

# Consultation response: The Culture Strategy for Scotland

19 September 2018

## Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) is the national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations in Scotland. The voluntary health sector includes health charities, community health organisations and other third sector organisations making an active contribution to Scotland's health and wellbeing.

Our vision is for a healthier, fairer Scotland served by a thriving voluntary health sector, and we work to improve people's health and wellbeing by providing an effective national network for voluntary health organisations.

VHS provides the secretariat for the Health Inequalities Cross Party Group and the views expressed in our response have been informed through a CPG meeting held in December 2017, looking at the relationship between Culture and Health<sup>1</sup>. This particular CPG meeting went on the record as one of the Scottish Government's official engagement events in the preliminary discussions about a draft culture strategy.

VHS welcomes the draft strategy and commend its potential to affect positive change to the promotion of and engagement with culture and the many health benefits this can provide.

## Vision

The culture strategy for Scotland aims to position culture as having intrinsic value and contributing both directly and indirectly to health, wealth and inclusive growth. Our understanding of culture as defined within the draft strategy is that it represents creative activity, and focuses heavily on the arts. During our discussion about culture and health at the Health Inequalities Cross Party many members highlighted sports, religion, multiculturalism and food as important manifestations, influencers and contributors in relation to Scotland's culture. Whilst we understand the Scottish Government's desire to have a strong focus on arts and heritage in the culture strategy, we believe it is a missed opportunity not to embrace a much wider definition of culture. Especially when the draft strategy refers to Calhoun and Sennett's 2007 definition which describes culture as a part of everyday life. This definition highlights

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.parliament.scot/CrossPartyGroups/Session5CrossPartyGroup/Minutes/HI\\_20171207.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/CrossPartyGroups/Session5CrossPartyGroup/Minutes/HI_20171207.pdf)

the visible forms of culture, as described in the strategy, but also the less visible forms of culture, which is not articulated within the strategy.

Focusing solely on the arts could have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the concept of culture, including Scottish culture, as something exclusive and exclusionary, which goes against the ethos of inclusivity that the strategy purports.

The strategy aims to be long term, broad in outlook and seeks to be able to respond to the unprecedented pace and extent of change experienced in the last decade. It is therefore imperative that it takes into account the growing digital and technological advances being made and the new platforms that these offer people to access culture. This will enable the strategy to remain a living document that can also look to tackle barriers to access.

### **Transforming through culture: Arts, Culture and Health**

An ageing population and the prevalence of chronic conditions such as cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, dementia and diabetes pose the greatest challenges to the health and social care systems<sup>2</sup>. This is further compounded by the presence of multi-morbidities (two or more simultaneous medical conditions) which exist in 30 percent of the over-75s<sup>3</sup>. This is resulting in an increasing burden on health and social care services, with patients and their carers not getting the support they require<sup>4</sup>.

The 2014/15 Chief Medical Officer's annual report, *Realistic Medicine*<sup>5</sup> states that as a society we are overmedicating and that alongside clinical interventions other forms of support need to be explored in order to provide a holistic approach to health and care. As part of the Health 2020 strategy, the World Health Organisation noted that *"Good health for communities is a resource and capacity that can contribute to achieving strong, dynamic and creative societies. Health and wellbeing include physical, cognitive, emotional and social dimensions. They are influenced by a range of biomedical, psychological, social, economic and environmental factors that interconnect across people in differing ways and at different times across the life-course"*<sup>6</sup>.<sup>9</sup>

In Scotland, primary care reform, health and social care integration and the new GP contract call for transformational change from clinical to community settings including cross sectorial and multi-disciplinary partnerships. The Scottish Government's

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_publication\\_file/data-briefing-emergency-hospital-admissions-for-ambulatory-care-sensitive-conditions-apr-2012.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/data-briefing-emergency-hospital-admissions-for-ambulatory-care-sensitive-conditions-apr-2012.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://personcentredcare.health.org.uk/resources/thanks-petunias-developing-and-commissioning-non-traditional-providers-support-self>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/01/3745/downloads>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/01/3745>

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. (2013). *Health 2020: A European policy framework and strategy for the 21st century*.

national programme to recruit at least 250 community link workers<sup>7</sup> to work in GP surgeries will help to bridge the gap between medical and nonmedical interventions.

