



IHPE Position Statement: Arts and Health

KEY INFORMATION

Definition

1. The arts comprise a wide range of cross-cultural creative activities.
2. The arts have been proposed as consisting of five broad categories:
 - i. performing arts (e.g. dance, film, music, singing and theatre)
 - ii. visual arts, design and craft (e.g. crafts, design, painting, photography and sculpture)
 - iii. literature (e.g. writing, reading and attending literary festivals)
 - iv. culture (e.g. going to museums, galleries, concerts, the theatre and community events)
 - v. online, digital and electronic arts (e.g. animations and computer graphics)(WHO, 2019)

History

3. The arts have formed an integral part of human connection and wellbeing for thousands of years, with musical origins in simple vocalisations and percussive sounds in early hunter-gatherer communities, and artistic expression preserved in prehistoric cave paintings and ancient sculptures.

Today the arts continue to constitute a universal language, connecting individuals across diverse backgrounds and providing a means of emotional expression, cultural preservation and social cohesion.

4. The arts have the potential to contribute a vital component of positive health promotion, empowering individuals and communities, reducing loneliness, and improving health by teaching new skills and bringing people together across cultural divides, both on-line and in person.

Research

5. There is an extensive body of international research, including high-quality reviews proposing the cost-effective benefit of the arts to health and wellbeing across the lifespan, including end-of-life care and bereavement but further research is needed.

6. There is potential for a greater role for the arts in helping people experiencing physical and mental ill health. For example, in the UK the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends activities including art, and music, therapy for people with dementia. Visual arts, music making, animation and physical movement have also been used successfully to improve wellbeing for people with chronic pain and reduce reliance on opioid medication.
7. The development of children and young people with special educational needs and disability may particularly benefit from inclusive access to music. Projects such as the "Sounds of Intent" have successfully engaged with individuals and are carrying out research.
8. Adverse childhood experiences impact health in adult life. Some of these can be offset by positive childhood experiences, which can be provided by access to the arts in a recovery-focussed approach to wellbeing, including in low- and middle- income countries.

Inequalities

9. Access to the arts can form part of an inclusive and health-promoting settings approach to health and wellbeing, including in schools, workplaces, hospitals and prisons, and also for emerging settings hosting marginalised groups such as refugees and people seeking asylum.
10. In the UK, reduced access to the arts for children and young people exacerbates inequalities, as a result of declining curriculum time for the arts and a reduction in funding for free music lessons in schools. In some schools, music, art and drama are rotated termly, offering just one hour per week to access any of the arts, in a 'carousel' system. The impact of reduced access in earlier years is reflected in national examination data showing declining entries for art subjects, especially music.

STATEMENT

1. IHPE advocates for preventative policies, early intervention and the promotion of positive health outcomes for both individuals and communities. The arts form an integral part of these aims and require additional resources.
2. IHPE supports inclusive, cross-cultural access to the arts as a vital, economic component of the social model of health at individual, local, national and international levels. There should be appropriate provision to ensure disadvantaged, vulnerable, marginalised, and minority groups can participate.
3. Arts provisions should form an integral component of social prescribing, as part of a balanced approach to the social and medical models of health and be adequately resourced to increase availability and access across all areas of society, including marginalised groups.

