

INTRODUCTION

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) works with its members and others to address health inequalities and improve health related policy, systems and partnership working in order to help people and communities live healthier and fairer lives.

Culture is recognised as central to Scotland's wellbeing but people who face the greatest health inequalities (poor health, low incomes, living in a high SIMD area) have the lowest participation in cultural activities so benefit least from cultural interventions.

OUR AIMS

Through our project *Culture, Health and Wellbeing* we are collaborating with arts and health practitioners across sectors to maximise the role of the arts and culture to:

- Support **primary prevention and early intervention** by building capacity and supporting vulnerable people before mental and physical health conditions manifest
- **Reduce stress** and thus **enhance immune function and higher cardiovascular reactivity**
- Help people to **manage their conditions and support recovery** by providing a stability and structure
- **Relieve pressure** on frontline services
- Affect the **social determinants of health** by developing social cohesion and reducing social inequalities
- **Enhance self-efficacy** and develop **copng mechanisms and emotional regulation**
- Encourage **health-promoting behaviours**
- Support people to **engage** with healthcare providers and clinical interventions

OUR METHODOLOGY AND ACTIONS

We build bridges and strengthen dialogue between arts and health sectors and foreground evidence of patient outcomes that are improved through cultural interventions.

Over the last year we have:

- Held three cross-sectoral round tables on *Keeping the Conversation Going About Culture, Health and Wellbeing*
- Became Secretary of the Arts and Health Scotland network
- Published 8 posters and 8 accompanying blogs by arts and health organisations to highlight the evidence on cultural interventions and health
- Held a joint seminar with the Scottish Rural Health Partnership on *Culture, Health and Wellbeing in Rural Scotland*
- Explored the wider evidence, including the Creative Health report (UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing) and the early findings of a World Health Organisation project examining international evidence
- Engaged with Scottish Government, Creative Scotland, NESTA, Museums and Galleries Scotland and the Cross Party Group on Culture, to help forge new links between the cultural and health sectors
- Held a national conference for 140 people: *Get the Picture, Culture, Health and Wellbeing* with keynote speaker Professor Sir Harry Burns
- Started to map Scottish evidence on the impact that cultural interventions have on patient outcomes
- Collaborated with the Arts and Health Scotland network to present an event for 70 people at Glasgow Royal Infirmary *Keeping the Conversation Going – A Collective Voice*
- Organised a meeting for the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group (in our role as Secretariat) on *What Can Arts and Culture do for Health Inequalities?*

