

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth, cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications and sport
CWLC COV55

Ymateb gan Coleg Brenhinol y Seiciatryddion, Cymru/ Response from the Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales

Response to Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee: Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak, and its impact on culture, creative industries and heritage, communications, and sport

Written Evidence from the Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Wales is the professional medical body responsible for developing and supporting psychiatrists throughout their careers, and in setting and raising standards of psychiatry throughout Wales.

The College aims to improve outcomes for people with mental disorders and the mental health of individuals, their families and communities. In order to achieve this, the College sets standards and promotes excellence in psychiatry; leads, represents and supports psychiatrists; improves the scientific understanding of mental illness; works with and advocates for patients, carers and their organisations.

We are pleased to respond to this inquiry. We've identified some principal recommendations that we are keen to propose to the Committee, alongside some detail of projects initiated by the College that have helped for our views and lastly, our aspirations that support a partnered approach to wellbeing.

We would be pleased to provide further detail to the Committee if at all beneficial.

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak, and its impact on culture, creative industries and heritage, communications, and sport

Wales is well placed to innovatively support the positive mental health of individuals and communities through its rich cultural, heritage and arts industries.

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These industries, and individuals working within these industries have been impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak.

Art, Culture, Heritage, Language and Sport can all play a central component in an individual, communities and nations wellbeing.

We have formed our view by work we have undertaken in partnership with organisations and individual artists and outlined below.

Principal recommendations

- The access to arts and culture should form a central component of Welsh Governments Covid-19 recovery planning.
 - This is not a recommendation to say that venues should be open at the earliest opportunity, we would always advocate that these decisions are based upon robust scientific evidence and advice. This recommendation is intended to highlight the benefit that these industries have upon an individuals, families and community's positive mental health and wellbeing. This should be recognised and considered in decision making, and in strengthening the recovery planning from Covid-19.
- Consideration should be given to enhancing digital resources to be further developed to support the delivery of virtual and group artistic opportunities for individuals and communities; engaging individual artists and health professionals.
 - We have welcomed the development and progress of the work undertaken by TEC (Technology Enabled Care) Cymru in rapid rollout of video consultation software for health appointments.
 - We would like for the project to be supported to give consideration for social prescribing interventions and referrals that can be extended

to existing video consultation software now being used throughout the health service.

- o We would like to ensure that support is given to organisations and artists to extend their opportunities to provide digital, virtual artistic offerings to individuals, groups, and communities.
- The health and wellbeing of artists must be increasingly supported, especially at this time.
 - o We have received a significant number of requests from individual artists to collaborate on projects, there is a clear interest that aligns art and mental health.
 - o Artists have also expressed the challenges around sustaining income during this time, and post Covid-19; and how this is impacting upon their own wellbeing and increasing levels of anxiety.
- We believe that the creative arts can help Welsh Government to communicate its key messages.
 - o There are many examples of where public messaging has been strengthened through thoughtful and engaging campaigns.
 - o We would highlight a recent example with presenter Jess Davies, and the College. [This campaign](#) underlined a 'Be Kind' message aimed at social media activity and the increase in 'trolling' behaviour. This campaign received a significant number of views, and comments, reaching out to important audiences.
- The creative industries and health service could play a really important role in helping individuals and communities to understand what they are going through.

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We wish to highlight our recent work as we feel it evidences the value of our views, and the consultation that we have undertaken to form our views.

Resident Artist

The College has appointed an Artist in Residence, the poet, author, and playwright Patrick Jones. Patrick's work has seen him explore the relationship between art and mental health through different projects to date.

This partnership also intends to take that learning directly into clinical practice environments as well as school and community settings. It is a partnership based upon shared learning.

Projects so far have included:

- A project of creative writing workshops for carers and people living dementia, entitled 'This is My Truth, Tell Me Yours'
- A series of poetry reading evenings, with prominent artists, writing groups and the public, entitled 'Words for Mental Health'
- A series of workshops with children and young people in schools exploring creative writing for wellbeing (pilots took place pre-Covid)
- Readings and discussion of workshop approaches at national psychiatry conferences, directly with medical students, trainees and consultant psychiatrists.

