

## **Cross Party Group on Arts and Health**

*The Economic Impact of Arts & Health Programmes on the NHS & Social Care*



**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2025, 12:00-13:00

**Location:** Conference Room A (Tŷ Hywel)

**Chair:** Heledd Fychan, *Member of Senedd*

**Minutes by:** Rhianwen Williams, *Arts Council of Wales*

### **Present:**

Heledd Fychan (Chair), *Member of Senedd*

Alun Gruffudd, *Senedd Staff*

Kathryn Lambert, *Hywel Dda University Health Board*

Ruth Jones, *Hywel Dda University Health Board*

Teri Howson-Griffiths, *Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board*

Sarah Goodey, *Aneurin Bevan University Health Board*

Claire Turner, *Aneurin Bevan University Health Board*

Johan Skre, *Swansea Bay University Health Board*

Iori Haugen, *Swansea Bay University Health Board*

Lucinda Bevan, *Powys Teaching Health Board*

Nesta Lloyd-Jones, *Welsh NHS Confederation*

Angela Rogers, *WAHWN (Wales Arts Health and Well-Being Network)*

Becca May Collins, *WAHWN (Wales Arts Health and Well-being Network)*

Sharon Davies, *WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association)*

Sofia Vougioukalou, *Cardiff University*

Dan Allen, *Arts Council of Wales*

Elinor Lloyd-Davies, *Arts Council of Wales*

Ceri Charles Durrant, *Arts Council of Wales*

Prue Thimbleby, *Arts Council of Wales Council Member*

Rosie Dow, *Arts Council of Wales*

Rhianwen Williams, *Arts Council of Wales (minuting)*

Sally Lewis

Morgan Eleri, *Senedd Translator*

### **Apologies:**

Tom Giffard, MS

Mike Hedges, MS

Delyth Jewell, MS

Hannah Moscrop, *Velindre Cancer Centre*

Melanie Wotton, *Swansea Bay University Health Board*

Maggie Russell, *Arts Council of Wales Chair*

Naomi Alleyne, *WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association)*

*Confederation*

Emily van de Venter, *Public Health Wales*

Andrea Davies, *Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board*

Gemma Brown, *Hywel Dda University Health Board*

Gill Windle, *Bangor University*

Matthew Greenough, *Tŷ Hafan*

Sion Edwards, *Senedd Staff*

Brooke Webb, *Senedd Staff*

Timothy Jenkins, *Welsh Government*

Jon Day, *Social Care Wales*

Kate Newman, *Social Care Wales*

Sue Evans, *Social Care Wales*

Sarah McCarty, *Social Care Wales*

Heather Parnell, *Cwm Taf University Health Board*

Sally Thelwell, *Velindre University NHS Trust*

Simon Fenoulhet, *Velindre Cancer Centre*

## **1. Welcome and AGM – election of Chair and Secretariat**

Sally Lewis welcomed online and in-person attendees and initiated the election of the Chair and Secretariat.

Prue Thimbleby nominated Heledd Fychan, MS, to be Chair of the Cross Party Group on Arts and Health. This nomination was seconded by Dan Allen and unanimously agreed by those present.

Sally Lewis invited nominations for the Secretariat. Prue Thimbleby nominated the Arts Council of Wales, supported by Johan Skre and Angela Rogers. This was also unanimously agreed.

Heledd Fychan thanked attendees for her re-election and congratulated WAHWN (Wales Arts Health and Well-being Network) on their successful Weave | Gwehyddu 2025 conference in September. She noted the increased coverage of arts and health, which has significantly raised awareness.

## **2. Welsh Government draft budget – overview, priorities and opportunities**

Heledd Fychan invited Nesta Lloyd-Jones (Assistant Director of Welsh NHS Confederation) to lead on this item.

Nesta Lloyd-Jones highlighted that the Welsh Government published its Draft Budget earlier than usual this year due to upcoming elections. This earlier release has been welcomed by NHS budget holders as it allows more time for review and planning. She emphasised the importance of shifting from a reactive to a proactive health model, focusing on prevention. Investment in arts, culture, sports, leisure, education, and local government is key to creating a sustainable system. Nesta Lloyd-Jones noted the NHS's significant budget share and ongoing deficits, which impact other areas such as culture. A cross-sector approach is essential for long-term change. The final budget will be confirmed early next year.

Heledd Fychan added that due to the Senedd elections, there is uncertainty about who will negotiate the budget. The current draft does not include new investments, but supplementary budgets may be considered by the next Welsh Government leader.

Heledd Fychan also congratulated Rosie Dow on her new role as Head of Arts, Health and Wellbeing at Arts Council of Wales. Rosie Dow thanked attendees and shared her commitment to bridging cultural and health sectors.

