on the real world which can be harsh and tragic - the Holocaust, homelessness, war - all have been the subject of arts activities, acting as a means to vent the feelings of the originator, educate and as a record of the history of key events. Not only do all these activities provide enriched experiences, they also engage people at a personal and communal level.

Individuals have assets which can be drawn on to develop themselves and provide support for others. Volunteering provides a good example of what can be achieved through engagement with projects which help others^{72, 73} and many of these have a key arts element.

BRIGHT NORTHUMBRIA

Bright Northumbria (Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's registered charitable Trust) was established in 1998. The charity's activities rely on volunteers (about 850 at the time of writing) who tirelessly and generously give their time to services for patients and visitors. For the past 15 years, Bright Northumbria has funded the development of an award-winning 'healing arts programme' which uses art as a therapeutic medium to improve the quality of patient environments. The charity works with students from local schools, colleges and universities who are studying art, architecture or interior design and give young people the chance to help the Trust enhance patient environments.

Much of the work of Bright focuses on the arts, such as Our Healing Arts Programme, working closely with artists and photographers in the region, many of whom have donated artwork or photographs, or provided them on long term loan. Anyone who has visited one of Northumbria Trusts' sites will have seen the fantastic range of high quality art displayed around hospitals and community sites.

More recently, the charity joined forces with Music in Hospitals to promote the inclusion of musical entertainment in healthcare settings which have proved immensely popular with older patients. Much of the work of Bright focuses on the arts, such as Our Healing Arts Programme.

71 All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. Page 17. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

72 Guiney, H. and Machado, L. (2018) Volunteering in the Community: Potential Benefits for Cognitive Aging. The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, Volume 73, Issue 3, March 2018, Pages 399–408. <https://academic.oup.com/psychsocgerontology/article/73/3/399/4638261>

73 Tabassum, F., Mogán, J. and Smith, P. (2016) Association of volunteering with mental well-being: a lifecourse analysis of a national population-based longitudinal study in the UK. BMJ Open, vol 6, issue 8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011327>

Using the arts to reduce inequalities

Like too many other things, there is a social gradient associated with arts participation, those with higher levels of education and older people are more likely to visit galleries and museums and be involved in creative activities⁷⁴. They are likely to have encouraged their own children to be creative. Some minority ethnic groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be able to access and enjoy the benefits of culture and arts⁷⁵. Those that would benefit the most from the positive impact of the arts are those least likely or able to participate. This can be reversed though and recent evidence suggests that people with disabilities and long term conditions, for instance, have become more engaged in arts activities over the last 13 years⁷⁶.

FACT!

Men's sheds are community based places for men to connect with others to engage in a range of social and skill based activities, such as woodwork, gardening, photography and the like. There are several Men's Sheds across Northumberland including Hexham, Pegswood and Blyth. They produce a wide range of benefits including skills acquisition, social engagement, improved well-being, increased self-esteem, a greater sense of self-worth and cognitive involvement. Men's Sheds have shown a return on investment of approximately 10:1 (£48844 return on £5000 investment).⁷⁷

Although disadvantaged and marginalised groups are less likely to participate in the arts, they are more likely to access such activities through health routes, because they're more likely to be affected by poor health. Consequently, arts interventions around health can be an effective route to reducing inequalities⁷⁸. This needs to be supported by arts engagement that can help mitigate the impact of inequalities for the wider population, not just those with poor health. Engagement of those living in disadvantaged circumstances needs to be fundamental to the process of addressing inequalities, and requires building alliances for social change⁷⁹.

74 Buraimo, B., Jones, H. and Millard P. (2011) Participation and engagement in cultural activities. Analysis of the Taking Part Survey. London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137982/tp-participation-engagement-culture-activities-report.pdf

75 Inglis, G. and Williams, J. (2010) Models of sporting and cultural activity. Analysis of the Taking Part Survey. London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137996/TP_Modellingreport.pdf

76 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832874/Taking_Part_Survey_Adult_Report_2018_19.pdf

77 Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

78 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

79 White, M. (2009). Arts Development in Community Health: A social tonic. Oxford: Radcliffe

CASE STUDY 8

THE COQUETDALE MUSIC TRUST

This is a community minded organisation, established in May 2013, with the primary aim of promoting music, dance, poetry and the arts to all. This is achieved through education programmes, workshops, exhibitions, recording and production. The work helps to preserve, promote and ensure that the rich culture and heritage continues to grow in rural Northumberland, whilst also embracing contemporary music and cultures.

