

A4D Best Practice Conference

Arts for Brain Health: Social Prescribing as Peri-diagnostic Practice for Dementia.

Friday 21 May 2021

Veronica Franklin Gould, A4D President

VERONICA FRANKLIN GOULD FRSA founded Arts 4 Dementia (A4D) in 2011 to develop weekly programmes for early-stage dementia at arts venues, training, best practice conferences and reports. *Rearwakening the Mind (2012-13)* won the London 2012 Inspire Mark and Positive Breakthrough in Mental Health Dementia Award 2013. On publication of *Music Rearwakening (2015)*, Veronica was appointed A4D president. Her regional guide, *Rearwakening Integrated: Arts and Heritage (2017)*, maps arts opportunities for dementia and aligns arts within NHS England's Well Pathway for Dementia. Nominated Social Prescribing Innovator of the Year Finalist 2021, Veronica leads A4D's social prescribing programme, whose research findings will be disseminated with our report and conference *Arts for Brain Health: Social Prescribing as Peri-Diagnostic Practice for Dementia (20-21 May 2021)*.

'Arts for Brain Health – From despair to desire: social prescribing as diagnostic practice for dementia.'

Good morning. Thank you for joining A4D in our quest to bridge the gap in provision from the onset of symptoms – to combat loneliness and fear in the run up to diagnosis – and empower people through social prescribing to take up arts to preserve brain health.

Prince Charles, our future king, and both sides of politics endorse and passionately urge that social prescribing is the way forward. Andy Burnham states,

You have got to start with the person not the patient. prioritise social, cultural and creative interventions to prevent the risk of cognitive decline. In a 21st century NHS we need to turn things around. Social prescribing needs at the heart of the system. It has got to be about that wider holistic support for people with dementia, not just post-diagnosis, but from the onset of symptoms.

I think 'care' is helping people do what they love to do, allowing them to connect with their passions, what animates them in life. empower them to do what they love doing. That is the starting point for dementia care. It is about the vision of promoting independence, creativity, empowering people to interact and enjoy activities to preserve their brain health.

Matt Hancock has committed a further £6m funding to National Academy Social Prescribing (NASP) for two years. We must keep embedding social prescribing in our communities. Culture needs to be a vital part of the health agenda that I lead. Revolution has already begun. GPs are putting more people in touch with social prescribing link workers (SPLW) – James will tell us more.

Guided by leaders in dementia prevention, brain health, innovative and creative ageing, culture, health and wellbeing, and social prescribing, our aim is to discuss how GPs, when they refer patients for memory assessment, at the same time offer social prescribing. To debate how best to embed the practice, then to demonstrate arts and health funding and building cross sector partnerships so as to achieve sustainable arts prescription programmes.

Lift them out of isolating fears and choose activities that will open the door to creative and cultural discovery and insodoing, override symptoms. At that same point to refer them to their SPLW. Mindful that each later stage means worsening private strain at home.

Culture and creativity open doors to new discovery, even with dementia. Actually, the arts of greatest value for the cohort we discuss today are those designed for older people, not branded for dementia, but course leaders trained to understand the symptoms.

A cultural milieu or arts group can preserve fulfilling active life, sense of purpose and belonging in the community for years. And in the absence of a cure, a non-pharmaceutical intervention can provide an inspirational lifeline – despite dementia.

Your giving time to consider how social prescribing can fit with your academic and diagnostic approach will help spread the practice. We acknowledge that social prescribing offers value for people of all ages, every need. But our job today is to demonstrate how GPs and SPLW, by offering the empowering choice of arts treatment, is key to health and wellbeing from the onset of dementia.

We have the most astonishing array of speakers today:
Kings College London neuroscience student Hamaad Khan interviews Ron Bennett, fellow participants at Muse of Fire our partnership programme with Southwark Playhouse.

Biskaha Sarker, Artistic Director of Chaturangan South Asian Dance, and inspirational organiser of the Memory conference a decade ago, has recorded s beautiful contribution, after which Professor John Gallacher of the University of Oxford and Director of Dementias Platform UK takes over as chair for the morning – to advance social prescribing as peri-diagnostic practice for dementia, ideally to be offered by GPs to

patients at the point of referral to memory assessment. There follows talks by the Oxford Creative Ageing expert Sir Muir Gray, Christopher Bailey, Head of Arts at the World Health Organisation and Dominic Campbell, Artistic Director of Creative International.

Professor Brian Lawlor of Trinity Dublin and the Global Brain Health Institute, speaking of transforming the narrative of dementia from one of tragedy to one of hope, inspired our theme – From Despair to Desire. And where would any of us be without our leader Dr Michael Dixon, Chair of the College of Medicine and NHS Clinical Champion for Social Prescribing and co-founder of the International Social Prescribing Network.

After the break, John chairs the debate. We welcome Dr Charles Alessi, wearer of many hats too, among them Dementia lead at Public Health England, Jo Ward, Co-Chair of the North-West Social Prescribing Network, Ian McCreath Policy Manager, Personalisation and Integration at Alzheimer's Society, Professor Martin Marshall, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners – where it all begins – Kate Duncan of Nottingham City Arts, and Neil Fullerton of Brain Health Scotland. Who collaborate to debate the way forward – no mean task!

Speaking on Arts and Health for Social Change are Cara Courage, Head of Tate Exchange and Dr John Zeisel – our American arts for dementia guru – you may know his seminal publication *I'm Still Here*.

Alyson McGregor, National Director of Altogether chairs talks on building cross sector partnerships for sustainable arts prescriptions, from Ireland, Wales and Julie Hammon on the arts and nature, Dorset Thriving Communities consortium.

Victoria Hume, Director of the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) then chairs the Oxford, Hampshire and Devon regional sessions and Dr Mohan Sekeram the London Midlands and Yorkshire sessions.

Finally, the alluring heritage and green prescription session is chaired by Craig Lister, Wellbeing Lead for the East of England at Public Health England, to help preserve Brain Health par excellence: Desi Gradinarova for Historic England, Elizabeth Galvin for the Victoria & Albert Museum, Tom Mack of Active Devon speaks on 'Connecting Actively in Nature', leading to Sir Tim Smit, unmissable co-founder of The Eden Project, 'Making Natural History'. This promises to be a day of fascinating development.

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