

Arts Care



Arts Care Impact Review

Creative Health at Every Level

Supporting the development
of a Creative Health Ecosystem
for Northern Ireland



Purpose of this paper

Arts Care has commissioned William Nicholson, an independent Arts and Health Consultant, to conduct a high-level review of the impact the organisation creates in Northern Ireland.

The review has been conducted through: analysing reports to funders, assessing feedback from patients/service users, staff, funders and other key stakeholders and desk-top review of relevant arts, health and care strategy documents. This paper is not a formal evaluation of Arts Care.

It is intended to give Funders, Commissioners, Health and Care Professionals, Arts and Health practitioners and other interested stakeholders an understanding of the range of ways in which Arts Care has created positive impact for the health and wellbeing of local people and for the health and care system in Northern Ireland to inform discussions about how Arts Care can continue to support the development of a creative health system in future.



Executive Summary

There is overwhelming evidence of the benefits of arts and creativity in supporting individual and community health and wellbeing across the life course.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing report *“Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing”* (2017) and the World Health Organisation European Report 2019 are two of the most comprehensive reports in a growing body of evidence that support this. They conclude that the arts and creativity can:

- **Enable people to take greater responsibility for their health and wellbeing and enjoy a greater quality of life.**
- **Have a positive impact on the social determinants, enhance health and wellbeing.**
- **Improve the humanity, value for money and overall effectiveness of the health and social care systems – it can save the system money.**
- **Make a major contribution to both the prevention of ill health and the treatment and management of long-term conditions.**
- **Help meet major challenges facing the health and social care systems: ageing population, long-term conditions, mental health, isolation and loneliness.**

Locally, the case for Arts and Health is neatly summarised in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust’s first Arts and Wellbeing Strategy (2020-25) - *“Creating Healthy Lives Through the Arts”*. Its vision is *“To enhance care and enrich lives of our people through engagement with the Arts”* by *“building on the evidence-based practice that has shown that the arts can make a major contribution to both the prevention of ill health and management of long-term conditions”*.

The UK National Centre for Creative Health's impending 'Creative Health Review' will also highlight the potential for creative health to help tackle pressing issues in the health and social care system and more widely, including increasing health inequalities and the additional challenges we face as we continue to recover from COVID-19.

It also states the need to do this as a whole creative health system that includes support for, and education of, clinicians and other professionals and brings together system players for strategic alignment and sharing of budgets, expertise and resources.

It is within this context that I have conducted this review of Arts Care. As is shown in this report, Arts Care is undoubtedly a wonderful asset for Northern Ireland. It is uniquely placed to support the Health and Social Care System and the health and wellbeing of our community. Its impact is considerable at every level – improving individual and community wellbeing, enhancing healthcare delivery and healthcare environments and contributing to system and culture change.

Arts Care has been achieving this impact for over 30 years. The challenge now is for Arts Care and its commissioners, funders, researchers and practitioners to consider how to build on the findings in this report and, at a time of growing need and decreasing resources, consider how to pool resources and continue to develop a **Creative Health Ecosystem** for Northern Ireland over the next 30 years...

William Nicholson

Independent Arts, Health and Wellbeing Consultant

26 September 2023



Introduction to Arts Care

Arts Care is an arts, health and well-being charity whose aim is *“to enable people in health and social care, community, corporate and other settings to benefit from the recuperative, healing and positive mental health effects of engagement with the creative arts”*.

Initiated in 1991, uniquely by the then Department of Health, Arts Care delivers a wide range of innovative and impactful participatory arts projects, events, performances, and exhibitions across the whole of Northern Ireland. Arts Care also provides enabling support to the health and care system via environmental transformations, staff wellbeing services and training and education for healthcare professionals and medical students.

It delivers its activities and services through its long-standing system of Artists-in-Residence and Clown Doctors programmes and specific commissioned projects including the **“Here & Now”** Older People’s Arts and Health Festival and **“Twilight Zone”** Project for young people.