Community link working is a form of social prescribing that offers an approach for connecting people to non-medical sources of support or resources in the community which are likely to help with their health problems<sup>8</sup>.

Social prescribing is a model that is person-centred, asset-based and holistic and can help foster healthy societies. A healthy society is synonymous with the concept of 'salutogenesis' – a phrase coined by Aaron Antonovsky, a medical sociologist, to denote the creation of health through a process of healing and recovery.<sup>9</sup> The term salutogenesis offers an assets based approach. Assets-based health approaches are increasingly found within health discourse, and we make the case that the arts are a key individual and community asset in achieving and maintaining wellness.

A form of social prescribing also known as 'art on prescription' is a model where art activity is accessed through a referral process, usually by professionals working in primary care, social care, and housing as well as through a range of third sector agencies. An example of art on prescription is Art in Healthcare's project 'Room for Art'<sup>10</sup>. The project takes place in areas of Edinburgh that are amongst the most deprived in Scotland based on levels of income, employment, health, education, skills and training, housing, geographic access and crime. Some of the reasons people are referred onto Room for Art are:

- Experience of loss, isolation or loneliness which is impacting negatively on their health and wellbeing
- Experience of depression and stress
- Anxiety or depression alongside other chronic health issues
- Unemployment due to ill-health
- Undiagnosed needs such as carers needing time for themselves
- Impairment in abilities to function socially due to poor health
- A significant reliance on primary care – people visiting GPs frequently due to loneliness, for example.

Engaging with arts and culture can have a number of specific health benefits. The All Party UK Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, in their report 'Creative Health'<sup>11</sup>, have outlined the role of the arts in relation to health and wellbeing.

*“Engagement with the arts can play a role in mitigating health inequalities. Evidence has shown that engagement with the arts can influence maternal nutrition, perinatal mental health, and childhood development; shape educational and employment*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/04/3662/5>

<sup>8</sup> [https://vhscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Gold\\_Star\\_Exemplars\\_Full-Report\\_June\\_2017.pdf](https://vhscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Gold_Star_Exemplars_Full-Report_June_2017.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Antonovsky, A. (1979). Health, Stress and Coping. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.artinhealthcare.org.uk/news-entry.php?post=70&title=making-room-for-art>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

*opportunities and tackle chronic distress; enable self-expression and empowerment and help to overcome social isolation; and prevent illness and infirmity from developing or worsening<sup>12</sup>*. The report considers the arts as an element of psychosocial care with a part to play in the creation of a healthy society.

Realising Realistic Medicine, the 2016/17 Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report<sup>13</sup>, states that obesity, physical inactivity and alcohol-related harm remain key public health challenges in Scotland. There are a number of third sector organisations using cultural approaches to support people's health and wellbeing. For example, Impact Arts<sup>14</sup> often gets involved as the cultural partner in community led approaches to tackling local issues. They have worked with local nurseries and schools, community groups and unemployed young people to deliver creative workshops on food growing, gardening, and environmental art. They also have a wild walking group that encourages people to get out and about, improving their fitness and enjoyment of the environment. Some of their achievements include:

- Getting 1,322 members of the local community involved
- Diverting 95 tonnes CO2E of waste materials from landfill
- Delivering 134 arts workshops
- Organising 54 healthy eating workshops

They also run an art therapy programme that is community based and specifically for primary school children living with family members who have drug and alcohol addictions. In Glasgow's East End, as many as 35% of children fall into this category. The programme is a creative lifeline that supports and empowers children to cope with their home environment. It offers one-to-one art therapy sessions with fully qualified and experienced art therapists. It engages with children by working in partnership with schools, social care providers and children's charities<sup>15</sup>.

VHS believe that more needs to be done to support cross-sectorial and multi-disciplinary partnership working. The strategy needs a much stronger emphasis on the need for the worlds of health and social care to join forces with the worlds of arts and culture in a shared effort to improve and nurture people's health and wellbeing.

## **Access to Culture**

We appreciate the focus on the arts within the draft strategy and recognise the various transformative qualities of arts and culture and we agree with the draft strategy that culture's empowering and transformative power should be experienced by everyone. However, it is clear that more work is needed to support people to engage with and access cultural and creative activities.

