

A Charter for Arts, Health and Wellbeing

We are a national alliance committed to promoting the role of the creative arts in health and care. Creative activity has long been known to have tangible effects on health and quality of life. The arts, creativity and the imagination are agents of wellness: they help keep the individual resilient, aid recovery and foster a flourishing society.

Arts in health programmes across the country, indeed across the world, are using diverse and dynamic disciplines in a variety of health care and community settings for expressive, restorative, educational and therapeutic purposes. Some work preventively, some enhance recovery, others improve the quality of life for people with long-term or terminal conditions. The creative arts help make sense of our human condition, making room for the heart and soul to be heard. They encourage active engagement with the world around us, help people to keep learning, connect with each other and contribute to their communities.

In our current political and economic climate, which is forcing a reassessment of human priorities, and where wellbeing is a declared government priority, arts in health offer a professional, value-for-money contribution to mainstream health care. They can contribute to shortening the length of hospital stay, reduce patient medication and lower reliance on G.P. consultation. They offer personalised non-medical health strategies that support many of the declared NHS outcomes, including improving the effectiveness of care and quality of patient experience.

We are holistic in approach and believe the arts and humanities have a crucial role to play in medical training, clinician wellbeing and awareness. We believe the arts help us to see and value the patient as a whole person, not just an illness or symptom. We believe the arts will contribute to a culture within health services that is more supportive, empowering, enlightened, personal and humane.

Environment has a huge impact on health. Works of art can create a welcoming, uplifting space that increases a feeling of wellbeing and promotes a positive experience of care. We strongly advocate original art commissions, sensitivity to aesthetics and the introduction of nature into medical and other healthcare settings.

A lot of arts in health work happens at grass roots levels, in community based programmes that address both clinical and social determinants of health. Our aim is to provide a proactive national alliance, which will offer strong networking and advocacy to increase public awareness and understanding of the role of arts in health nationally and internationally. We will encourage best quality practice, shared ethics, research and evaluation, excellence in process and product, while celebrating and supporting the passion and drive of the many arts in health activities which make a difference.

We believe that keeping this creativity alive, active and accessible to all, will reduce the financial burden of illness, help people to be the best they can be, and foster a healthier, happier, more vibrant, thriving society.

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This Charter for Arts, Health and Wellbeing is the result of conversations across the nine regions of England and was written by Rosie Jackson.

The National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing

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