



 <p>GIG CYMRU NHS WALES Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales</p>	<p>Name of Meeting Board Date of Meeting 29 January 2026 Agenda item: 4</p>
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Briefing on collaboration with Arts Council Wales	
Executive lead:	Professor Jim McManus
Author:	Emily van de Venter, Consultant in Public Health (Mental Wellbeing) and Interim Director of Health Improvement

Approval/Scrutiny route:	
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Purpose
To provide the Board with an update of activity and ambitions for our collaboration with the Arts Council Wales in support of our MOU

Recommendation:				
APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/>	CONSIDER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMEND <input type="checkbox"/>	ADOPT <input type="checkbox"/>	ASSURANCE <input type="checkbox"/>
The Board is asked to consider the content of this report.				



Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	2 - Promoting mental and social wellbeing
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	3 - Promoting healthy behaviours
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	5 - Supporting a sustainable health and social care system

Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	N/A
Risk and Assurance	N/A
Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act	N/A
Financial implications	N/A
People implications	N/A



1. Purpose / situation

Public Health Wales and the Arts Council of Wales co-signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2024 with the over-arching aim of **strengthening the position of arts and creativity in addressing population health and wellbeing in Wales**. This builds on collaboration between partners under the Hapus Strategic Partnership Group.

This paper outlines joint activities undertaken to date and ambitions for 2026/27 and beyond.

2. Background:

Specific objectives of the MOU are:

- To increase engagement with creative activities through collaborative working between PHW (Health Improvement Division) and ACW.
- To enhance the role of arts for health and wellbeing in improving equity of access and outcomes.
- To strengthen the arts, health and wellbeing offer across Wales through developing the evidence base and supporting the translation of evidence into practice.
- To promote existing arts, health and wellbeing assets and collaborate on future development opportunities.
- To build on the reputation of Wales as a leader in arts and health approaches within Wales and internationally.

3. Progress to date

3.1 Hapus Partnership & the National Conversation: Through the Hapus Strategic Partnership ACW and PHW collaborate to:

- **Develop and promote** the Hapus National Conversation
- **Strengthen cross-sector advocacy** to influence policy and practice
- **Increase engagement** with arts and creativity, including through joint artist commissions to reflect lived experiences of what matters for wellbeing, and producing digital tools and tutorials to enable participation in creative activities. The Hapus Partnership is also developing options for how they can collectively support and enhance social prescribing and community-based approaches for young people.

3.2 Artist Commissions: In September 2025 Public Health Wales and Arts Council of Wales jointly commissioned 6 Artists to create unique creative content on the theme of motivating and inspiring action to protect and promote mental wellbeing;



particularly for priority groups who we know are less likely to be engaging with wellbeing supporting activity. ([Understanding mental wellbeing in Wales, 2024](#)).

Working together to produce and promote a call out to the creative arts sector we attracted a large number of high-quality submissions. A cross-sector panel successfully shortlisted and jointly funded the following commissions. All of which provide short films, action prompts and digital media content, available to share from February 2026.

- *Resonant Voices*: Co-created with young, black women. Inspiring others through cooking, dance, song and story.
- *Glimmers*: Co-created with neurodivergent women. An invitation to engage with senses to find joy, comfort and meaning in the everyday, which can inspire creativity.
- *Dear Younger Self*: Co-created with men living with access to fewer resources and opportunities. Spoken word piece focussing on importance of connection to self and others.
- *Wellbeing rituals*: Co-created with mothers aged 16-25 who are homeless / or in a vulnerable housing situation. Creative exploration of building small wellbeing promoting actions into everyday life.
- *And Still*: Co-created with those living in poor health/long term conditions. Presenting ways of coming to a radical acceptance of where you are in body, mind and time
- *Singing for wellbeing*: Co-created with those seeking sanctuary in Wales. Inspiring others through song and community

In previous joint commissions artists have helped to engage people in the National Conversation, provoking people to think about what wellbeing means to them. Now, artists have worked with people across priority groups to create inspiring tools or resources and tell their stories of what helps their mental wellbeing, to share with others and increase engagement in wellbeing supporting activities. The commissioned artists are working with Hapus communication channels - including the Strategic Partnership and Supporter Network - to plan and deliver a comprehensive communication strategy to maximise the reach of the creative outputs, especially to the priority groups represented in the commissions. We have already seen promotion via ITV and social media, which will be built on through the remainder of 2025/26 and beyond.