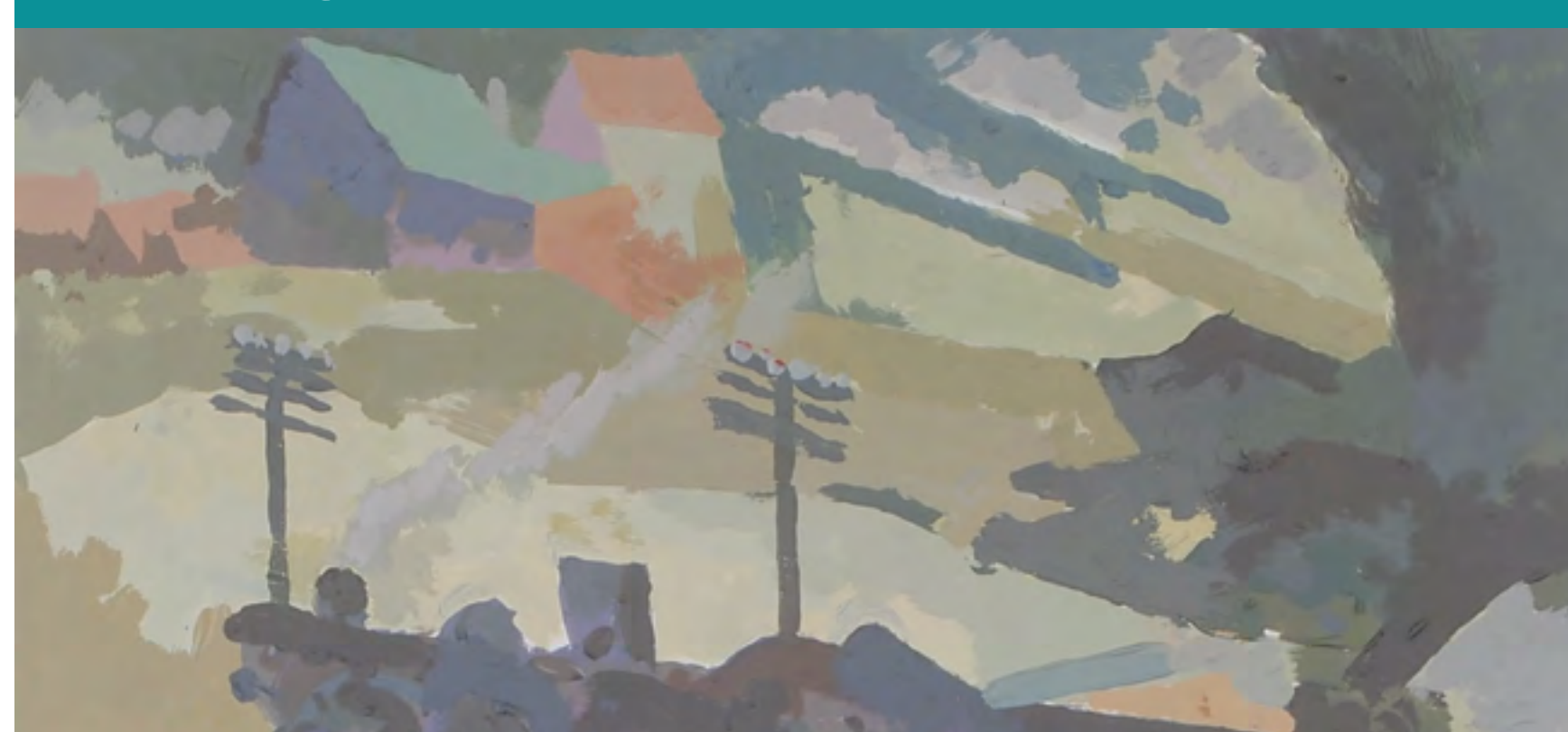
CASE STUDIES

Cheyne Gang



- A community singing group for people with long term respiratory conditions. Set up in 2013 by three practice nurses: now operating in seven locations
- Referrals via GP practices, local newspaper advertising, links with Pulmonary Rehabilitation and word of mouth
- Uses singing to teach breathing techniques to support recovery and management of a range of respiratory conditions
- Undertook pilot feasibility study using AQ20 forms to measure patients' quality of life on joining the group and 6 months later:
 - Improved physical health: less inhaler use, fewer flare ups of COPD and no new hospital admissions. Improved mental health with increased confidence and less stress and anxiety. Less lonely and social isolated; improved capacity and health to enjoy social contact

Art Angel



- A Dundee project of 20 years standing run by people with lived experience of mental illness
- Supports people aged 16+ with mental health problems in their attempts to get better and stay well through active participation in the arts
- Delivers a wide range of art, photography, creative writing, film and drama groups that provide safe spaces so that people can experience social and psychological stability, structure and belonging
- 85% of people attending Art Angel said it improved their recovery, 90% said it improved their wellbeing, 84% said they learned new skills (2018)
- Evaluates regularly; for more information visit www.artangeldundee.org.uk/creative_evaluation.html

Football Memories Scotland



- Originally established in 2009 by the Scottish Football Museum and Scottish Football Heritage Network, now a partnership between Alzheimer Scotland and the Scottish Football Museum
- Uses skilled facilitators to engage male dementia sufferers in a discussion about their football past times, prompted by photographs and memorabilia.
- Positive effects of football reminiscence on participants' mood, communication and alertness have been measured by the University of Glasgow: *Football Memories: Impact of non-pharmacologic treatments on Alzheimer's and Dementia sufferers* (2010)
- The added benefits to carers (improved mood, quality of life and respite) has also been established

CONCLUSIONS

- Cultural interventions have an important role to play in an integrated health and social care system, with a focus on prevention, anticipation and supported self-management, and taking a person centred and assets based approach
- Realistic Medicine seeks to address the over-medicalisation of health. Scotland's Chief Medical Officer has written about the 'magic of the arts' and their benefits for physical, mental and social wellbeing
- Cultural interventions should play a role in realising the six National Public Health Priorities
- The roll-out of 250 new community link workers to help address health inequalities provides new opportunities for social prescribing arts and cultural interventions
- The Culture Strategy for Scotland presents a new opportunity to build stronger collaboration and meaningful coproduction between the cultural and health sectors
- The third sector is a crucial innovator, collaborator and evaluator in this area
- Whereas there is robust UK and international evidence about the impact of cultural interventions on patient health and wellbeing, more evaluation of Scottish interventions would be beneficial, as currently the evidence is mostly grey literature
- The Arts and Health Scotland network is an important development in sharing good practice, evidence and learning

Artlink

VHS would like to thank Artlink Edinburgh for the design of the poster and artwork.