

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 3 February 2015

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

Review of the Effects of Arts, Leisure and Culture on Wellbeing

The review aimed to understand the impact of arts, leisure and culture on wellbeing and if this provided the case for future commissioning of arts in health initiatives.

As there was significant evidence associated with the physical activity and physical wellbeing, the review has sought to focus in particular on the effect of arts and cultural activities on mental wellbeing.

The Committee has taken evidence from

- Council Services including Public Health and Arts, Leisure and Culture
- SNAPS (Special Needs Activities with Parents Support)
- The Silvers Programme – The Arc
- English Heritage
- TEWV NHS Foundation Trust
- Dr Theo Stickley, Academic Lead for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, Nottingham University

The Committee has found that there is a clear and substantial body of national and international evidence that arts and cultural activities have a positive impact on both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

In general:

- Physical activity has a positive impact on promoting good physical and mental health and this is well-documented
- Physical activity helps to improve poor physical and mental health (well-documented)
- Creative activities can help to treat mental health conditions
- Arts and Cultural activities can contribute to a sense of well-being, promoting good mental health and promoting better outcomes in physical health

It is more difficult to quantify the impact and cost effectiveness of participation in cultural / arts activities in preventing mental and physical ill health although there is a vast array of qualitative research to support this

The review has found that arts and cultural activities have a positive impact:

- On physical health
 - On mental health and wellbeing
 - In reducing social isolation
 - On progress to further learning
 - On communities and families
 - On community cohesion
- Positive impacts can be achieved cost effectively, achieving net savings in

- some cases and delivering economic benefit through the reduced cost of people becoming economically inactive and dependent
- Certain projects could be delivered with minimum financial investment by working in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary and community sector, making small investments go a long way
 - There is a need to provide a wide range of activities to encourage and maximise engagement
 - Transport and accessibility of activities need to be considered in setting up projects, including with regard to vulnerable groups
 - Local Authorities and schools are ideally placed to make venues available to facilitate activities

The Select Committee will be formulating draft recommendations at their meeting on 21 January prior to submitting their report to Cabinet on 12 March.