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<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> <https://beta.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/report/2018/04/practising-realistic-medicine/documents/00534374-pdf/00534374-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.impactarts.co.uk/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.impactarts.co.uk/content/our-work/>

During the Health Inequalities Cross Party Group meeting on culture and health many participants noted the inequalities in engagement with culture. It was noted that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, those living in poverty and in areas in need of regeneration as well as people living with long-term physical or mental health conditions, and those who did not have University degrees were less likely to engage with culture or cultural activities<sup>16</sup>.

The previously described Room for Art Project by Art in Healthcare had zero attendance at the first workshop. It was described as ‘too big a jump to go from a referral to a community venue to meet an artist and a group of strangers’. Art in Healthcare discovered the need for a stepping stone and in order to combat the barriers to taking part they now hold one to one sessions with each participant prior to starting the workshops<sup>17</sup>.

The third sector has also galvanised the opportunities to access and support vulnerable people who can benefit from arts and culture but who may be unlikely to engage with it on their own. Research conducted by Art in Healthcare<sup>18</sup> showed that 50% of patients surveyed at hospital sites said they had never visited an art gallery. When the hospital admission data was mapped to areas, it was clear that people from the most deprived areas of Scotland were disproportionately represented amongst the users of hospital services.

Hospitals have proven to be a useful access point to reach people with arts and culture who may not otherwise be engaging and there are many examples of how the third sector bridges the gap between health and culture, including health charities that work specifically through the arts. Hearts and Minds<sup>19</sup> works in collaboration with paediatric healthcare units, respite centres, schools for learners with complex additional support needs and dementia units. Their Clown Doctors programme<sup>20</sup> supports children and young people to cope with life in a hospital, hospice or respite care setting and in schools for learners with complex additional support needs. They help children cope with painful, distressing or confusing treatments and procedures, and help them tackle communication, social and physical challenges.

The Teapot Trust<sup>21</sup> children’s charity uses art therapy as a way of helping young people cope with long term medical conditions. These conditions can cause anxiety, anger or upset for children and families. Art therapy provides a way of expressing and dealing with feelings, helping children to feel more in control and to cope with their condition. They run open group art therapy sessions in a number of hospital outpatient departments around Scotland. Any child attending clinic can come to their

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<sup>16</sup> <https://vhscotland.org.uk/what-can-arts-and-culture-do-for-health-inequalities-developing-a-culture-strategy-for-scotland/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://vhscotland.org.uk/margarets-blog-what-can-arts-and-culture-do-for-health-inequalities/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.heartsandminds.org.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.heartsandminds.org.uk/clowndoctors/meet-the-clowndoctors/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.teapot-trust.org/>

art table to paint, draw, collage or model clay and engage with an art therapist if they wish. The group helps to reduce anxiety before medical procedures as well as providing a safe space for children to express feelings about their illness that may be difficult to talk about<sup>22</sup>.

The Teapot Trust also offers small group art therapy for children who may require more help and support. These children include paediatric oncology patients who are dealing with severe stages of their illness on a hospital ward and children who are living with grief and loss after the death of a sibling.

The third sector's ability to act as a conduit and a lynchpin, and its trusted position within communities, means that it can deliver support in a variety of different settings and can support people to engage with the arts and culture.

North Edinburgh Arts<sup>23</sup> offers local residents a place to relax, explore, learn, meet, share, volunteer and have fun in. Last year over 30,000 visits were made to the venue and over 17 hours of creative workshops are on offer each week, most with a family focus, alongside a wide range of other events from singing groups, to dance shows, circus skills workshops, community theatre to film clubs. Their Community Garden and Community Shed bring people together to make things, grow things, mend things, learn new skills or use old ones, meet people, and have a laugh while being productive. North Edinburgh Arts is also home to Licketyspit Theatre Company<sup>24</sup> and Muirhouse Youth Development Group<sup>25</sup>, both reaching out to the most disadvantaged children and families in the area.