History of Arts Care - Timeline

- **1991** - Arts Care commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services
- **2004** - Arts Care NI Clown Doctor Programme established
- **2012** - Facilitated Sustainable Creativity in Healthcare, International Arts in Health Conference in Northern Ireland
- **2012** - Supported Belfast Trust Arts in Health Strategy 2013-15 “Unfolding Arts in Health”
- **2014** - First Arts in Health Module for Medical Students at Queen’s University
- **2017** - “Let the Dance Begin” in Strabane
- **2018** - First annual “Here & Now” Older People’s Arts Festival
- **2018** - First Annual “Twilight Zone Project for young people
- **2018** - Delivered “Fusion Arts and Health Symposium” for Northern Ireland
- **2019** - Supported first Arts and Wellbeing strategy for the Northern Trust “Creating Healthy Lives 2020-25”
- **2020** - opened Arts Care Centre in East Belfast
- **2023** - Supported NHS/HSC 75th birthday celebrations at Stormont

How Arts Care Achieves Impact

Art's Care takes a multi-faceted, whole systems approach that is considerably beyond supporting the individual wellbeing of those that directly participate in arts and creative activities. The key features of Arts Care's approach are:

Delivery using a wide range of artistic forms including – visual arts (from pottery to photography to painting), music (singing, variety of instruments and drums), clown doctors, dance and movement (yoga/dance), books, creative writing and poetry, drama, storytelling, music, animation, photography, digital arts, art exhibitions.

Geographical spread –

- It delivers in all five Health and Social Care Trust areas and at the Arts Care Centre in Belfast, giving it unique positioning as the largest regional arts and health provider.
- It provides activities in both urban and rural settings.

Delivery in a wide-variety of different care settings, including:

- Acute healthcare settings, hospital wards and high dependency units.
- Public settings like hospital grounds, corridors and atria.
- Community health and care settings such as nursing units and recovery colleges.
- Day care, residential care homes and supported living.
- Adult and children's mental health settings.
- Children and young people services.
- Learning and physical disability services.

Online as well as in-person - during COVID-19 Arts Care transferred much of its annual programme delivery online, creating the Arts Care 4U Arts & Well-being YouTube Channel to sustain delivery of services. Artists and Clown Doctors have now produced over 370 facilitated online workshops increasing the ability to reach more people and from a range of backgrounds. For example, the recent St Patricks Day Show was broadcast on Zoom to over 40 Adult Training and Day Centres.

