



Written Submission of Evidence presented on behalf of Arts Culture Health & Wellbeing Scotland to support the mainstreaming of culture across the Scottish Government, including the impact on health and wellbeing. Submitted to the committee of the Scottish Government’s Spending Review, February 2022

Introduction

[Arts Culture Health and Wellbeing Scotland](#) (ACHWS) is an active network providing information and support for anyone working across arts and culture, health and wellbeing in Scotland. ACHWS is a registered charity.

Building on extensive evidence and research, we advocate that culture and the arts can provide enormous benefit to our health and wellbeing, both for specific patient populations in healthcare settings and through integrating culture into our everyday lives.

A Culture Strategy for Scotland commits the Scottish Government to support ACHWS to expand and develop, and to work with ACHWS network and Creative Scotland to produce a joint action plan. Wellbeing was identified by the National Partnership for Culture as a priority issue during its 2021 work programme and recommendations have been made to the Cabinet Secretary in this area.

ACHWS welcomes the Committee’s previous recommendation that the resource spending review should include detailed consideration of how budgetary decisions can support the mainstreaming of culture across the Scottish Government, including the impact on health and wellbeing.

Evidence base

A 2019 scoping review by the World Health Organisation suggests that results from over 3000 studies “identified a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan.”¹

The impact of culture and the arts on health and wellbeing is wide-ranging, including:

¹ [WHO/Europe | Publications - What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review \(2019\)](#)

- supporting recovery from mental illness after trauma;
- improving the experience of hospital inpatients;
- improving social connections between residents and staff in care homes;
- reducing the need for medication in people with dementia.²

This impact is increasingly recognised internationally and supported through social or cultural prescribing. 4 in 5 people in Scotland agree that there are physical and/or mental health benefits to engaging with arts, creative and cultural activities, and a majority say they would take up a 'social prescription' if offered.³ A recent pilot of 'nature prescriptions' found a positive impact on mental health.⁴

This growing understanding of the positive contributions that creative and cultural participation bring are also recognised in the developing 20-minute neighbourhood and community wealth building agendas.

Wider context is offered in evidence documented in the following UK reports: Evidence Summary for Policy: The Role of arts in improving health & wellbeing, Report to the Dept. of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport⁵ (April 2020) and the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing⁶ (2017).

More recent reports specifically looking at the role and impact of the arts during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Impacts of Covid-19 on the Cultural Sector Study by Centre for Cultural Value⁷ (2022) and Arts Council England The Role of the Arts during the COVID-19 Pandemic⁸ (2021).

Whilst these reports focus on the UK, and not Scotland specifically, all of them support the evidence base and firmly connect to an agenda of policy support in arts, culture and health.

Current provision

Creative Scotland recently published the Mapping of Arts and Health Provision report⁹ outlining the extent to which cultural engagement with health and wellbeing is currently underway. This report is an important piece of work in this developing area and can act as a benchmark against which progress can be measured.

The research identified 119 organisations delivering arts and health provision in Scotland, with provision clustered around Glasgow, Edinburgh and the central belt.

² <https://www.ourcreativevoice.scot/s/OCV-Research-Download-Health.pdf>

³ [Public Opinion on the Health Benefits of Creative Activities — Culture Counts](#)

⁴ [Does being prescribed nature help our health? - Scottish Nature Notes - Our work - The RSPB Community](#)

⁵

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929773/DCMS_report_April_2020_finalx_1_.pdf

⁶ <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

⁷ <https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/the-team/covid-19-research-project/>

⁸ [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/UCL_Role_of_the_Arts_during_COVID_13012022_0.pdf)

[file/UCL_Role_of_the_Arts_during_COVID_13012022_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/UCL_Role_of_the_Arts_during_COVID_13012022_0.pdf)

⁹ [Creative-Scotland-Arts-and-Health-Mapping-Report.pdf \(creativescotland.com\)](#)

This research found that the majority respondents were funded by Creative Scotland, although some funding was provided by Local Authorities, the NHS and other external funders. This mapping exercise is unlikely to be comprehensive as it has only identified organisations who have actively sought support from Creative Scotland.¹⁰

This research is part of a wider commitment to culture and health partnerships from Creative Scotland, including developing an Art and Health Strategic Plan. Creative Scotland has supported ACHWS in our first year and has confirmed a second year of funding.