## **3. Iechyd Da-wns | Dance to Health film – how dance is helping prevent older people's falls across Swansea**

Sally Lewis (Arts and Health Consultant) introduced the *Iechyd Da-wns | Dance to Health* programme, which delivers weekly dance sessions to help prevent falls among older adults. The project has great potential cost-savings if scaled.

### **Key Statistics:**

- 1 in 3 people over 65 fall each year; this rises to 1 in 2 for those over 80.
- Falls cost the NHS £2.3bn annually and social care £1.1bn.

- *Dance to Health* participants are 58% less likely to fall.
- Social return on investment: £2.89 for every £1 spent.

Sally Lewis also highlighted the wider impact of falls, including trauma, loss of confidence, and social isolation.

A short film created by *We Are Torchy* was shown: [Dance to Health Videos - Dance to Health](#)

#### **4. Presentation: SBUHB Musical Hospitals – how music interventions can help the NHS save money**

Iori Haugen shared a presentation on the *Musical Hospitals* pilot project, Swansea Bay University Hospital's low-cost and high impact intervention using music on hospital wards.

##### **Key Statistics:**

- Physical assaults reduced by 98%
- Verbal assaults reduced by 99%
- Patient falls reduced by 23%
- Staff sick leave reduced by 35%
- Estimated savings: £110,000 per year (500% ROI)

The project, funded by the Welsh Government and Arts Council of Wales, brought musicians onto wards at Neath Port Talbot Hospital to encourage movement, conversation, and therapy. Staff reported feeling calmer and more connected to patients, reducing the need for costly 1:1 care.

If scaled, this project has national benefits with the potential to expand to various arts-based activities beyond music. While staff nurses reported that the external musicians anchored the project, the impact was largely delivered by nurses administering these sessions.

Johan Skre praised Iori Haugen's work on the project so far and raised the challenge of quantifying patient happiness and wellbeing. Johan added his belief that we require a service which delivers art to hospitals; this project mirrors what this could look like. Despite this, funding sustainability remains a key issue. Iori hopes that NHS budgets will eventually fund the programme directly.

Angela Rogers highlighted the power of short films, and Prue Thimbleby suggested that patient stories could strengthen the case for funding. Rosie Dow queried whether there are plans to publish the project report and Iori confirmed the plan is to do so.

Heledd Fychan reflected that the evidence and statistics demonstrate the project's positive effects yet raised concerns surrounding how we would replicate it across Wales, and how we encourage a shift within NHS funding and budget allocations.

Nesta Lloyd-Jones agreed to share the project with the Health Board Vice-Chairs peer group and encouraged Arts in Health Coordinators to directly contact health board vice-chairs themselves. Rosie Dow suggested to additionally engage with Chief Nursing Officers.

Heledd Fychan stressed the importance of raising arts and health ambitions to Senedd members, especially while nearing the election period.

## **5. Discussion, questions and actions arising**

Rosie Dow asked Sally Lewis whether Aesop's *Iechyd Da-wns | Dance to Health* programme has plans for further research. Sally responded that Aesop are working to make *Dance to Health* more locally owned. The programme has been successful in Swansea and is exploring expansion into Neath Port Talbot due to underspend there. Training costs for dance instructors are approximately £1,000 per person, a relatively small and cost-effective investment. To maximise prevention and cost-savings, Aesop's recommendation is for a dance instructor to be trained and installed in each local authority.

While the sector is keen to see *Dance to Health* scaled up, funding remains a challenge. Sally Lewis stressed that it is not sustainable for the comparably small arts budgets to cover these costs. NHS funding and budget allocation should be considered, yet this raises the question on how this could be done.

Heledd Fychan noted that the WAHWN manifesto has already been circulated and addresses many of these issues.

**Action:** *Nesta Lloyd-Jones to share Musical Hospitals project detail with Health Board Vice-Chairs*

**Action:** *Rhianwen Williams to share the Musical Hospitals video with attendees.*

## **6. Tabled Partner Updates and Any Other Business**

Angela Rogers shared that a £20,000 grant has been awarded to WAHWN in partnership with Public Health Wales and the Wellbeing Future Generations Office following their submission for an AHRC Creative Communities "Co Lab Policy Network Award". This news is embargoed until January 2026.

Nesta Lloyd-Jones (via meeting chat) informed attendees that the Future Generations Office is developing a tool for NHS bodies and local authorities to measure how much of their budget is allocated to preventative spending. The tool is currently being piloted with three Health Boards and is expected to launch in March. It will provide a benchmark for preventative investment across sectors.