'Opening Up in Lockdown' (Appendix 1)

Patrick Jones has been undertaking a series of Vlogs and podcasts with prominent figures in Broadcasting, Literature, Film Making and Theatre Directing in Wales.

These Vlogs and podcasts will be shared in the next couple of weeks but explore the relationship with different industries and mental health, the impact of Covid and how different industries can respond to support artists.

Digital Commissions with Literature Wales (Appendix 2)

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The College has partnered with Literature Wales in offering bursaries to support freelance writers through the pandemic. These commissions will produce digital content that focusses on health and wellbeing.

Big Pit National Coal Museum

Last year the College worked with the management of Big Pit National Coal Museum to host a multi-disciplinary mental health conference. Attendees received updates on diagnostic developments in dementia, whilst understanding innovative approaches that the museum had undertaken in intergenerational activity and ensuring a dementia-friendly approach to their work in the community.

Finally

In our Senedd Cymru manifesto, we have called on the next Welsh Government to **ensure parity** between Physical and Mental Health Services, **with access to the right services in the right place and communities working together to reduce poor mental.**

Furthermore, we would like to encourage the Welsh Government to make wellbeing the principal aim of its budget to meet the wellbeing needs of people in Wales. This follows International approaches on the introduction of wellbeing budgets, that allocates spend based on increasing quality of life and wellbeing as opposed to increasing GDP.

Art, Culture, Heritage and Sport can all play a central component in an individual, communities and nations wellbeing.

As the medical voice for mental health, we work to secure the best outcomes for people with mental illness, intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders by promoting excellent mental health services, supporting the prevention

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of mental illness, training outstanding psychiatrists, setting standards and promoting quality and research.

Appendix

'Opening Up in Lockdown'

In the Vlog and podcast series 'Opening Up in Lockdown', Patrick Jones has interviewed a number of prominent figures.

Rhys Mwyn - Broadcaster, Musician, Archaeologist

Paul Sng - Filmmaker

Catherine Anne Davies - Musician, Writer

Rhiannon White - Director

Prof Keith Lloyd - Consultant Psychiatrist

Alex Wharton - Writer

Digital Commissions with Literature Wales (Appendix 2)

Fiona Collins will digitally collect and share elders' memories; create an opportunity for individuals to be heard and appreciated; and confirm that their personal stories are valued by others.

Siân Melangell Dafydd will devise a series of three web-based workshops on creative writing and yoga with a closed working group on Facebook for discussion and home exercises. This is a project for anyone suffering from mental problems, such as anxiety in this period, and are available in both Welsh and English.

Ffion Jones will develop and deliver an online art inspired creative writing course for two groups of home educated children and young people (i.e. 4 - 10 and 11-16) supported by Mountain Movers educational charity who are an inclusive community organisation providing opportunities to home educating families.

Deborah Llewellyn will create an online Poetry and Creative Writing Course for People Living with Chronic Pain. This course will provide a safe space to discuss thoughts and feelings whilst exploring varied writing styles and voices.

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It will offer a sense of purpose, a chance to connect with others.

Sian Northey will design a resource in Welsh for those who wish to lead creative writing workshops in a health well-being context. It would be aimed at two audiences: writers new to health and well-being work and charities / support groups that want to hold creative writing sessions but lack confidence.

Grace Quantock will create a video of how to write about painful emotions or memories in a safe and effective way. She will also write and design a PDF of writing prompts to support carers and disabled people, as well as hosting a closed webinar.

Kerry Steed will devise an online course for Wales-based writers who are working with or interested in working with writing for health and wellbeing. It will be an online support group: a space for sharing, for accessing course-related materials, resources, inspiration and prompts, materials will be emailed prior to sessions where relevant.

David Thorpe will create a series of webinars with exercises in between to help writers express emotional and transformative effects of the lockdown and consequences of this. Using written forms, and experiments with humour these will help to build their confidence & improve mental health.

Amanda Wells will hold digital closed workshops for vulnerable groups such as disabled people, people with mental health issues or older people. They will combine visual poetry techniques and creative writing.

Paul Whittaker will pilot writing workshop with patients with a chronic illness who are currently self-isolating to create their own autobiographical collages that can be shared with staff and a wider audience at Cardiff and Vale Health Board.