

Using culture to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities in York

Introduction

Culture and Wellbeing York, won a contract for a pilot programme from City of York Council (hereafter CYC) to help improve the public health of its older residents. From March 2017 to February 2018, the Consortium has worked in partnership to use cultural prescribing to improve access and participation in arts and culture for the older residents in York.

The Cultural Consortium for Wellbeing York (hereafter Culture & Wellbeing York) is a partnership between:

- York Museums Trust
- National Centre for Early Music
- York Theatre Royal
- Pilot Theatre
- Accessible Arts & Media
- Converge (University of York St. John)
- York Explore
- York@Large

By enabling greater participation in high quality artistic and cultural activity, the project has focused on improving public health determinants by increasing mental wellbeing through;

- Reducing social isolation and loneliness
- Enabling people to connect with others across generations
- Keep active and reduce risk of injury
- Inclusivity of people with learning disabilities and those with dementia

The partnership has sought to encourage participation in those who may not have assessed arts and culture due to perceptions that it is not for them or due to health, social or financial barriers to participation.

Why Cultural Prescribing

Culture & Wellbeing York has developed a model of 'cultural prescribing' due to a growing national body of research and evidence showing the health benefits of participation in artistic and cultural activities. The partnership is also keen to use the cultural assets (people and place) to integrate strategically with the Ageing Well theme and to meet a wider range of need within the Health and Wellbeing Board Public Health Plan.

- Access to Explore York's extensive and diverse arts programme across multiple sites in York
- Free screening of Pilot Theatre productions, Blood and Chocolate and Everything is Possible in Tang Hall
- Between 220 – 250 number of participants (Cuppa and Chorus, York in Harmony, Pilot)
- Delivered access to cultural activities via the menu developed by the Partnership including YMT's
 - Volunteering 423 in 2017 giving over 10,000 hours
 - Access card 4562 members providing unlimited visits and high satisfaction rate
 - Wellbeing specific events – Art for Wellbeing with 8 regular attendees, 40-50 per year.
- Established standards of measurements via accepted social prescribing frameworks using Ways to Wellbeing and use of Manchester Colour Wheel
- Developed framework for Arts organisations across the city to promote access to a broad range of quality artistic and cultural programming which has increased the number of co-productions and collaborations between the arts partners. A sharing and learning workshop celebrated the development work and showcased the opportunities and potential for future project work
- Before and after word cloud - data from NCEM about increased happiness
- 40% of clients in the last 6 months of Social Prescribing were connected to cultural activities
- Developed scoping exercise for future participations and programming to integrate specialist offerings with; iMuse work at Windsor House with dementia patients, Art in Hospital, York Hospital Outreach Services

Cultural Consortium expertise and experience

Culture and Wellbeing York, emerged from an Arts Council England(ACE) project and is a partnership of the main arts organisations in York with an ambition to improve the health and wellbeing of York residents through engagement in arts and culture. Partnership members include 2 ACE National Portfolios organisations, 1 University affiliated for practice and research, an ACE Major Partner Museum, 1 community benefit society and 1 Cultural Partnership.

York Museums Trust (YMT) – Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum and York City Art Gallery and lead partner for this contract

National Centre for Early Music (NCEM) – with established educational, volunteer and outreach programme

York Theatre Royal – with a track record of successful community participation e.g. Blood and Chocolate and Everything is Possible Pilot Theatre – Digitally based theatre with work in progress on intergenerational digitally creative programmes in care homes

Accessible Arts &Media (AAM) – Creative media-based charity focused on providing access to those with learning difficulties and dementia using transformative media innovations and services

Converge – York St John University – provides access to educational, arts and culture activities to those using mental health services in York

York Explore – Social enterprise model for library services in York with 16 facilities across the city providing a large geographical and trusted footprint for outreach activity

York@Large - the cultural forum for engagement with differing CYC depts, enterprise and community groups

In addition to the core partnership, Culture & Wellbeing York works in collaboration with:

Voluntary Arts North - Voluntary Arts works to promote and increase active participation in creative cultural activities across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Voluntary Arts has a close relationship with the BBC Radio at a

local and national level and works in partnership with BBC Radio York to deliver York in Harmony Choir

Age UK York – a leading provider of services and support for the older residents of York providing feedback on the practicalities of providing age related programming

CVS – provider of the Ways to Wellbeing Social Prescribing Model as a benchmark standard for Cultural Prescribing

Other associate artists include – York Dance Space and Art in Hospital among others willing to participate in provide access to a broad artistic and cultural offering.

