



It's not a substitute for medical treatment but a complementary community-based intervention to support mental health and social inclusion.

An infrastructure needs to be established to make this work. The most widely used model employs a link worker who matches referred patients to the most suitable available arts programmes.

Referenced from various sources, see last page.

# 87%

of Europeans agree that engaging with culture improves their emotional or physical well-being reminding us that access to culture is a fundamental human right

From Culture and Health: Time to ACT, OMC report, 2025

## Arts on Prescription

refers to any program in which health and social care providers are enabled to prescribe, or refer, arts, culture, or nature experiences, such as group-based arts (visual arts, music, dance, creative writing, theatre) and culture activities (like museum visits) to patients or clients in order to support their health and well-being.



The UK was the pioneer of arts on prescription and now also successfully implemented in most European countries, USA, Australia and across the world. Recently implemented in 8 Baltic countries in a €3.1million EU investment.

## Some interesting examples from around Europe:

There are now hundreds of inspiring examples from around the world showcasing how the arts are being used to promote health and well-being – from music programs to support people with dementia, to dance initiatives for those living with Parkinson's, creative writing projects in diverse communities, and theatre and music-making with young people.

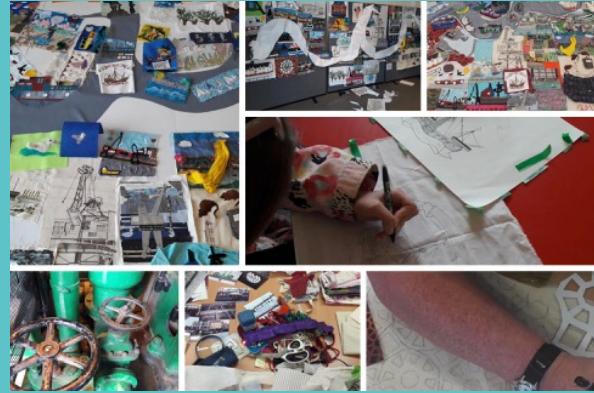
### Music and Motherhood project



Through this [project](#) new mothers experience alleviated symptoms of post-partum depression and more connection to their baby through singing and music.

Location: Romania, Italy, Denmark and others

### Tapestry project



This [project](#) involved people working in a group to discuss and create a new tapestry about the regional history inspired from an exhibition at the Arnolfini contemporary art centre.

Location: creativeSHIFT, Bristol (UK)

### Minerva project



Minerva is a scientific [project](#) aiming to provide evidence on the positive effects of the artistic experience and cultural activities on the mental health of individuals and the population and indicate the role that museums can play in prevention and treatment in these areas.

Location: Palazzo Maffei Casa Museo, Verona (Italy)

### Culture vitamins!



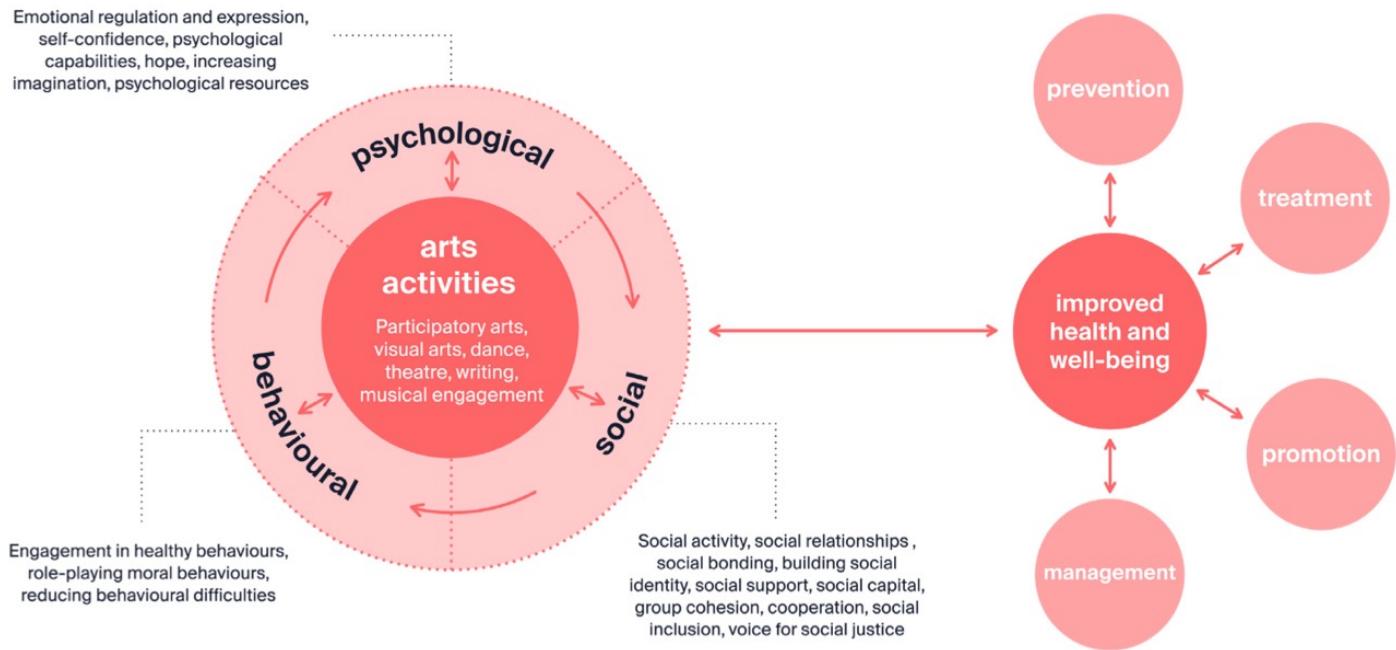
This [project](#) exposes participants to a different art form every week, such as group singing, museum visits and creative workshops, all designed to foster social connection, self-expression and emotional relief.