Case studies

- Sporting Memories, a project run by the Scottish Football Museum in partnership with Sports Heritage Scotland, offers supported reminiscence and handling sessions centred around sporting photographs, collections, and personal memorabilia for older people and those living with memory loss or related conditions.
- ‘We will become like (a) family’ – a 18 month programme led by Artlink Hospital Arts developing a long-term relationship with Dementia Care at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital by exploring ways in which families, nursing staff and artists can work together as a team, learning from each other in order to make positive change within the wards.
- Prescribe Culture is a mental health and wellbeing initiative run by the University of Edinburgh Museums Services, pro-actively engaging with social prescribing, sometimes referred to as community referral or non-pharmacological support. Prescribe Culture aims to use heritage experiences as a form of self-help for students with mental health issues. The Prescribe Culture programme provides support for the growing number students experiencing mental health issues, by drawing on research which has found cultural activities to be a beneficial, non-clinical way of managing mental wellbeing
- The Skylark IX Recovery Trust is a small charitable organisation that works in collaboration with the Scottish Maritime Museum, and with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to deliver woodworking and boatbuilding skills training to people at Alternatives, who are recovering from drug addiction. The Trust hopes to expand and build the Spirit of Skylark Centre in the Museum grounds over coming years
- Art in Hospital delivers an ongoing visual arts programme for patients in the healthcare areas of Medicine for Older People, Stroke Rehabilitation, Acute Rehabilitation, Palliative Care and Community and Mental Health across the NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde region of Scotland. The organisation provides a permanent presence in hospitals and care homes, which brings the visual arts into the context of health and medicine.

¹⁰ [Creative-Scotland-Arts-and-Health-Mapping-Report.pdf \(creativescotland.com\)](https://www.creativescotland.com/creative-scotland-arts-and-health-mapping-report.pdf)

- National Galleries of Scotland works with the hospital Play Team in the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People to deliver creative sessions, resources and art materials for children and their families whilst they wait for appointments or throughout the treatment process.
- The new National Secure Adolescent Inpatient Service (NSAIS) Art Strategy focuses on holistically addressing both security and the therapeutic environment. Led by creative engagement with young people in secure and CAMHS settings, the Strategy focuses on biophilic and empathetic approaches designed to be renewed regularly with patient involvement. The project demonstrates the importance of art and design within capital projects and highlights the need for this to continue into operational contexts.
- The Grampian Hospitals Art Trust is an award-winning arts and health organisation which exists to enhance the wellbeing and experience of all who spend time in NHS Grampian hospitals, whether patients, visitors, or staff. The Trust hold a collection of over 4000 artworks either commissioned or purchased over the past 30 years that are on rotational display over 34 NHS Grampian sites. NHS staff are involved in the curatorial process of organising exhibitions, which has had an extremely positive effect in communicating the Art Collection as a valuable cultural asset.

Way forward

The Resource Spending Review identifies “improving cross-government collaboration” and “prevention and invest to save initiatives” as two ways to get best value out of public spending. Both of these ambitions have clear relevance to the opportunities arising from integrating culture with health and wellbeing.

In broadest terms, the arts and culture support our collective wellbeing and investment in these should be seen as recognition of the intrinsic, society-wide benefits that they provide. It is therefore important to ensure that the Scottish Government continues to support the culture sector’s recovery and ensures that all Scottish residents are able to participate in cultural activity.

More specifically related to the ambition for an outcomes-focused approach to public spending, there are opportunities to take a cross-portfolio approach to funding cultural services with investment linked to health and wellbeing outcomes. There are a variety of possible approaches.

Most radically, the contribution that culture makes to the outcomes of the National Performance Framework could be recognised by providing some level of core funding to cultural organisations from budgets outside of the culture portfolio. Alternatively, a project funding approach could allow organisations to build capacity to support cultural prescribing or other wellbeing approaches, including expanding projects already proven to deliver strong health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Scottish Government’s commitment to investing in public art during capital programmes could be used to support this work if an inclusive approach is taking to

defining “public art” to include programmes of art in public situations rather than solely for installed work.

Any funding model should provide long-term certainty allowing organisations to develop and expand without continually chasing short-term project funds. The Creative Scotland research previously cited found that practitioners desired “long term, flexible funding, which focuses on “tried and tested” work in addition to newer initiatives”.

While funding will be required to embed this approach, the barriers to such collaboration are not purely financial. A wider culture shift will be required to overcome silo thinking and ensure that health practitioners, the culture sector and the wider public sector, such as schools, are aware of the benefits of this cross-portfolio approach. The Scottish Government should therefore consider how best to incentivise collaboration and build partnerships across sectoral boundaries.

Submitted to the committee by Robbie McGhee, Chair - Arts Culture Health & Wellbeing Scotland, 17/02/2022