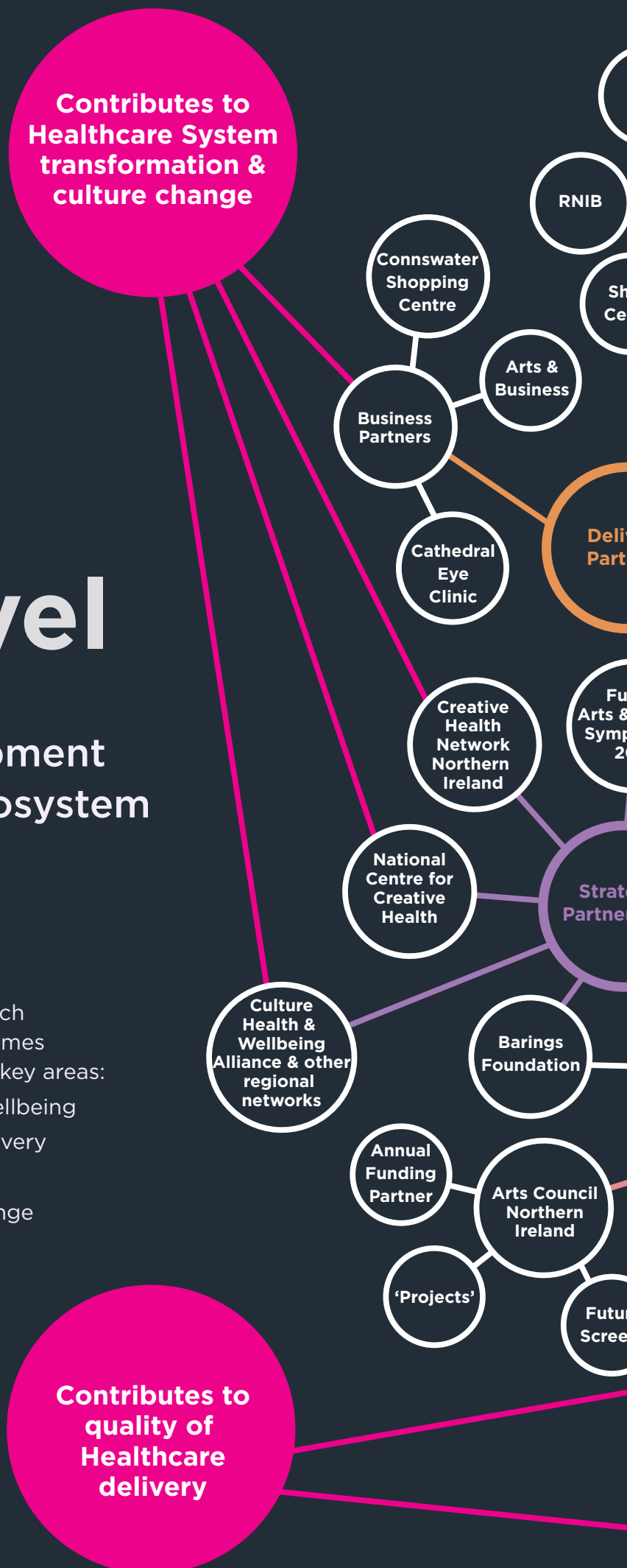
Creative Health at Every Level

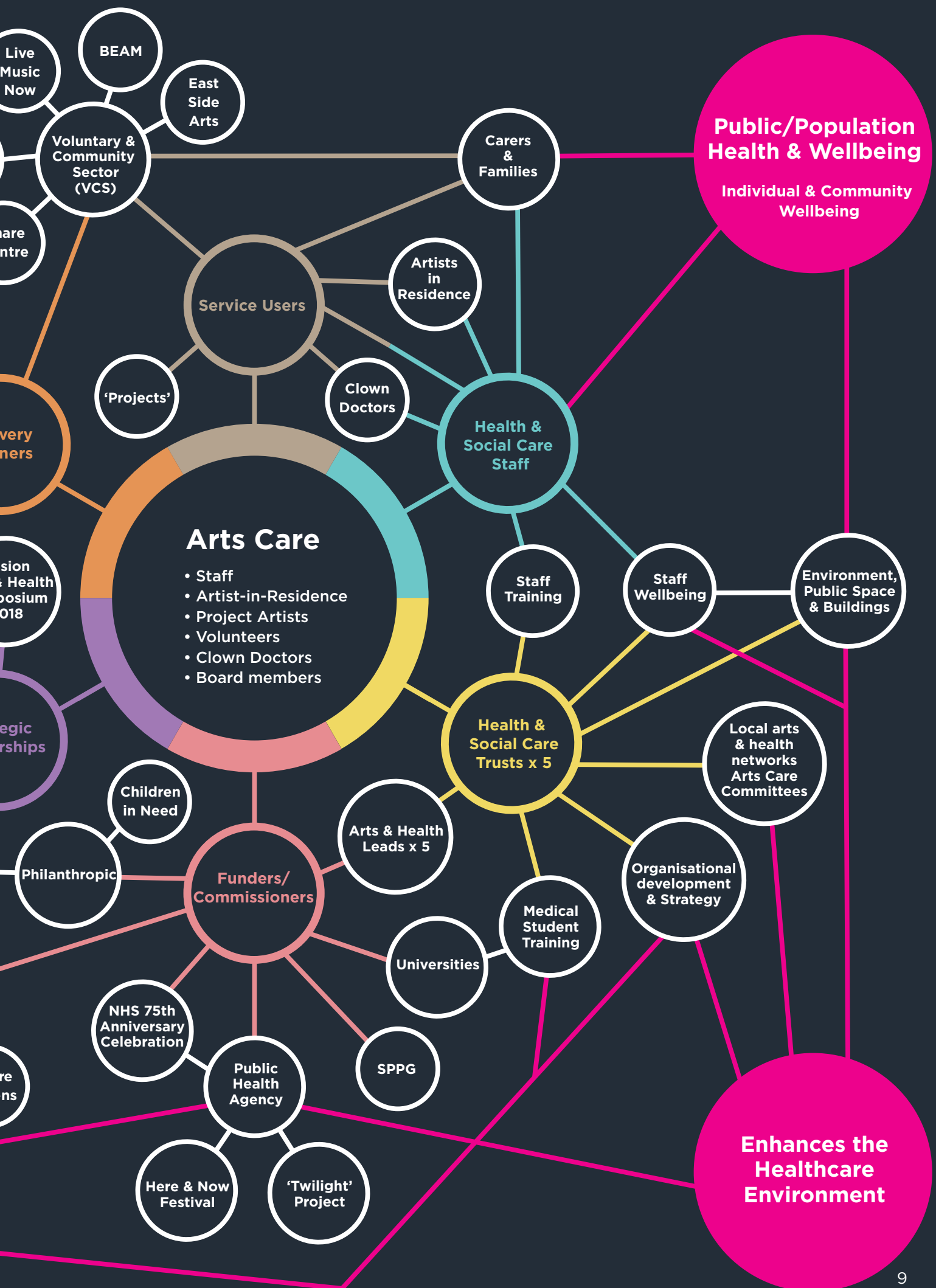
Supporting the development of a Creative Health Ecosystem for Northern Ireland