Location: Denmark

# How can the arts help to improve health and well-being?

Often being low-risk with high social and health returns, participation in arts and culture programs offers a promising solution to support public health by reducing the burden on strained healthcare systems, address social isolation and promote cross-sector collaboration.

Below is a theoretical model that outlines the health benefits of the arts



## Why the arts?

Evidence confirms that:

Taking part in art, nature, exercise, music, creative, expressive, social, or philosophical activities including through arts on prescription, can lead to a wide range of benefits:



# Where is the evidence?

An increasing number of reports, research studies, and evaluations now provide evidence-based support for the health benefits of the arts, including findings from Arts on Prescription programs. Here are some...

## Culture for Health report

This report synthesised existing evidence from over **300 studies across Europe**, the most positive health impacts were:

- General and psychological well-being
- Increased social engagement
- A  $\downarrow$  in personal experiences of depression and anxiety
- A  $\uparrow$  health-related quality of life in patients with **chronic health conditions** e.g. pain relief, breathing,
- Prevention of cognitive decline in older adults
- The development of cognitive, emotional and social skills

## National Academy of Social Prescribing (UK)

Studies showed that visiting museums, galleries, and the theatre has a relationship with a  $\downarrow$  **risk of developing dementia in older age**.

Mental health service users who participated in a museums on prescriptions scheme which included gardening & art making showed **improved self-esteem,  $\downarrow$  social isolation and reduced psychological stressors**.

## Financial benefit

'**£149 million is saved** every year in the UK because of how movement and dance reduce the risk of developing dementia.'

Day-to-day arts engagement for young people brings them individual wellbeing benefits that are valued at over £1,000 a year per person

Professor Daisy Fancourt  
DCMS commissioned report

## Hospital admissions

In another study called airlift in collaboration with University of Gloucestershire, arts on prescription was found to have a **27%  $\downarrow$  in hospital admissions**.

## Impact on non-communicable diseases

According to the HUNT study from Norway which took place among 35,902 participants over 8yrs:

People who engaged in music, singing, and theatre had a **27%  $\downarrow$  risk of cancer-related mortality** when compared to non-participants.

Participating in creative activities less than once a week  $\downarrow$  **cardiovascular disease mortality risk by 40% in women and 33% in men**.

## Young people

Studies show that participation in the arts at a young age  **$\uparrow$  cognitive abilities, self-awareness and emotion regulation**. From the book 'Your Brain on Art'



## Recent developments in the field of arts for health

Momentum has accelerated rapidly in recent years, marked by significant progress in research, publications, toolkits and guidelines, the establishment of dedicated institutions, advancements in national and global policy and advocacy, and the expansion of an active international community of practice.

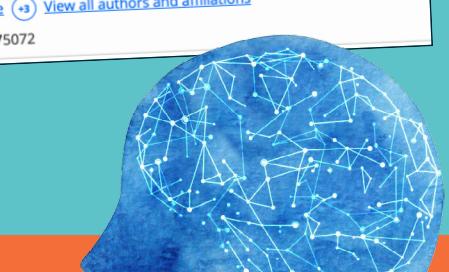


## Toolkits, guidance and factsheets

**The impact of arts on prescription on individual health and wellbeing: a systematic review with meta-analysis**

Ita Jensen<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Nicola Holt<sup>3</sup>, Sayaka Honda<sup>4</sup> and Gary Bungay<sup>5</sup>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2752535X231175072>



"I'm convinced that culture for health interventions will be part of health systems throughout the future. The question is how fast do we want this future to be?" *Nils Fietje, Research officer, WHO*

**What is your take on this?**