The Trust also provides an opportunity for visitors from outside the area to participate and gain access to the many projects planned. As a charity the trust is passionate about providing an affordable and accessible venue to be used by the community as a whole to promote all aspects of the arts, as well as taking projects out into the community throughout North Northumberland.⁸⁰

Social prescribing – arts on prescription

FACT!

Estimates suggest that approximately one in five GP visits are made for reasons that are psychosocial, rather than medical⁸¹.

'Social prescribing' is a term used to describe the process of connecting people to non-medical sources of support within the community. These include cultural activities, green space, debt advice, physical activity and leisure and learning opportunities, much of which can be based on engagement with the arts^{82, 83}. Social prescribing can lead to improvements in levels of mental wellbeing, a greater sense of control, the ability to cope with life, increased confidence and reduced loneliness.⁸⁴ This has been demonstrated in particular for social prescribing to arts activities.⁸⁵

Arts interventions can address multiple health-promoting factors in a single activity, for example supporting physical activity, reducing loneliness and improving mental health.

Evidence also suggests that social prescribing has the potential to reduce the number of frequent attendances at primary care services and the potential need for prescriptions of antidepressants⁸⁶. This has been recognised within the new GP Contract, which sees NHS funding for engaging social prescribing link workers to the Primary Care team⁸⁷. In recent months, Primary Care Networks (groups of practices of up to 80,000 patients) have each recruited one or two social prescribing link workers. This supplements the vital work of Support Planners, working in Adult Social Care, who work with people to find support in the community and provide information and advice to keep people independent in their own homes and communities and prevent them from needing services (health and social care) for as long as possible.

80 <http://www.coquetdalemusictrust.com/>

81 Torjesen, I. (2016) Social Prescribing could help alleviate pressure on GPs. BMJ,352:i1436

82 The Kings Fund (2017) What is social prescribing? <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/social-prescribing>

83 NHS England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-prescribing-applying-all-our-health/social-prescribing-applying-all-our-health>

84 Bickerdike L, Booth A, Wilson PM, et al. Social prescribing: less rhetoric and more reality. A systematic review of the evidence. BMJ Open 2017;7:e013384. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013384

85 Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

86 Polley M, et al. A review of the evidence assessing impact of social prescribing on healthcare demand and cost implications. 2017:University of Westminster. https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/14f499_75b884ef9b644956b897fcec824bf92e.pdf

87 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/investment/gp-contract/>

FACT!

Arts on prescription suggests an average return on investment of £2.30 for every £1 spent.

For a great example of the dramatic impact that getting involved in the arts can have on mental wellbeing listen to the story of Debs Taylor <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/debs-taylor-impact-social-prescribing-people-communities>. And for a more local example, listen to Mary's story <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJVwVxju2c&feature=youtu.be>

The success of social prescribing is dependent on activities being available for referral.⁸⁸ In the current climate, all small arts organisations and community groups are vulnerable to the pressures facing local authorities.⁸⁹ According to the Arts Council England's Rural Evidence Review 2019,⁹⁰ it is largely rural areas that have experienced the greatest decline in cultural spend (on average a 32.7% reduction). In order to maintain the wide range of activities, we need to have a mechanism in place to support them, not just financially but also in terms of training and other advice. Joint commissioning could provide an opportunity for providing appropriate funding, with the chance to provide commissioners with some assurance around the quality and impact of the activities that individuals are being supported into. An important component is the involvement of artists/practitioners as professionals in their field, working with health and care professionals and participants on an equal footing to design and develop programmes together.

One of the challenges for the arts in making the case for evidence of impact is that by their nature, they can be delivered in complex and diverse ways.

Diversity of engagement e.g. as a volunteer/facilitator; participant; observer/audience; long/short term

Diversity of setting e.g. museums, theatres, artists studios, national parks, heritage sites, community centres.