Arts Care's Impact – 4 key pillars

This comprehensive, whole systems approach enables Arts Care to achieve positive outcomes for health and care in Northern Ireland in 4 key areas:

1. Improving individual and community wellbeing
2. Enhancing the quality of healthcare delivery
3. Enhancing the healthcare environment
4. Contributing to system and culture change





Arts Care in Numbers – 2022-23

To provide a sense of the scale of the work Arts Care delivers, below is a snapshot of some of the key metrics for Arts Care in 2022/23:

Programming

20,333

direct engagements from
Artist-in-Residence programme

6,348

compliments from attendees of
Artist-in-Residence Programme

0

complaints from attendees of
Artist-in-Residence Programme

137

different venues for
Artist-in-Residence Programme

126

Clown Doctor Sessions across
26 venues in Northern Ireland

236

compliments from attendees
of Clown Doctor Sessions

0

complaints from attendees
of Clown Doctor Sessions

48

performances and events

31

art exhibitions in hospitals,
galleries, open spaces

1,503

staff engaged in workshops

Workforce

9

core staff members

5

Clown Doctors

21

Artists-in-Residence

40

Project Artists

3

Volunteers



Social Media Reach



2,500
Facebook



1130
Instagram



270
YouTube



1170
X



270
LinkedIn



107
Threads



600
Email subscribers

Long Term Nature of Commissioners and Funders

- Strategic Planning Partnership Group (Department of Health) – Funding since 1991 for Artists-in-Residents programme in all five HSC Trusts
- Five Health and Social Care Trusts – funding since 1991 for arts and health projects and staff wellbeing training
- Public Health Agency – funding since 2018 for Here & Now Festival and Twilight Zone Project
- Arts Council for Northern Ireland – core funding since 2018
- Children in Need – funding for Clown Doctors since 2018

Arts Care's Impact – Improving Individual and Community Wellbeing

Through delivery of its wide range of creative activities, Arts Care creates direct, positive impact for the individuals who participate in those activities as well as significant indirect benefits for the wider community including families, carers, health and care staff and the general public.

Individual Wellbeing

There are two key participant groups which are direct beneficiaries of Arts Care creative activities:

1. Patients and service users
2. Health and social care professionals

Both experience the same health and wellbeing benefits, namely:

Mental health:

- Decrease in levels of stress, fear and anxiety. This is particularly noticeable in children and young people in hospital settings.
- Improvement of confidence and self-esteem.
- Improvement of mood and emotional health.
- Increased creative thinking, concentration and motivation.
- Improved motivation and enjoyment in work, reduces staff burnout and helps create a great place to work and be cared for.