3.3 Developing the evidence base: ACW commissioned Bangor University to review the value of benefits to health, wellbeing and productivity in Wales from investment in arts and creativity in Wales. The research estimated this to be £588m per year, with a return on investment of £11 for every £1 invested. Additionally key areas where additional value could be unlocked through we identified, these were:



- **Falls prevention:** Investment in dance for strength and balance could save the NHS £5m a year by preventing falls in the elderly
- **Children and young peoples mental health:** Reaching 5% of young people on NHS mental health pathways could generate benefits of £9.5m a year
- **Adult mental health:** If 5% of adult mental health GP appointments were avoided through engagement with the arts this would save £17m a year
- **Supporting staff wellbeing:** Arts interventions for NHS staff have the potential to save £3.5m a year through reduced sickness absence and improved retention

3.4 PHW support to the sector

3.4.1 Engagement with WAHWN & WEAVE Conference 2025: WAHWN are the arts and health sector infrastructure organisation, receiving funding from ACW to support and develop the workforce and share good practice in Wales, and are an active Hapus Supporter. PHW's Hapus programme sponsored the conference and hosted a workshop to raise awareness of Hapus and develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of arts and health practitioners in supporting mental and social wellbeing. Evidence-based good practice for designing and delivering welcoming and inclusive wellbeing-promoting activities was shared and participants invited to share their own experiences. A keynote speech and expert panel discussions were also delivered to help frame the day and recognise the valued contribution the arts can, and are making for residents of Wales.

3.5 Supporting Arts and Health Implementation: ACW provides funding for Health Boards to employ Arts and Health Co-ordinators. PHW provides advice, guidance and support to the regional leads through a number of mechanisms including:

- Hywel Dda Creative Health Steering Group
- Betsi Cadwalader Creative Well Forum
- WAHWN network meetings
- Hapus Supporter Network

3.5.1 National Youth Arts Wales: PHW supported NYAW in a successful bid to the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Innovation Fund. [Creative Futures](#) is a cross-sector initiative which aims to tackle inequalities in access to creative and wellbeing opportunities for disadvantaged young people (aged 10–18) in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. A free 12-week programme will integrate dance, music, wellbeing, and career development.

To help strengthen implementation plans WHIASU were engaged to support NYAW in delivering a Health Impact Assessment workshop in Autumn 2025.



4. Future activities

4.1 Cynefin: A Creative Health Review for Wales: In 2026 ACW, PHW, WAHWN and FGO, supported by AHRC funding, will deliver a Creative Health Review for Wales. A series of Roundtables will bring together stakeholders, providers and beneficiaries of creative health approaches to co-develop policy recommendations for maximising the contribution of arts and creativity to population outcomes in Wales.

The review will explore how placing the arts and culture as a frontline public service in Wales could effect a step-change for public health and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales. We will apply a life-course lens, build new and stronger relationships across the sectors and create new champions for arts and health. Evidence and lived experience will shape the policy recommendations due to be published in January 2027.

4.2 Story Telling for Health Conference 2026: PHW, through the Hapus programme, is working with the University of South Wales to co-deliver the next Story Telling for Health Conference, exploring and showcasing how story-telling and the arts can strengthen the voice and experiences of people in Wales, build hope for a more positive future and inspire positive action for population health and wellbeing. The focus of the event is “Unheard Voices” with core themes running through the conference in line with the ambitions of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and becoming a Marmot Nation.

5. Summary & opportunities

The partnership between PHW and ACW continues to strengthen the visibility and role of arts for health and wellbeing in Wales. The Cynefin project presents a significant opportunity to broaden and build the role of arts and creativity in Wales.

Engaging with arts is increasingly being seen as an important health behaviour, not only for mental health and wellbeing but wider health improvement, presenting an opportunity to broaden health communications for better health and wellbeing.

We would be keen to explore establishing a Board Arts and Health Champion role and considering future PHW events where the arts can be promoted as a tool for health improvement, building on the artist presence at the Wales Public Health Conference 2025.