Developing the Cultural Menu

In developing the menu, the Partnership was keen to make the cultural offer as accessible and inclusive as possible to attract a diverse audience. Culture & Wellbeing York using Social Prescribing protocols to set benchmarking and oversight standards. The Partnership believes that using these approaches makes it easier for members of the public and prescribers to access our services and then progress and develop through them. This enables:

- Referral and self-referral to an accessible cultural menu
- Gentle introduction to social discourse through cultural activity
- Regular activity to encourage new positive habits
- Wider recognition of the accessibility of cultural provision – using facilities across the city to enable easier attendance where transport maybe an issue.
- Build-up of confidence after significant life events e.g. bereavement, illness
- Small steps to introduce of new activity to build up resilience for new participants
- Development of individual participants to offer peer to peer support and mentoring

The menu includes

Cultural Menu uses the expertise of York's renowned arts and cultural organisations to provide a range of opportunities that deliver health and wellbeing benefits. Whilst some of these have been commissioned as part of the pilot, others are part of the core arts and culture offer within the city. Our relationship with social prescribers allows for careful assessments and signposting to cultural activity to take place. This means that the partnership can ensure that cultural prescribing is a positive experience for the organisation and the individual.

Examples of activities delivered via the Cultural Menu

York in Harmony was a 'Up for Arts' initiative led by 'Voluntary Arts' in collaboration with BBC Radio York, Converge and delivered at York Explore. The project created and recruited a new community choir through taster sessions held in local libraries and shared through on-air programming. This attracted residents who had never been involved in community singing. Over 100 people attended the workshops and participated in community singing designed to deliver lung and mental health benefits as well as reducing loneliness. The finale was performed during the BBC's Get Creative weekend and broadcast live on BBC Radio York with over 80 choir members

Cuppa and Chorus is hosted by the National Centre for Early Music and developed through links with Converge and building on a relationship with Age UK. The project delivered 6 monthly sessions for community singing, attracting 18-22 individuals per session, most of whom had not sung before. For a couple of hours, the choir master gently encouraged the group to greater expression through a mixed choice of music and active participation. The programme also trialled 10 short Voice Clinics for one to one sessions to help with vocal confidence. Working with Age UK as a supporting partner has enabled this project to Celebrate Age; it attracts new participants to cultural activity, reduces social isolation, the group has helped to define its agenda, leading to an ongoing relationship with older people.

Feedback has shown very high satisfaction rates with the majority in each group being grateful for the opportunity and happy to return for future sessions – comments include:

I have been through some bad times. This has really lifted me up. Wish there were more...

I realised singing is not something we do without love. The more we love the more satisfaction we get from it

This is a thoroughly enjoyable session which is open to all whether you are young or old

Feel good achievement after 2 hours

A very enjoyable session with beautiful harmonics and amusing dancing! It's nice to talk to different generations from the community – to find out about people's singing experience and why they came

Overall Cuppa and a Chorus engaged 84 people with 30% of the cohort coming from the highest priority areas of Tang Hall, Westfield and Huntingdon & New Earswick.

See appendix for benefits of communal singing, and the Manchester Colour Wheel.

In 2017 Pilot Theatre screened 2 of its productions, Blood and Chocolate and Everything Is Possible to a local audience of over 60 at Tang Hall Community Centre. Bringing members of the production team to share insights with a Q and A after the performance with very positive feedback.

Case study referral from Social Prescribing, Ways to Wellbeing Service - 'Jo'

Jo has a number of physical health problems as well as anxiety and PTSD. Her referral to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) has been declined due to her needs being too complex. She lives alone and has one friend, but she has 'her own problems'. Jos GP is really her only source of support. She feels isolated and describes having no sense of belonging.

Jo and the coordinator meet a few times for a chat, they discuss what Jo wants to change and possible ways forward. Jo wants to enrol in an art course. It is a long time since Jo has done anything like this, she problem solves what might be difficult with the coordinator. They meet the course administrator for a coffee, she shows Jo round, Jo gets a student buddy. Jo starts the course, she feels positive about it, she's meeting new people and it's good to creative again. She is interested in what else might be available to her and starts to go to the socials at Kyra.

Jo sets up a work station at home, so she can continue doing her artwork, using the skills she has learnt on the course. She becomes involved in street festivals to raise funds for Kyra to purchase art materials, so she can share some of her learning with other women at the drop ins.

Jo feeds back that Ways to Wellbeing helped her feel more confident, it was good to be encouraged and have someone believe in her.

Wider Legacy of the Partnership

As a result of being within the partnership, many members are now actively collaborating as a result of regular contact. The partnership has created a shared outlook and willingness to co-produce relevant programming for mutual benefit as part of the public health agenda. Partners have also been successful in integrating health and wellbeing into their own outreach programming.

The increased visibility and profile of the partnership has allowed Culture & Wellbeing York to develop a list of associates artists and organisations beyond the partnership who share the wellbeing agenda. We hope to be able to add these organisations to the Cultural Menu in future years. The Partnership's relationship with CYC and health commissioners has allowed us to build our profile with York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and GP's. This has raised awareness of pilot programme and is helping to establish demand for future developments.

A significant consequence of the pilot has been the development of a funding application to Arts Council England under its Celebrating Age Programme. If successful, the partnership would deliver a 3-year project to improve the quality of life of York's older residents. Working in partnership with arts organisations, individual artists and older people, the partnership

would develop a high-quality programme of arts and cultural activities with the aim of improving wellbeing, reducing isolation and loneliness through providing access to artistic and cultural events. By enabling and empowering older residents to influence and shape programmes it will provide a safe and nurturing space in which the creativity of age can be explored and supported.

In winter 2018, the partnership worked with CYC to provide a commission for York based artists to deliver an iconic image for the new CYC Connect to Support website.

February 2018 saw the partnership deliver a very well received learning and support workshop to review and develop lessons learnt from the pilot programme.

Next Steps

Art gallery – exhibition space May – June 2018

NCEM – Conference June 2018 on benefits of Community Singing at University of York

BBC – Get Creative – March 2018 - York Explore will offer 4 venues for activity

Festival of Ideas – Cultural Menu as part of One Planet York programme
Mediale Sept 2018

Recommendations

1. Cultural Wellbeing is integrated in policy making, written into council strategies and seen as a partner in the referral and delivery of wellbeing services in the city.
2. For Arts organisations to become more integrated into Public Health and Voluntary Sector strategic frameworks for Mental Health, helping to alleviate NHS winter pressures through increased health and wellbeing and to deliver some of the relevant findings from the York Older People's Survey.
3. To build on the foundation of the pilot programme into a longer-term approach with Arts Council support.
4. For Culture and Wellbeing York to be a partner in service design to ensure that arts and culture play their role in the health and wellbeing agenda.

5. As arts and cultural specialists, we would be able to help align the sector to Health and Wellbeing strategies.
6. We offer the board support through the procurement process to ensure that any arts and culture commissions are of the highest quality (from a cultural perspective).

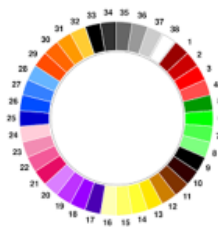
Appendix

The impact of communal singing on health and wellbeing*		
Physically	Emotionally	Socially
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Releases physical tension • Encourages good posture • Strengthens the lungs • Stimulates the mind • Offers gentle exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces stress • Stimulates positive feelings • Increases energy • Increases self-esteem • Gives a sense of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reason to get 'up and out' • Bonding through co-ordinated group activity • Enables social interaction based on shared interests

* Adapted from *Singing and Health: A Systematic Mapping and Review*, Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, 2008

Measuring impact

We have used the Manchester Colour Wheel to help measure the impact of *Cuppa and A Chorus* on participants' wellbeing.



Participants select a colour that they feel best represents their mood BEFORE each *Cuppa and a Chorus* session starts. They then repeat this process AFTER singing in a group.

Colour choices are then mapped against charts developed as part of Dr Helen Carruthers' research* into the use of colour to determine mood. The sample analysed so far, from *Cuppa and a Chorus*, indicates a positive change in mood after singing.

Permutation 1		
Positive	Neutral	Negative
1 8 12 14 15	2 3 4 5	11 9 10 11
16 19 20 21	6 7 12 18	17 25 33 34
22 23 24 29	26 27 28 38	35 36 37
30 31 32		

*The Manchester Color Wheel: development of a novel way of identifying color choice Carruthers et al, BMC Medical Research Methodology, 2010

Participants were also asked to sum up their mood in one word, before and after singing:

BEFORE



AFTER





explore



YORK@LARGE
the city's cultural partnership

York Museums Trust