Physical health

- The benefits from an increase in physical activity and improved fitness levels.
- Weight loss.
- Singing and dancing in particular has specific benefits to improving lung capacity and breathing.
- Reduction in use of medication and assists with pain control.

Quotes to Evidence Arts Care Impact on Service Users Who Are Direct Beneficiaries/Participants in Arts Care Activities

"I've made lots of new friends and I've lost weight. I feel happier and now say "Hello" to my new friends when I see them in town on a Friday".

Service user participant with learning and physical disability, 'Let the Dance Begin', Strabane.

"I feel so much better after the session. It has lifted my mood and given me a great boost to my wellbeing".

Western Trust, Asha Centre for Addictions.

"I really look forward to each week, I've made many friends and my lung problems have improved".

Participant, Ballymoney Singing for Health Group.

"Art really helps me. You can see that I haven't been well so when I draw, I get it out of my head and into my hands and I feel much better. I don't think so much about bad things."

Young Person, Arts Care facilitated workshop within Children's services.

Social health

- Increase in physical and cognitive functioning – learning of new skills.
- increased awareness of health and mental health in creative, positive, fun and engaging ways.
- Increased social connections and interactions.
- Reduced isolation and boredom.
- Enhanced level of friendships.
- Support for relationships with staff and family.
- Social inclusion and a sense of belonging.
- Sense of pride and achievement through participation in performances and events and production of art work.
- Support for healing processes and resilience building.

Community Wellbeing – the indirect benefits for staff, carers, family members and wider society

- Provides vital staff and carer respite, reducing anxiety and stress and improving mental health.
- Enhanced emotional health, mood and positivity through the enjoyment their patient or family member is experiencing.
- Tackling inequalities – Arts Care delivers a Social Model of Arts within Healthcare that provides opportunities to access the arts for many who are typically excluded due to their mental or physical health barriers or socio-economic status.
- Diversity and inclusion – Arts Care contributes to a fairer and more diverse society as it provides arts and wellbeing opportunities for people of all ages, gender or race and in all counties of Northern Ireland, including rural or urban areas. For example, through partnering with SENSE NI, offering art engagement to people with sensory loss and complex needs. An Arts Care project also won an Alzheimer's Award for Dementia Friendly Community of the year.

Quotes to Evidence Arts Care Impact on Health and Social Care Staff Who are Direct Beneficiaries/ Participants in Arts Care Activities

"I never considered myself creative, let alone understand how my creativity could make me a better professional carer".
Healthcare Professional,
Arts and Older People
Healthcare Staff Training
Programme.

"Having been given the day by my unit manager to undertake arts training, this has not only opened my eyes as to the role of art, music and dance as valuable activities for the patients that I care for but in someway has made me feel that I matter and it has revitalised me again".
Healthcare Professional,
Arts and Older People
Healthcare Staff Training
Programme.

Arts Care's Impact – Enhancing the Quality of Healthcare Delivery

Arts Care enhances the delivery of healthcare services that contributes to enhanced patient experience, saving costs and increasing efficiency of healthcare services through reduction in use of services, fewer number of appointments and decrease in use of medication. It does this through:

- Enhancing workforce skillset - CPD, professional learning and development.
- Supporting staff in times of crisis by offering a safe and meaningful creative expression that reduces levels of stress in a stretched workforce.
- Increase in job satisfaction, motivation and enjoyment in work for staff that leads to increased productivity and enhanced delivery of care. For example, the Solis project which won the Arts and Business staff engagement award 2022.
- Improving relationships between service users, their families and carers, and healthcare staff
- Art delivered as therapy and as part of social prescribing enhances the range of health and care services offered to patients/service users.
- Providing adaptable and flexible patient-centred and accessible activities. For example, moving programming online during lockdown and continuing to offer online activities to patients/service users with mobility issues.
- Being a trusted delivery partner and providing activities that meet high quality health and safety, safeguarding and best practice standards in challenging healthcare settings.
 - Many Arts Care artists originate from professional Healthcare backgrounds and have significant experience and knowledge working in the health system.
 - All artists/clown doctors are Access NI checked, have Arts Care Health and Safety, Hygiene and infection Control, Children and Vulnerable Adult Protection, Dementia Awareness training.

