

Press Release

## **Creative Health report supports proposals for social prescribing**

Compelling evidence supports proposals for social prescribing made in a speech today by Matt Hancock.

At the second national annual conference on social prescription – ‘Social prescribing: coming of age’ – at the King’s Fund today, Tuesday 6 November 2018 at 12pm, the Health Secretary will outline the ways person-centred social prescribing can tackle ageing, loneliness, mental health, and other long-term conditions.

[Creative Health](#) is the report of an Inquiry into arts, health and wellbeing, led by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW). It contains the evidence for the power of the arts to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The Health Secretary will outline the three key ways social prescribing can be a tool for doctors to help them and to help patients – using music to help people with dementia, through libraries, and a new National Academy for Social Prescribing to ensure that GPs in all parts of the country refer patients for arts and cultural activities which can keep them active and tackle loneliness.

In his speech, Matt Hancock will say:

“We’re looking at how music can help people with dementia. How it can reduce the need for medication. How it can reduce agitation and combative behaviour. How it can reduce the need for restraints and help dementia patients and their families cope better with symptoms.”

The Health Secretary will also talk about the value of the arts:

“It’s scientifically proven. Access to the arts improves people’s mental and physical health. It makes us happier and healthier. So that’s what I want to talk about today: how we can harness the incredible power of the arts to improve the nation’s health and wellbeing.

“How the arts can help us move to more person-centred care and a focus on prevention as much as cure. And how social prescribing can shape our health and social care system in the future.”

[Creative Health](#), which was published in July 2017, presents the findings of two years of evidence gathering, roundtables and discussions with service users, expert patients, health and social care professionals, artists and arts organisations, academics, policy makers and parliamentarians from all parties and both houses.

It shows that GPs and other health professionals are referring people to programmes including painting, pottery, music, drama and museum activities. Arts and culture have helped to alleviate the symptoms of Parkinson’s using dance, improve lung function for COPD patients taking part in group singing and decrease depression for participants in arts workshops.

Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, the Rt Hon Lord Howarth of Newport said today:

"The Secretary of State's drive to improve preventative strategies must make sense. It is encouraging that he has recognised the important potential of the exercise of the creative imagination, through participation in the arts and culture, to help people stay well, recover better and enjoy longer lives better lived. As *Creative Health*, the Report of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing, shows, with compelling evidence, the arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long term conditions, loneliness and mental health. *Creative Health* also shows how the arts can help save money in the health service and social care."

Some of the most compelling evidence is from Arts on Prescription Gloucestershire, a scheme supported by Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Wiltshire County Council and operated by the charity [Artlift](#). The scheme has shown a 37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions. A social return on investment of between £4 and £11 has been calculated for every £1 invested in arts on prescription. The scheme was developed by GP Simon Opher, who will also be speaking at today's 'Social prescribing: coming of age' conference.

Arts on Prescription programmes across the country include:

[Arts and Minds](#) runs Arts on Prescription in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Participants are referred to the programme by their GP or other health professional, while others self refer.

A series of 12 to 14 weekly workshops is led by a professional artist, covering a range of creative activities, materials and techniques, including drawing, collage, stitching and wire work. The programme is open to people of all abilities, and offers the chance to develop new skills through stimulating and absorbing activities.

A survey of participants before and after taking part in the 2014/15 programme showed:

- 76 per cent reported an increase in wellbeing
- 73 per cent reported a decrease in depression
- 71 per cent reported a decrease in anxiety
- 69 per cent reported an increase in social inclusion

[START Inspiring Minds](#) runs their Inspiring Minds Arts on Prescription programme for residents of Salford.

The programme uses arts and horticulture to build confidence, self esteem and resilience for adults experiencing mental health conditions. It aims to raise aspirations and act as a stepping stone to other opportunities in education, work and volunteering in order to improve an individual's life chances and quality of life.

Individuals are referred to the service through a range of routes including GP, counsellor, psychologist, job centre, mental health practitioner and a number of hospital services.

START now employs eight previous participants as members of staff or freelance artists for the organisation, and many participants have moved into further education, gaining qualifications to enhance their employment opportunities for the future.

The [Community Connector scheme](#) in Suffolk helps people to connect with social activities, clubs and groups, including arts and cultural activities to improve mental wellbeing, learn new skills and meet new people.

Participants are referred by a GP, social worker, housing officer, police or other professional, and some people self refer. A mobile office visits villages where a Community Connector helps participants to build a personal action plan, as well as offering advice.

The scheme is developed by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Family Carers, working in partnership to assist individuals to find non-clinical solutions to improve their own health and wellbeing.

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### **For further information**

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### **Images**

### **Notes for editors**

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW):

[www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg](http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg)

Creative Health the report of an Inquiry into arts, health and wellbeing, led by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing:

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

Full report: [https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_Inquiry\\_Report\\_2017\\_-\\_Second\\_Edition.pdf](https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf)

Short report: [https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative\\_Health\\_The\\_Short\\_Report.pdf](https://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_The_Short_Report.pdf)

The Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW), the Rt Hon Lord Howarth of Newport, is the parliamentary lead for the Inquiry. The secretariat for the APPGAHW is provided by the Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance, supported by Arts Council England. The APPGAHW produced the Inquiry report in collaboration with King's College London, The Royal Society for Public Health and Guy's and St Thomas' Charity. The Inquiry is funded by Wellcome and Paul Hamlyn Foundation. APPGs involve Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in the Inquiry Report are those of the APPGAHW. It is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords.