# The culture, health and wellbeing sector in relation to Cov-19

## DRAFT Short report

26 March 2020

## Introduction

This report is based on a quick-turnaround survey of the following key partners:

* Strategic Alliance Member organisations – SAMs (45 cultural organisations with a health and wellbeing focus, of whom 14 were able to respond)
* Regional Champions (18 individuals and organisations based across the nine English regions, of whom 11 were able to respond)

As well as a brief summary of the #practisingwell webinar and twitter chat conducted on 19 March 2020 in collaboration with Nicola Naismith, London Arts in Health, 64million Artists and Daniel Regan (Arts & Health Hubs).

We are considering a member survey but are holding off for now, because:

* several surveys are already in circulation, and there is a lot of noise and communication via social media. We anticipate it may be difficult for us to get data from members until this abates.
* there may be some benefit to waiting to see how pressing concerns emerge over the next few weeks as the medium/long-term consequences become clearer.

## How the survey was conducted

SAMs were emailed on Friday 20 March and asked to answer two questions:

1. How are you doing?
2. What are the headline concerns and challenges for your area of work?

Some responses have come by email, in some cases the Director and Coordinator have been speaking to people.

Regional champions were called by either the Director or Coordinator to discuss short- and longer-term concerns.

*NB we are in contact with our sister organisation, the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, who are also working closely with the arts and criminal justice sectors to understand the scope of the impact of Covid-19 and co-ordinate and support the response.*

## Analysis

### Groups of primary concern to our sector

* Freelancers - self-employed people reaching parity with employed (NB the survey predated additional government support announced 26 March)
* Vulnerable participants who depend on communities created by arts organisations/interventions
* Vulnerable volunteers who depend on museums “using museum as a lifeline”
* Frontline health and care staff (“there is nothing for them, no shops, nothing on site, just 12-hour shifts” and huge distress)
* Small arts organisations who are likely to go under
* [emerging] Museum staff who may have to be furloughed; arts organisation staff subject to changing roles and pay cuts

### Key themes

* Sector has been responsive, supportive and adaptable
* Overwhelming concern about freelancers in the medium- to long-term
* Sector will have a role after the immediate crisis – specialism in wellbeing and health means potential source of support for traumatised country (esp. health and care professionals) but *will need training and support to be prepared for this*
* Pace of work and maintaining motivation:
  + Rush to get stuff online, pressure through social media counteractive in some instances (people leaving WhatsApp groups etc.)
  + Need to reflect on the new normal as it develops; resources will be better if we take more time
  + Supporting mental health across participants and facilitators will rely on taking adjustment seriously
  + Principles of reflective practice will be key
* Important for us to access ‘hidden’ knowledge about consequences of and coping with isolation, from ppl with chronic illness used to self-isolating
* Museums and arts concerns are related but somewhat different
  + Museums concerned about teams (unused to home working, possibly lacking equipment), volunteers and participants
  + Arts organisations concerned about their freelancers and participants
* Concern about small organisations medium- and long-term
  + Arts organisations attempting to pay freelancers and balance with preserving cashflow and sustaining organisation beyond crisis
* Positive move towards collaboration and dropping of disciplinary boundaries now, but it will be important to maintain integrity and identity of work for the longer term and find ways to articulate collective value
* Regional and local networks will be central to sustaining motivation and practice
* Place remains critical despite move online, and existing inequalities will be emphasised
* There may be an opportunity here to consider the ways in which we work, longer term – slow things down, absorb principles of reflective practice, consider streamlining offers over volume of output, consider our connection with broad social issues.

#### Online and offline issues

* Some potential here, resources being gathered but much of this work is relational and digital is currently causing some problems
  + hospitals/prisons/care homes and also people who are ‘digitally deprived’
  + Carbon emissions/server use from heavy online activity
  + Problems specifically in hospitals where online traffic is slowing down work
  + “Ppl are leaving WhatsApp groups… too overwhelmed. People struggling with mental health are withdrawing.”
* Need for offline solutions for institutions and communities
* Need for digital training to support safe and supportive online engagement
* Safeguarding and data protection with online groups (WhatsApp, zoom etc) is unknown territory – could e.g. digital champions support a protected data-neutral space online?

#### Funders/funding

* Funders’ support has been appreciated – praise specifically for:
  + ACE’s quick and supportive messages especially re freelance community
  + National Lottery Community Fund’s offer to allow fundees to do what they need to and reconcile at the end of the year
* May now be an additional need for funders to work on trust basis with fundees: “Organisations/individuals will need to be able to change everything very quickly and get final payments to free them up to be autonomous – removing the obligation for a final report … so that the money can be released on trust”. Some commissioners are able to do this, some (in local authorities e.g.) may struggle because they work to a ‘procurement’ model, and will have to initiate culture change.
* Longer-term concerns around funding for this work: with funding being redirected into emergency funds, longer term stability of orgs is threatened
* This could shift our understanding of mixed-funding models; organisations who have moved away from grant-funded to mixed funding models w/private finance/philanthropy may be *more* vulnerable without the flexible support grant-givers are currently providing

#### Training needs

* Trauma and resilience – supporting health and care workers, as well as our ‘usual’ communities whose vulnerability will have exposed them to the greatest impacts of Covid-19
* Digital and digital safeguarding
* Larger question about undergraduate courses which will need to adapt to realities of a reduced sector – where will the jobs be?