

PRESS RELEASE

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Events to highlight importance of creativity for health and wellbeing

Three key events in May will highlight the importance of creativity for health & wellbeing in the aftermath of the pandemic and for the future:

- During **Creativity & Wellbeing Week**, hundreds of events will offer the opportunity to take part in activities to benefit wellbeing.
- **The Arts 4 Dementia Best Practice Conference: Arts for Brain Health** aims to transform the diagnostic experience through prescribing creative activities from the onset of dementia symptoms
- The **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing** will explore how culture and creativity can support the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act.

An event run by the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing** will be held on 17 May, during Creativity & Wellbeing Week.

The roundtable discussion will explore how creativity can contribute to a better experience for people who come into contact with mental health services. Contributors will examine how arts and culture can support the four principles on which the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act (MHA) are based. The principles aim to place people at the centre of decisions about their own care and ensure everyone is treated equally:

- choice and autonomy – ensuring service users' views and choices are respected
- least restriction – ensuring the MHA's powers are used in the least restrictive way
- therapeutic benefit – ensuring patients are supported to get better, so they can be discharged from the MHA
- the person as an individual – ensuring patients are viewed and treated as individuals

The event will be chaired by Dr Ben Spencer MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.

Dr Ben Spencer MP said:

“The Government’s White Paper on the reform of the Mental Health Act and Review rightly set out a set of core principles for people detained and treated in hospital for mental illness. This fascinating and timely session will look at how culture and creativity can support people when they are in hospital and severely unwell with mental illness. We will examine how best the principles can be achieved in practice, how the arts can help us understand people’s different responses to distress and illness, and how people can express their creativity in a psychiatric hospital.”

Sandra Griffiths, Founder and Director of [The Red Earth Collective](#), will be speaking at the event. The Red Earth Collective uses the arts to inspire stories, stimulate thinking and to create conversations that support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of marginalised and racialised communities.

Arts 4 Dementia is campaigning for social prescribing of arts activities by GPs at the onset of dementia symptoms. Joining a weekly creative group empowers people to preserve their brain health. Arts 4 Dementia aims to transform the diagnostic experience by ensuring that social prescribing is offered early to help combat the isolating, stressful months leading to memory assessment and diagnosis.

[Arts for Brain Health: Social Prescribing as Peri-Diagnostic Practice for Dementia](#), organised by [Arts 4 Dementia](#) runs on 20 and 21 May during [Dementia Action Week](#). At the conference, policy makers, social reformers, academic specialists and culture, health and wellbeing experts will present evidence for creative ageing, highlight cross-sector referral and funding partnership practice for sustainable social prescription programmes and debate the way forward.

Veronica Franklin Gould, President of Arts 4 Dementia, said:

“This conference aims to unlock access to re-energising arts support for people from the onset of dementia, rather than endure lonely fear-filled months until confirmation that their brain is degenerating with no hope of a cure.

“Thanks to social prescribing link workers, available to every GP, instead of living in lonely fear of stigma in the wait for diagnosis, people can now be invited to choose empowering cultural and creative activity to preserve their brain health. By the time diagnosis comes, their involvement in the community will reassure them how they can continue to discover and enjoy life with loved ones, despite dementia.”

Ron Bennett was referred to Arts 4 Dementia’s partnership programme with Southwark Playhouse, while undergoing assessment for a potential dementia. He said:

“It gets your brain working – you get into the character. It was all about me and my acting. It takes you into the character. It’s amazing. You think something quick. You don’t usually think like that! It means a lot to me.”

Creativity & Wellbeing Week 17-23 May is a national festival celebrating a creative approach to supporting health and wellbeing. Online events run by organisations all over the country will offer opportunities from mindful stitching to nature photography, with the aim of encouraging people to consider their wellbeing through creativity. The festival has been running for eleven years.

The event is run by [London Arts and Health](#) and the [Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance](#), a national organisation for everyone who believes culture and creativity can support health and wellbeing.

The festival will also offer a number of events to support the sector and encourage best practice, networking and peer to peer learning.

The Week includes a conference from [The Arts and Health Hub](#) which brings together an exciting mixture of interdisciplinary speakers including artists, medics and researchers, discussing and sharing works on themes of *care*.

Victoria Hume Director of the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance said:

“Creativity and culture have a key role to play in dealing with the mental health impacts of the pandemic for young people, for NHS and care staff and for all of us. Research confirms that culture and creativity support our health and wellbeing; they have protected our mental health during the pandemic and will be essential to supporting our collective recovery. Grassroots organisations all around the UK are using creativity to address entrenched health inequalities and support agency, confidence and build hope in change.

“Through the events and campaigns that are happening during May, we aim to raise the profile of this important work, to offer opportunities to participate, and to encourage policy-makers to ensure that creativity and culture are built into our systems of health and care.”

During the pandemic, organisations all over the country have been using creativity to combat the effects of loneliness, improve mental wellbeing and keep communities connected.

[Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) has coordinated a collective response across health, social care and cultural organisations to ensure people who cannot connect online are not forgotten. Tens of thousands of Creative Care Packs have been sent out to [young people](#) and [older people](#) with materials and activity ideas using music, writing, craft and other artforms. The kits also include phone numbers for help and support as well as hints and tips to protect mental wellbeing.

[Plymouth Music Zone](#) has run on and offline programmes, community creations, activities and workshops to engage, entertain and encourage the communities they work with, in particular people who were already experiencing levels of social isolation for a wide variety of reasons. This includes those in residential care, children with disabilities and sensory impairments, adults with mental health conditions, neurodiverse and disabled adults, and older adults with sight loss. Activities include Makaton and BSL videos with musicians, piano lessons by telephone, and weekly music quizzes.

The activities aim to engage people’s thinking and creative skills, to encourage them to try something new, to exchange ideas with others and to offer some respite from the relentlessness of being isolated.

[The Museum of You](#) aimed to capture the experience of lockdown and support wellbeing. The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge in Canterbury released regular themes to inspire local people to create. Through accessible activities designed to improve health & wellbeing while at home, people created a range of artistic responses including paintings, drawings, photographs, textiles and prints. The activities were based on Mind’s Six Ways to Wellbeing and aimed to combat loneliness and support mental and physical health. Participants’ artwork was then brought together in the Special Exhibitions Gallery at The Beaney, with over 100 works displayed to the public. Participants were able to share their stories and demonstrate the value that creativity had had on their wellbeing

Intermission Youth has worked predominantly with young people between 16 and 25 from the Black and ethnically diverse backgrounds who are vulnerable, at risk and from socio-economically challenging backgrounds. During lockdown they provided a range of theatre-based workshops, performances and training, supporting physical and mental health and helping empower young people to support change in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Almost a hundred more such case studies of creative work reaching people, institutions and supporting people shielding at home can be found via the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance.

Information about how to participate in Creativity & Wellbeing Week is available online.

Registration for Arts 4 Dementia Best Practice Conference 2021 is open. The report Arts for Brain Health: Social Prescribing as Peri-Diagnostic Practice for Dementia will be launched at The Culture, Health and Wellbeing international conference 21-23 June 2021.

Registration for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Webinar is open.

Ends

For further information

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Notes for editors

Arts 4 Dementia

Arts 4 Dementia (registered charity, founded in 2011) develops programmes in partnership with arts venues to empower, re-energise and inspire people above early symptoms of dementia and their companions, through challenging weekly workshops, to help them live better for longer in their own homes.

arts4dementia.org.uk The charity's social prescriber website signposts local arts and wellbeing events for brain health and dementia in the community and dementia-friendly arts venues, serving both those looking for stimulation and providers. Early stage and dementia awareness training for arts facilitators enables them to deliver effective workshops.

Arts 4 Dementia works to enable people with dementia and their loved ones to enjoy life to the full. Participating in arts activity, rekindling and learning new artistic skills enables them to bypass dementia symptoms and discover new creative experiences together.

Some 209,600 people will develop dementia this year: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/news-and-media/facts-media>

Fancourt, D., Steptoe, A. Cultural engagement predicts changes in cognitive function in older adults over a 10 year period: findings from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. *Sci Rep* 8, 10226 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-28591-8>

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW)

The APPGAHW was formed in 2014 and is a cross party group of parliamentarians with a shared interest in the field of arts, health and wellbeing. The aim of the APPG is to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to health and wellbeing and to stimulate progress towards making these benefits a reality across the country.

Chair: Ben Spencer MP

Co-Chair: Rt Hon. Lord Howarth of Newport

Vice-Chair: Tracy Brabin MP

Vice-Chair: Rt Hon. Baroness Morgan of Cotes

Treasurer: Baroness Andrews

Creative Health is the report of an Inquiry into arts, health and wellbeing, led by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing

Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA)

CHWA is a national alliance committed to building a healthy world powered by our creativity and imagination. We are an organisation driven by the collective power of our 6000 members. We connect, amplify and support their work to transform people's lives and communities through culture and creativity. Creative activity and cultural engagement have long been known to have tangible effects on health and quality of life, building resilience and supporting communication and community.

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing international conference

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing international conference 2021 takes place from 21 to 23 June. It is delivered by Arts & Health South West in collaboration with the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance. The programme draws on over 200 submissions for practice and research from 20 countries. Presentations, workshops and films cover subjects including dementia and the arts, hip hop therapy, young people's mental health, singing for health, staff wellbeing and training, partnerships and access, population level research and theoretical contributions.

London Arts and Health

London Arts and Health (LAH) is a strategic London based charity, which creates a bridge between the arts and health across the capital.

Our vision is that the power of arts and culture transforms and enriches the lives and health of Londoners. Our work is focused on creating more opportunities for Londoners with the least access, and the most to gain, to engage meaningfully with the arts.

We support Arts and Health practitioners in London and offer events, opportunities and resources. We have recently launched a number of projects to support practice, including The Digital Sandpit, Culture on Prescription and Partner Up.