4. Arts subjects urgently need to be given a higher priority in education. In the UK additional resources are needed to provide equal opportunities for arts provision, particularly musical instrument playing in schools, to contribute to the prevention of widening inequalities.
5. Further research is needed to address the link between curriculum time in the arts in education and health and wellbeing, attainment and potential impact on school attendance and engagement with learning.
6. In different education settings, for example prisons, education in the arts is a prime opportunity to engage and rehabilitate 'excluded' or 'invisible' populations.
7. The arts can form part of a recovery-focussed approach to wellbeing for children and young people experiencing poor mental health, unmet Special Educational Needs and other adverse childhood experiences, to increase inclusion and improve health and wellbeing prospects into adulthood.
8. IHPE advocates addressing the root causes of maladaptive health behaviours, such as addiction. The arts can form part of an empowering, restorative process of recovery and should be prioritised in adult recovery communities given the high levels of poor health, inequalities and vulnerable people who seek or need support for substance use.
9. IHPE recommends the measurement of arts engagement as a positive health indicator with ongoing funding for research. This forms part of a necessary shift to more positive visions of health and wellbeing, away from solely sickness and ill health.
10. Access to the arts should be provided in many areas by the NHS in the UK, in line with NICE guidelines, with ongoing evaluation of evidence for how the arts can help support public health in a range of contexts and across the lifespan.
11. Cross-sectoral collaboration, especially across health, social care, education, justice and culture, should ensure that the arts form a fundamental part of public life within and across communities, both nationally and internationally.
12. Extensive, scoping reviews have identified 5 key policy areas in which the arts can have a significant impact and should be adequately resourced and implemented, with investment in quality research to measure outcomes:
 - i. Mental health and wellbeing
 - ii. Health inequalities
 - iii. Education system
 - iv. Social care
 - v. End of life care and bereavement.(The National Centre for Creative Health, 2023)

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Additional Resources

Arts Council England. Research: how creativity and culture impacts people's lives.
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/our-research>.

Arts Council England. Creative Writing in Schools Report.
[FINAL ACE CWIS 2017-18 - Final Report.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/~/media/Arts-Council-England/2018-19/Creative-Writing-in-Schools-Report-Final-Report-2017-18-Final-Report.pdf)

First Story- creative writing charity for young writers and schools.
<https://firststory.org.uk/lives-changed/>

Music for Dementia.
<https://www.musicfordementia.org.uk/resources>

National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance.
<https://artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/our-work/research/>

Scottish Ballet National Centre for Dance.
<https://scottishballet.co.uk/discover/news-and-articles/scottish-ballet-launches-as-a-national-centre-for-dance-health/>

Services for Education.
[Why is Music Important in Schools and What Can You Do to Prioritise it? - Services For Education](https://www.servicesforeducation.org.uk/why-is-music-important-in-schools-and-what-can-you-do-to-prioritise-it?_ga=2.141111111.141111111.141111111-141111111-141111111)

Singing Medicine- wellbeing through singing for children and adults in hospital and at home.
<https://singingmedicine.co.uk/>

The Baring Foundation- supporting developments in the arts and health.
<https://mailchi.mp/b6965aad9f9d/new-arts-mental-health-funding-plus-news-reading-and-resources>.

The Independent Society of Musicians.
<https://www.ism.org/>

UK Alliance for Art and Culture.
<https://www.campaignforthearts.org/>

UK Music.
<https://www.ukmusic.org/research-reports/a-manifesto-for-music/>

ResiliArt 100: Crowdsourcing a vision of resilient creative industries.
[https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382692/PDF/382692eng.pdf.
multi](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382692/PDF/382692eng.pdf.multi)

Why Humans Need Music.

<https://www.whyhumansneedmusic.com/research>

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10th May 2024

With thanks to reviewers: Stephen Clift, Professor Emeritus, Canterbury Christ Church University; Mat Davis, Music Teacher, Music Director of the Mat Davis Film Orchestra, Nottingham; Claire Franklin, Conductor at Music for Everyone, Head of Performing Arts: Music & Drama, Bramcote College, Nottingham; Robert Parker, Graduate and Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, tutor with Nottingham Youth Orchestra, Music Director of the Nottingham Concert Band; Dr Theodore Stickley, Honorary Associate Professor of Mental Health, University of Nottingham.

We are grateful that critical voices in the field are calling for further high-quality research to investigate the effects and benefits of arts for health interventions.

<p>Citation: Neil K E, and Watson M C. (2024) <i>IHPE Position Statement: Arts and Health (May 2024)</i>. Lichfield, Institute of Health Promotion and Education.</p>
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