Quotes to Evidence Arts Care Enhancing the Quality of Healthcare Delivery

“Since I lost my mother, it has also helped me with my grief so I don’t have to attend my doctor or take as much medication”.
Participant, Ballymoney Singing for Health Group.

“I cannot believe how engaged the young people are with the arts activities this week. We often have challenges in getting them to stick with an activity but they have wanted to come every day. This is just such a normal environment for them and they can be normal teenagers within it”.
Healthcare staff from Looked After Services visiting the end of Twilight Zone Arts Week Young People’s Performance T13.

“Personally, I was honoured to be a part of this project and I found it one of the most rewarding things I did during work in 2019”.
Dave Rogers, Clinical Psychologist at Whiteabbey Hospital working with Ciara O’Malley (Artist in Residence) - artwork for new unit “The McArt Rooms”.

Arts Care's Impact – Enhancing the Healthcare Environment

Arts Care positively impacts on both the physical healthcare environment as well as the culture of clinical settings. The overall impact of this work contributes to reduced anxiety, length of hospital stays and increases service user and family satisfaction with overall quality of care. It similarly enhances the working environment for staff, family and carers. It does this through:

Environmental transformations

- Transforming often fatigued, clinical environments into welcoming, fun, authentic “cared for spaces” thereby improving working conditions for staff and environmental benefits for patients/service users, carers, staff and the general public (for example Solis exhibition at Mater Hospital Belfast).
- Creating visually stimulating public settings that improves whole community wellbeing, for example sculptures on hospital grounds and pop-up galleries in waiting areas.

Cultural transformations

- Installing arts works created by service users and staff creates a sense of pride and ownership that is motivating, inspiring and uplifting.
- Creating a holistic wellbeing atmosphere through Arts Care's various different art forms (from hospital atrium music recitals to paintings in wards to active engagement via clown doctors) that enhances mood and emotional wellbeing for everyone regardless of disability, age, gender or ethnicity.
- Creating synergy between the Arts Care artists with staff and service users contributes to enhancing the wellbeing of those who work in or avail of Health and Community Care Services through better relationships and quality arts engagement.

Quotes to Evidence Arts Care Enhancing the Healthcare Environment

“My daughter comes to hospital regularly with her condition and she really looks forward to her hospital visits so that she can see the clown doctors. It makes a real difference to her day.”

Mother of young service user.

“There is strong evidence that participation in the arts and working in a beautiful aesthetically pleasing environment with lots of artwork has therapeutic benefits for both service users and staff”.

Dave Rogers, Clinical Psychologist at Whiteabbey Hospital working with Ciara O'Malley (Artist in Residence) – artwork for new unit “The McArt Rooms”.

Arts Care's Impact –

Contributing to system and culture change

Arts Care plays a significant role in supporting system and culture change in Health and Care as well as in the Arts Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector development. It does this by:

- Inspiring change in health and care culture through facilitating creative training and arts education for healthcare staff and students to enhance professional care practice.
- Assisting funding partners to achieve their strategic priorities with regard to positive health and wellbeing.
- Supporting funders and partner organisations to develop arts and health strategies.
- Contributing to research and increasing the evidence base for Arts and Health and generating solutions for tackling health inequalities, for example:
 - As lead contributor to the Arts in Health Research Group at Queen's University Belfast.
 - As a partner organisation alongside Professor Gerard Leavey, Ulster University in *"Challenging Health Outcomes and Integrating Care Environments: a community consortium to tackle health disparities for people living with mental illness"*
 - a large scale research project which is part of a UK Research and Innovation funded programme researching community solutions that tackle health inequalities.

Quotes to Evidence Arts Care Contribution to Healthcare System Transformation and Culture Change

"Arts Care clearly demonstrate how their service supports our strategic priorities and helps us to achieve them."
Learning and Physical Disability Services, Western Health and Social Care Trust.