Diversity of form e.g. dance, music, singing, creative writing, drama/theatre, film

To promote best practice, in 2016 Public Health England (PHE) published an Arts for Health & Wellbeing Evaluation Framework, developed by Aesop (arts enterprise with social purpose)⁹¹ providing guidance on all aspects of evaluation including:

- monitoring and audit to assess how projects are doing in relation to established targets
- formative and process evaluations which take place during projects with the aim of improving practice
- outcomes evaluation which takes place at the end of a project to establish whether it has met its aims and objectives and to assess its effects or impact on participants.

The WHO report also highlighted the need to support research in the arts and health, particularly focusing on studies that examine interventions scaled up to larger populations, or studies that explore the feasibility, acceptability and suitability of new arts interventions.

88 Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

89 <https://www.artspromotional.co.uk/pulse/survey-report/pulse-report-local-authority-arts-funding-what-should-be-done>

90 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Rural_Evidence_Review_2019_0.pdf

91 PHE (2016). Arts for health and wellbeing. An evaluation framework.

CHAPTER 5. WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COLLABORATION



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Arts, culture, health and wellbeing collaborations

Recognising the value of the arts in improving health and wellbeing, a number of collaborations are in place across the county.

MUSEUM NORTHUMBERLAND AND THE BAIT PROJECT

(part of the Arts Council's Creative People and Places programme). A consortium of key partners, including Woodhorn Charitable Trust (lead body), Northumberland County Council Public Health and Cultural Services, Northumberland CVA, Northumberland College and Queens Hall Arts.

NORTHUMBERLAND CULTURE NETWORK (NCN)

A collaboration providing strategic direction to collective activity to support the Cultural Strategy. It exists to strengthen the contribution of culture, the arts and heritage to economic growth, quality of life and health and wellbeing. The NCN is made up of strategic partners across sectors including education, the voluntary sector, universities, sport, heritage, the arts as well as public health and provides an opportunity for the Public Health team to work directly with other sectors to enhance the cultural and arts input into improving health and wellbeing.

The Council's Cultural Services team can provide expert advice and support to the health sector in the County particularly in relation to quality and an understanding of local, regional and national organisations, commissioning and quality of engagement.

NORTH EAST CULTURE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING ALLIANCE⁹²

Recently convened with Arts Council funding to 'connect everyone who believes that creative and cultural engagement can transform our health and wellbeing'. This will provide opportunities for health and culture organisations across the region to work together. Further opportunities are available through the various universities and their research departments.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765496/PHE_Arts_and_Health_Evaluation_FINAL.pdf

⁹² <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/who-we-are/about-alliance>

TRAINING TOGETHER

Central to changing people's approach to improving health and wellbeing is ensuring staff are trained appropriately. Many people understand the benefits of engaging with the arts but feel unable to provide the support that is needed. Staff themselves need support to do this.

Training and education around the arts is not generally available to those working in the health and social care sector but increasingly universities are encouraging medical trainees to work alongside artists⁹³. Promoting this cross-sector working enhances the opportunity for a wider audience to experience the benefits of a different approach to improving lives, as well as increasing the appetite for funding such initiatives. There are numerous examples (including the local arts project Mortal Fools) where arts organisations have trained clinicians, health professionals and social workers to support approaches with managing people, understanding human response and empathy and the role of creativity in healing^{94,95,96}.

THE ARTS WORKFORCE

Those working in the sphere of the arts equally may not get the opportunity to understand the complexities of the health and social care context. Despite this, many do work across these boundaries. In Northumberland, many significant arts activities are set within this context, such as the arts work in Children's Centres.

Arts and cultural organisations (including theatres, museums and galleries as well as libraries) are largely charities and one of the prominent features that they have in common is education. Education is a cornerstone of health and wellbeing and many have recognised the impact their work has on an individual's health and wellbeing, both directly and indirectly. They have, in many areas, become experts within this field after many years of successful and sometimes transformational delivery.

93 <http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/resources/research>

94 Martellucci J. Surgery and jazz: the art of improvisation in the evidence-based medicine era. *Ann Surg.* 2015;261(3):440–2. doi: 10.1097/SLA.0000000000000782.

95 Shapiro J, Rucker L, Beck J. Training the clinical eye and mind: using the arts to develop medical students' observational and pattern recognition skills. *Med Educ.* 2006;40(3):263–8. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02389.x.

