

Written evidence submitted by the national Centre for Creative Health (PHS0226)

The National Centre for Creative Health (<https://ncch.org.uk/>) is a registered charity advocating for the integration of Creative Health - engagement with arts, culture, and creativity which has benefits for health and wellbeing - into health and social care systems.

Integration of arts, culture and creativity into a preventative healthcare approach for 2030

There is a rapidly strengthening evidence-base supporting the use of culture and creativity to improve mental and physical health, keep people healthier for longer and tackle pressing challenges facing the health and social care system¹.

In individuals, arts-based activities can prevent or alleviate symptoms in conditions that place significant burden on the NHS. For example, singing can improve respiratory health and is used effectively for long covid². Dance can prevent obesity and improve balance and reduce falls in older adults³. In mental health, creative activities can improve emotional regulation, stress, confidence, self-esteem and contribute to prevention and management of depression and anxiety across a range of settings⁴.

At a population health level, Creative Health can improve the environments in which people live, and tackle the social determinants of health, which account for the greatest proportion of ill-health. Engaging in arts and culture has been shown to improve health and wellbeing for all, and to be most impactful for those living in deprived areas⁵. Provision of creative opportunity in the early years and in schools has a positive impact on educational and emotional development. Creative Health strategies implemented at 'place' have benefited public health⁶. Therefore, embedding Creative Health as part of an upstream, preventative approach to health will not only keep individuals healthier for longer, but can contribute to a reduction in health inequalities, levelling up, and increased productivity over the long-term.

Why now?

¹ For comprehensive overviews of the evidence base see the APPG on Arts Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing' (2017) https://ncch.org.uk/uploads/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf and a 2019 World Health Organisation Scoping Review 'What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing?' available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/329834>. Evidence summaries for policy have also been produced for DCMS – See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing>

² Philip, K et al. (2022) 'An online breathing and wellbeing programme (ENO Breathe) for people with persistent symptoms following COVID-19: a parallel-group, single-blind, randomised controlled trial' *Lancet* **10** (9) Available: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(22\)00125-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(22)00125-4/fulltext)

³ Mattle, M et al. (2020) 'Association of Dance-Based Mind-Motor Activities With Falls and Physical Function Among Healthy Older Adults A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis' *JAMA Network Open* Available: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/article-abstract/2770956>

⁴ The Baring Foundation (2020) 'Creatively Minded' Available: <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/creatively-minded/>

⁵ Se March Network - www.marchlegacy.org/research

⁶ For example, the positive results from Greater Manchester's Great Place Programme (<https://greatplacegm.co.uk/>) has led to the development of an Creative Health Strategy that spans the ICS and Combined Authority region, with a focus on reducing inequalities - <https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/gm-creative-health-strategy-low-res.pdf> .

The potential for creativity and culture to support health is being recognised by policymakers. This is an opportune moment for the committee to look in detail at the evidence and successful examples underpinning Creative Health, and the benefits of fully embedding it into systems by 2030 as part of a preventative approach.

Creative Health features strongly in personalised care, a priority of the NHS long-term plan. One element of this is social prescribing, through which patients can be directed to creative activity, improving health outcomes, and reducing healthcare usage⁷. Arts Council England's plan for Creative Health and Wellbeing describes Creative Health as 'a fundamental part of living well' and central to its 10-year strategy. It has a focus on prevention, citing the role of the cultural sector in promoting healthy habits, behaviours and social connections⁸.

Integrated Care Systems provide an excellent opportunity to bring together stakeholders across health, local authority, culture and VCSE sectors to provide effective creative health interventions at neighbourhood, place and system level, supported by national policy. Good examples of this in practice are found in NHSE supported [NCCH Creative Health ICS hubs](#), and this could be scaled and spread universally⁹.

Why do we need scrutiny?

Creative Health approaches are used widely, and have been shown to be both effective and cost-effective¹⁰. A skilled and passionate Creative Health workforce exists, supported by the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance¹¹. However, the funding landscape for practitioners is precarious, and the work is often carried out on a short-term basis. Commissioning creative activity through health is limited, although the benefits of investment in the approach are evident when implemented, for example through the Gloucestershire ICS Creative Health Strategy¹². Social prescribing has shown a demand for creative and cultural activities, but funding does not extend to community organisations providing the service. With sustainable support and resourcing, existing assets could be quickly and effectively mobilised as part of a health creating approach to health and wellbeing. In Wales, establishing Arts and Health Coordinators in health boards was found to be a '*successful and relatively low cost intervention in stimulating and supporting the role of the arts in achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes*¹³'.

Why should the Government take action?

Creative and cultural opportunities, accessible to all in their communities and available as cost-effective, targeted interventions through the NHS will have significant and lasting impacts on health. A [review led by NCCH/APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing](#) is currently underway to make specific

⁷ National Academy for Social Prescribing Evidence Briefing on Arts, Heritage and Culture (2022) Available: <https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/media/dxslrxu/nasp-briefing-arts-culture-heritage.pdf>

⁸ Arts Council England – Creative Health and Wellbeing - Available: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-health-wellbeing>

⁹ <https://ncch.org.uk/what>

¹⁰ See APPG on Arts Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing' https://ncch.org.uk/uploads/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing>

¹¹ <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/>

¹² <https://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/your-health-services/healthy-communities/creative-health/>

¹³ UKRCS (2022) 'Evaluation of the Arts and Health Coordinator Capacity Building Programme' – Available: <https://www.nhsconfed.org/publications/evaluation-arts-and-health-coordinator-capacity-building-programme>

recommendations for a cross-governmental strategy on Creative Health, which will distil both the immediate potential to reduce burden on the NHS and social care, and the long-term benefits of embedding culture and creativity into public health to act on the social determinants of health and reduce inequalities¹⁴. The Government should take action to ensure the benefits of creative health are maximised as part of a joined-up, preventative, health creating approach.

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¹⁴ <https://ncch.org.uk/creative-health-review>