



The opportunities for arts and cultural activities to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Londoners



Produced by

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For

Thrive LDN

A brief summary of findings

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Context

In November 2017, **Thrive LDN** commissioned **Nikki Crane Associates** to undertake a scoping exercise to understand the opportunities for arts and culture to support the mental health and wellbeing of Londoners.

This report presents a summary of the key findings and supporting evidence, and makes several recommendations for Thrive LDN and the Mayor's Culture Team to consider.



Key findings and summary of supporting evidence

There is a wide recognition of the value of arts and culture in supporting wellbeing, tackling inequalities and engaging people from all backgrounds and there is a rapidly growing evidence base to support it. This is powerfully demonstrated through the work of the recent All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health & Wellbeing. The All-Party Parliamentary Group's *Creative Health: The Arts for Health & Wellbeing* report concludes through increasing evidence that arts and culture can help:

- Keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived
- Meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long term conditions, loneliness and mental health
- Save money in the health service and social care

The research and mapping work has revealed that there is a formidable and growing range of arts and culture provision locally and nationally that can support mental health and wellbeing. The work ranges from prevention and early intervention through to supporting recovery from serious mental illness. Provision embraces all art forms, social and health contexts (community settings to hospitals), scale (grass roots to national programmes), life-cycle (pre-natal through to end of life). Much of this is already captured in existing databases and resources, for example, London Arts & Health Forum and Arts Council England websites.



However, despite the evidence and wide-range of provision, our research, informed by discussions with key individuals and organisations and backed up by feedback from the engagement event held on 25 January 2018, revealed that there are challenges that need addressing.

This includes:

- A lack of joined up activity
- A lack of awareness of what exists
- A lack of opportunity to collaborate, share and learn
- An inequality of access to provision across London boroughs
- A mixed quality of evidence base

There are also challenges with bringing work to scale and with sustainability. In addition, the arts and culture is often seen as an add-on to mainstream services and there is a need to change this perception.

From the engagement work we have undertaken, key individuals and organisations believe that there is considerable opportunity for the Mayor of London to make a difference to the mental health of Londoners through arts and culture and Thrive LDN, and there is widespread support for the Mayor's work in this area.



Thriving City: delivery of citywide activity that is best done at scale

- Citywide campaign and festival of film: to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing, tackle inequalities and discrimination and improve the mental health literacy of Londoners
- Annual conference for arts, health and wellbeing: building on the successful engagement event at City Hall to encourage collaboration and sharing of best practice across London
- A Mayor of London's Award: for arts in mental health and wellbeing

Thriving Communities: delivery of localised activity that is best embedded within communities

- Embed arts and culture into the Mayor of London's Social Prescription Strategy: harnessing the ability of arts and culture to engage people in wellbeing activities at a local level across all health and social contexts
- Embed mental health and wellbeing in the Mayor of London's Culture Strategy and create a Mayor's Culture Team mental health webpage: this would act as an enabler for all the recommended initiatives and ensure that information and contacts are kept up to date post this research and mapping exercise

Thriving Lives: targeted activity to address mental health inequity and disproportionality

- Launch a micro grants scheme: to help build infrastructure at a borough level and to support the development of local networks, champions and spaces

Key Partners to support delivery of the recommendations

- **The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing** – <http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg>
- **Arts Council England** – <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>
- **London Arts & Health Forum** – <http://www.lahf.org.uk/>
- **Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance** – <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/>
- **Arts Enterprise with a Social Purpose** – <http://www.ae-sop.org/>
- **The Royal Society for Public Health** – <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/awards/health-wellbeing-awards/arts-and-health.html>
- **The Mental Health Foundation and the Scottish Arts and Mental Health Festival** – <https://www.mhfestival.com/>
- **Brixton Reel Film Festival** – <http://www.brixtonreel.co.uk/>
- **Nikki Crane Associates** – <https://nikkicrane.wordpress.com/about/>

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