96 Dolev JC, Friedlaender LK, Braverman IM. Use of fine art to enhance visual diagnostic skills. *JAMA.* 2001;286(9):1020–1. doi: 10.1001/jama.286.9.1020.

CHAPTER 6. WHAT NEXT?



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This report has set out to demonstrate the significant impact the arts can have on improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. Recent documents^{97,98} have drawn together research from a wide range of sources to provide the evidence for this. As Marmot has stated: 'The mind is the gateway through which the social determinants impact upon health' and there is a substantial body of evidence showing how the arts, enriching the mind through creative and cultural activity, can mitigate the negative effects of social disadvantage.⁹⁹

Northumberland has huge advantages over many other counties. It has stunning countryside and is packed with some of the cultural icons of the UK, such as Lindisfarne and Hadrian's Wall. It is also made up of diverse communities, including market towns, old industrial and rural villages, as well as modern housing estates. Within these varied settings a plethora of arts activities are taking place, which are all promoting health and wellbeing. Ensuring people have the skills to deliver this agenda is important.

The recommendations seek to pull some of the strands of this report together and turn the implications of the findings into actions.

Recommendations

1 PROMOTE AND ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS AS A KEY ELEMENT OF PROVIDING PERSONALISED CARE TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Activities that embrace the arts to provide personalised care, particularly through the social prescribing programme, have a significant impact on individuals' health and wellbeing. This needs to continue and expand to ensure that the contribution of the arts are considered whenever new initiatives are being planned. This is integral to the health and wellbeing strand of the county's cultural strategy and should be supported through the inclusion of NHS partners in the Cultural Network. To be effective, it also needs sustainable funding from NHS partners.

97 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

98 Fancourt, D. and Finn, S. (2019) Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO. www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/what-is-the-evidence-on-the-role-of-the-arts-in-improving-health-and-well-being-a-scoping-review-2019

99 APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) (2017) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

2 PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF IN THE HEALTH, CARE AND ARTS SECTORS

Many, if not most, staff recognise the importance of using the arts to engage local people, as well as a means of providing positive health and wellbeing outcomes. However, opportunities need to be offered to enhance mutual understanding and support around delivering programmes and interventions with an arts focus. Staff need the confidence to be able to include creative activities for individuals and communities in their everyday work.

There are clearly opportunities for joint learning and this could be through commissioning a joint training programme that supports both sectors to demystify language, share common goals and identify where areas of training and learning could take place for both sectors. An exchange of training between health and cultural sector professionals, and others, including Universities and other training bodies, would enhance the opportunities to deliver this agenda.

3 NORTHUMBERLAND TO TAKE A LEAD ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NORTH EAST CREATIVE HEALTH HUB

We have a cultural strategy which has improving health and wellbeing at its centre. We have great relationships with Newcastle and Northumbria Universities who are both already engaged in research around arts and health. We also have a newly formed NE Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance. Northumberland is well placed to take a lead role in developing some key priorities from an arts and health perspective across the north east. These could include:

- Identifying research priorities, particularly in terms of scaling up and mainstreaming arts interventions as part of routine care pathways;
- Developing simple to do evaluation frameworks for smaller scale arts interventions delivered through social prescribing initiatives;
- Using the arts for health and social care curriculum innovation, particularly around the development of softer skills such as critical thinking, verbal and non-verbal communication and empathy.

This could form the basis of a North East Creative Health Hub.

4 CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE ART AS INCLUSIVE AS POSSIBLE AND ADDRESS INEQUALITIES.

Work within Northumberland has demonstrated that it is possible to engage those who would not normally be interested in the arts and creative activities, showing that everyone can reap the benefits for their health and wellbeing. It does require a significant level of subsidy. Ensuring that all activities can demonstrate how they engage with those living with disadvantage will enable inequalities to be addressed.

Hope - Diane Redhead

A single flickering flame
Of a lonely match
In the vast darkness
You have to light the wick
Of the candle, shelter it
From the howling gale
Feed it, protect it because
It will grow, from that
One nurtured flame
You can light another
And another and another
See how it spread
Just see how it can be shared
How dark is it now
When the flames shine bright
The darkness is gone
Given way to warming light
The light is hope
Without it we are lost
Let the light die and
Darkness is the cost