

# Health and Wellbeing Board

## An evaluation of Creative care commissions - Covid-19 response

7 July 2021

### Recommendation(s)

1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes and comments upon the evaluation of the creative care commissions and the key principles for future commissioning.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Coventry and Warwickshire Creative Health Alliance (CWCHA) was established in 2019 to strengthen the links between the creative, health and care sectors across the sub-region. It is comprised of representatives from the creative sector, NHS, and local authorities who develop and oversee a programme of work to address local health and wellbeing priorities using creative health approaches.
- 1.2 In March 2020, Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet approved a bid to the Early Intervention, Prevention and Community Capacity Fund for £187,500 per annum for 3 financial years (total £562,500) to develop a creative health social prescribing system. This fund was further enhanced to include an offer for children and young people and the total value of the fund was increased by a further £110,000 per annum. The total fund available for this programme over the 3 years is £891,000.
- 1.3 Shortly after the allocation of the funding, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the start of the programme development in line with the original proposals. In response to the pandemic, WCC worked with the CWCHA to commission eight creative projects to support Warwickshire residents' health and wellbeing particularly affected by the restrictions placed on residents, such as shielding for the clinically vulnerable.
- 1.4 Through the CWCHA, submissions of proposals up to an estimated value of £10,000 per project were invited. The successful commissions included a variety of art forms, target audiences, and engagement methods, however all aimed to support wellbeing, happiness, and connectedness, and to be widely accessible to participants.
- 1.5 The organisations were partnered where possible with WCC commissioned services to ensure vulnerable residents were reached. All the projects successfully delivered a mixture of offline and online engagement opportunities. In total 15,000 residents across Warwickshire benefitted from engaging with the projects, of which there were 485 direct engagements,

10,000 activity packs distributed to residents and health and social care staff and many more engagements online recorded. A full breakdown of the engagements per project are outlined in Appendix 1 (*Evaluation of Creative Health Projects During Covid-19, Jan 2021*)

1.6 Projects were largely delivered between July and October 2020 and included various formats such as online group video calls and the provision of physical resources to participants. A brief overview of each creative project is shown below.

- **Armonico Consort:** Artists recorded videos of singing workshops which were shared with individuals, residential homes, and care homes to watch and engage with.
- **Arts Uplift:** Four subprojects, with online and offline aspects, supported groups of people through dance, creative writing, music and song writing, and hand sewing.
- **Escape Arts and Sitting Rooms of Culture:** Production of a physical booklet and digital resources to facilitate creativity, delivered to participants including hospital patients and staff.
- **Live & Local:** Ten creative partnerships were facilitated between artists and Warwickshire communities with various creative outputs (e.g. a short film and a book).
- **My Voice Lifts My Soul:** A series of weekly group online sessions focussed around Singing for Lung Health, attended by participants living with respiratory conditions.
- **Open Theatre:** A series of weekly group online sessions for young people with learning disabilities focussed around drama and resulting in the creation of a short film.
- **Starfish Collaborative:** An online group journaling project for new mothers, online digital media sessions for a group of young people, and an offline collation of community art.
- **Sundragon Pottery:** Individuals and charity organisations were provided with the resources needed to create with clay, along with provision of a second follow-on box.

1.7 Coventry University have evaluated these programmes and produced a report: *Evaluation of Creative Health Projects During Covid-19, Jan 2021 (Appendix 1)*. The evaluation found that COVID-19 required creative health projects to adapt to novel methods of mobilisation and delivery. Whilst these changes brought substantial challenges, participants interviewed in this research identified that creative projects positively impacted health, psychological, and social wellbeing during an uncertain period.

1.8 Research findings and the process of this evaluation identified further important considerations for evaluating creative health projects, particularly with regards to collecting quantitative evaluation measures from a larger sample. These findings have guided recommendations to support the development and evaluation of creative health projects in the context of COVID-19 and beyond and have been used to support the commissioning of a suite of 6 larger creative health programmes that are being between

January 2021 and March 2023.

## 2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The cost for the creative health programmes commissioned during this period totalled £80,000. The funding was made available from a larger fund of money awarded by Warwickshire County Council from the Early Intervention and Community Capacity Fund to develop a suite of 6 creative health programmes as part of a social prescribing creative health system. The total funding allocated to the overall delivery of creative health programmes is £891,000 over 3 financial years (2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23).

## 3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 All the interventions were either locally provided or online due to Covid-19, which enabled travel to be reduced and for activity to be localised.
- 3.2 Consideration was given to ensuring packaging and resources were kept to a minimum and could be recycled by some of the artists during the project.

## 4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 A summary of the evaluation findings is detailed below.
- 4.2 **Theme 1: Impact of creative arts on health and wellbeing:** participants described how the creative health projects have impacted health and wellbeing around three main themes: creating connections, providing hope and positivity and health benefits. Whilst most findings were identified from the project participants, the perceptions, observations, and experiences of artists also contributed to understanding about how creativity can support wellbeing. Taken together, the participants described the importance of continuity and access to creative projects to maintain these benefits to health and wellbeing. Benefits to physical health were also reported by participants attending a singing for lung health project.
- 4.3 **Theme 2: Mobilising, delivery and evaluating creative health projects:** findings were organised into five inter-related themes: responding to the challenges of Covid-19, collaborative partnerships, achieving accessibility, lessons and project legacy and measuring impact. Whilst most findings were identified from project artists, project participants including those who performed volunteer roles, also contributed perspectives about how projects could be successfully and accessibly delivered during Covid-19.
- 4.4 **Lessons learnt and project legacy:** the creative outputs produced by the individuals and communities served as an impressive reminder and legacy for the future, “we’ve all been amazed at what we’ve produced, especially the people in the planning group because suddenly there is this astonishing video that we’ve done” (project artist). The pride and enjoyment from the projects encouraged individuals and communities to seek further creative

opportunities. Relatedly, artists reflected that the experiences of adapting projects for the Covid-19 delivery had initiated new and useful ways of working, this is both in relation to adapting to technologies but forming new partnerships with commissioning services and charities supporting vulnerable residents.

- 4.5 **Measuring the impact:** measuring the holistic impact of the creative projects on participants and communities was a notable part of the commissions. There were a number of challenges to collecting and evidencing the impact and these are reflected in the recommendations in next steps. Evaluation methods need to be collaborative, coordinated and transparent to appropriately measure the holistic impact of creative projects on health and wellbeing.

## 5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 A further report will be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress of the broader suite of commissioned creative health services in November 2021.
- 5.2 Using the key areas of good practice for creative health delivery, we will embed these into new commissions for short-term projects and longer-term commissioned creative health services.
- 5.3 We will develop guidance on how to establish a coordinated evaluation structure, which can be communicated at an early stage and embedded into the creative project process for both short-term projects and longer-term commissioned creative health services.
- 5.4 We will use the intelligence gathered to help inform future creative health commissions, drawing on the experience of this activity.

## Appendices

- Coventry University Creative Health Evaluation Report

## Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Councillors Bell, Golby, Holland, Drew and Rolfe