"It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first Arts and Wellbeing Strategy for the Northern Area. The Trust works closely with a range of arts providers and would acknowledge the support of Arts Care in developing this strategy".
Dr Tony Stephens, OBE, Chief Executive, Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

- Making significant contribution to inter-sectoral development involving Healthcare, Arts & Culture, Voluntary and Community Sector, Business and Education. This is done through:
 - Strategic partnerships with organisations within and outside the arts sector. These include East Side Arts, Arts and Business, the Share Centre, the Cedar Foundation, SENSE NI, NI Hospice, Live Music Now, Training for Women Network and Sure Start.
 - Developing relationships with the corporate sector to bring in additional resources to the health and care system eg Connswater Shopping Centre, Cathedral Eye Clinic.
- Contribution to development of the Arts Sector:
 - Provision of quality, well-remunerated employment opportunities for arts professionals.
 - Continued Professional Development - supporting Artists to develop their professional practice skills both locally and internationally through flexible working.
 - Contributes to developing a contemporary arts sector in NI.

“Arts Care is unquestionably at the forefront of the burgeoning arts and health field internationally. It has led the way with innovative programs that use the arts to significantly enhance health and healthcare. There is no other single arts and health organisation that serves an entire nation and serves as a critical model for countries that strive to employ creative solutions to the complex problems faced by our healthcare systems today.”

Jill Sonke, Director,
University of Florida Centre
for Arts in Medicine.



Conclusion

There is overwhelming evidence of the benefits of arts and creativity in supporting individual and community health and wellbeing across the life course.

At a time of crisis, with unprecedented demand for NHS services, budget constraints and low staff morale, it is recognised that there is need to take a whole systems approach to creative health that includes support for, and education of, clinicians and other professionals and brings together system players for strategic alignment and sharing of budgets, expertise and resources.

It is clear from this review that Arts Care is significantly contributing to health and wellbeing outcomes in Northern Ireland that are considerably beyond supporting the individual wellbeing of those that directly participate in arts and creative activities.



Through delivery of its wide range of creative activities and services, Arts Care:

1. Creates significant direct, positive impact for the individuals who participate in its activities as well as significant indirect benefits for the wider community including families, carers, health and care staff and the general public.
2. Positively impacts on both the physical healthcare environment as well as the culture of clinical settings.
3. Enhances the delivery of healthcare services that contribute to saving costs and increasing efficiency of healthcare services through reduction in use of services, lower number of appointments and decrease in use of medication.
4. Plays a significant role in supporting system and culture change in Health and Care as well as contributing to Arts Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector development.

Arts Care has been achieving this impact for over 30 years with longstanding relationships, significant recurring funding and support from a range of different funders and commissioners within and outside the healthcare system.

The key challenge now is for Arts Care and its commissioners, funders, researchers and practitioners to consider how to build on the findings in this report and, at a time of growing need and decreasing resources, consider how to pool resources and continue to develop a ***“Creative Health Ecosystem”*** for Northern Ireland over the next 30 years...

About the Author – William Nicholson

William Nicholson is an experienced Independent Arts, Health and Wellbeing Consultant and is deeply passionate about the role that arts, culture and creativity can play in improving people's health and wellbeing. Will has recently relocated to Northern Ireland from London and is currently initiating the development of a Creative Health Network for Northern Ireland.

Will has been involved in a wide range of arts and health work from local to national level in the UK including; supporting the development of a Creative Health Toolkit for Integrated Care Systems for the UK National Centre for Creative Health, developing arts and health strategies for the Greater London Authority, Southwark Council and King's College London and facilitating a culture and social prescribing conference in partnership with King's College London and The Science Gallery and a Museum's and Mental Health event for the Baring's Foundation.

He is also the Co-Founder of the Southwark Culture Health and Wellbeing Partnership, an innovative place-based arts and health network with over 50 members from a variety of sectors, and is a trustee of several arts and health charities including the Northern Ireland Mental Health and Arts Festival.



Improving personal health and wellbeing through the arts



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