Alzheimer Scotland<sup>26</sup> has a wide range of community based culture activities for people with dementia. Art in the City Edinburgh is a friendly, diverse group of people who meet once each month to visit art galleries (and sometimes museums and historic buildings). The group provides an opportunity for people whose lives are affected by dementia to share a gallery visit and discuss art (and other things) in a friendly and supportive environment. They encourage people to come along with a relative, friend, or carer. Angus Music Café is a weekly music café in Forfar that provides an opportunity for people with dementia and their partners, families and carers to join in song and at the same time meet new friends. They also run the fortnightly Angus Friday Fling, for people with dementia and their partners, families and friends to come together to dance. Other Alzheimer Scotland culture focused groups include the Dumfries Photography Group, Aberdeen Musical Memories Group, and Mull Musical Minds.

The third sector in general also plays an important role in supporting people to develop their own resilience and abilities as well as helping people to access statutory services. Respondents to VHS's seminal report into health inequalities in

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.teapot-trust.org/about-us/our-services/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://northedinburgharts.co.uk/>

<sup>24</sup> [Licketyspit Theatre Company](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Muirhouse Youth Development Group](#)

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.alzscot.org/therapeutic\\_activity](https://www.alzscot.org/therapeutic_activity)

Scotland, 'Living in the Gap', highlighted that the third sector regard their work as strengthening the assets of the people they worked with, and the preventative nature of asset building. Organisations mentioned "helping individuals to develop internal resources and capacity so that they build resilience and gain the skills and confidence to cope with day-to-day issues"<sup>27</sup>.

It is widely recognised that third sector organisations are often able to engage and develop the trust of vulnerable people in a way that statutory services sometimes find hard to do. One respondent to Living in the Gap commented: "often the individuals who are most in need are not accessing statutory services, and therefore remain in the shadows of service provision"<sup>28</sup>. Our research reinforces the view that engaging vulnerable groups is what the voluntary sector does best.

The strategy needs to do more to ensure access to the arts and to ensure that the third sector is seen as an equal partner in the delivery of arts and culture as well as the mechanism through which people access culture.

It is important to encourage the NHS, health professionals, Health and Social Care Integration Authorities, and health and social care service commissioners to work with the arts and culture sectors. Despite evidence of the health benefits of engaging with arts and culture the health sector still does not readily acknowledge or routinely engage with them. The culture strategy poses an excellent opportunity to send out a strong message to the health sector of the value of working in partnership with arts and culture, which is an evidenced, cost effective means to support people's health, wellbeing and recovery embedded within the ethos of prevention and early intervention.

### **Harnessing digital technology to improve access to arts and culture**

We are living in an increasingly digitalised world and it is imperative to harness benefits and potential of digital technology in improving access to arts and culture. We have touched on some of the health, economic and social inequalities faced in Scotland today but there also exists geographic inequalities, and a persistent lack of social mobility. In the same way audiences for arts and cultural activity are also polarised along socio-economic, demographic and geographic lines.

We currently have a growing culture of digital consumption with a large proportion of our population spending increasing amounts of time online on a variety of different digital platforms. This is supported by the Scottish Government's ambition is for Scotland to be a world-leading digital nation by 2020<sup>29</sup>.

The growth of technologies such as Virtual Reality, 360 filming, live streaming and performance capture can offer a range of new platforms to engage with culture and also reduce inequalities of access.

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<sup>27</sup> Voluntary Health Scotland. *Living in the Gap: A voluntary sector perspective on health inequalities in Scotland*. 2015, pg. 23

<sup>28</sup> Voluntary Health Scotland. *Living in the Gap*. Pg. 24

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/7843>

Digital platforms offer the potential to connect with large geographically dispersed audiences and also help to foster deeper relationships within smaller geographic communities, and communities of interest.

For example, digital technology tools can also help close inequalities of access for and greatly enhance the experience of those with disabilities. Hi-tech glasses like those being developed by the National Theatre<sup>30</sup> allow deaf audience members to watch performances with subtitles without having to rely on dialogue screens at the side of the auditorium. Mobile apps are unlocking cultural content for many users, for example, apps such as Signly<sup>31</sup> are delivering smart signed content directly to a user's device – enabling visitors to access information without having to wait for interpreted tours or having to disclose a 'special need'.

The UK wide charity VocalEyes<sup>32</sup> has developed guidance for cultural organisations on how they can ensure that websites and other digital platforms as well as physical premises, are fully accessible to deaf and disabled audiences<sup>33</sup>.

If the culture strategy is to be a living document then it must take cognisance of the upcoming digital and technological advances and the significant opportunities and implications these will have for the arts and cultural sector.

### **What VHS can offer**

VHS held its first discussion on culture, arts and health in December 2017, at the Health Inequalities Cross Party Group Meeting, with speakers representing NHS Health Scotland, the Scottish Government and the voluntary health sector. The arts and culture organisations present voiced a strong wish for continued and better engagement with the NHS, health and social care partnerships and other parts of the health system. There was a consensus that the conversation must be kept alive and must develop and expand to bring together other voices across health and culture. VHS proposed to help 'keep the conversation going' in a drive to integrate health and culture strategies and build stronger collaboration between the health and cultural sectors. Since then we have organised two round table discussions that have built on the CPG discussion and have determined and helped shape our 2018 Annual Conference which is taking as its theme: 'Get the Picture: Culture, Health and Wellbeing'<sup>34</sup> As a national network and intermediary we believe we can play a valuable role in helping to build on and extend the links between the culture, health and third sectors.

### **Recommendations**

We would recommend that the culture strategy should look at articulating the less visible forms of culture including, sports, religion, multiculturalism and food. We

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/03/deaf-hard-hearing-theatre-goers-given-hi-tech-glasses-can-watch/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://signly.co/apps/roald-dahl/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://vocaleyeyes.co.uk/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://vocaleyeyes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Museum-access-information-guidelines-2016-VocalEyes.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <https://vhscotland.org.uk/event/vhs-annual-conference-and-agm-2018/>



propose that the strategy takes into account the growing digital and technological advances being made and the new platforms that these offer to access culture.

Given the very strong evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of engaging with the arts we recommend that the strategy sets out a more explicit commitment to fostering cross-sectorial and multi-disciplinary partnership working in relation to health. A strong commitment to generating more joined-up thinking and working between health and cultural sectors is needed. NHS boards, health and social care partnerships, commissioners and health professionals need leadership and support to improve their levels of knowledge, understanding, and engagement with cultural thinking, ideas and organisations.

Members of VHS have highlighted that there is a gap in Scotland for a mechanism or platform that would encourage and foster better understanding and partnerships between the arts, culture and health. Elsewhere in the UK there is evidence that health and the arts work much more closely together than in Scotland. The Royal Society for Public Health has an Arts, Health and Wellbeing Group which exists to share current research and best practice, organise conferences, seminars and workshops and influence government policy as a professional body. Arts Council England recently established the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, a network designed to support the practice and professional development of cultural practitioners wishing to engage with health and wellbeing and raise the profile of the work within the wider cultural community. Their webpage says:

*“The culture, health and wellbeing field works with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people either through ill health, poverty or personal and social circumstance. The potential to reach diverse people in this field of practice is enormous and will support all those who are interested in engaging with the work through networking, events and sharing resources”.*

In Scotland no such mechanism or platform exists and this gap is increasingly felt. VHS does not have a view as to a forum, a network, an alliance or an agency is the answer, but we strongly believe that there needs to be investment in a platform that should be resourced to carry out activities that would include:

- Policy work (eg. in relation to mental health, loneliness, social prescribing, etc.)
- Progress the position of art and health in relation to the broadest range of national outcomes (through partnership collaboration and innovation)
- Facilitate inter disciplinary conversations about the strategic importance of art and health with key funding partners including the big Trusts and Foundations in Scotland
- Training and professional development for both the cultural sector and healthcare sector
- Provide a focus for artists to develop and promote best practice

- Conference and seminar programmes Art and health awards infrastructure, including for example, a Youth Arts & Health Award

VHS is happy to discuss these recommendations further with the Scottish Government and we extend a warm invitation to the culture strategy team to our conference [Get the Picture: Culture, Health and Wellbeing](#), taking place Tuesday November 20<sup>th</sup> in Edinburgh, in order to explore these issues further.

**To discuss this response or for further information, please contact:**

Kiren Zubairi, Policy Engagement Officer: [kiren.zubairi@vhscotland.org.uk](mailto:kiren.zubairi@vhscotland.org.uk)