
Arts & Culture – Health and Wellbeing Projects

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board

On: 29 September 2022

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Report Sponsor: Jessica Jhundoo-Evans

Item for: Discussion



1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the Corn Exchange's engagement programme with a focus on the health and wellbeing benefits of creativity.
- 1.2 Provide an insight to the Links to Thrive Programme delivered by the Corn Exchange - creative arts on prescription sessions across West Berkshire to support wellbeing and mental health.
- 1.3 *"By ensuring everyone in the country has access to high quality creative and cultural activities, they will, in turn, lead happier and healthier lives"* Arts Council England, Chair – Sir Nicholas Serota.

2. Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that:

- A champion be secured from the Health and Wellbeing Board to work with the Links to Thrive Steering Group.
- Long-term funding be secured from new sources to continue the Links to Thrive programme.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board works with the Corn Exchange to embed partnerships fostered around wellbeing and maximise the opportunities developed.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Corn Exchange delivers an extensive and wide-ranging creative programme with health and wellbeing benefits for residents, with more than 20,000 engagements in 2021/22 and an ambition to achieve over 30,000 engagements in 2022/23. Alongside its live performance programme and ground-breaking free outdoor events it delivers:
 - **Regular programme** of creative courses and classes (including youth theatre) with bursary places available
 - **Ageing Creatively**, 5-year national lottery funded programme for the over 55s delivered across the District and in care homes

- **Becoming Us** West Berkshire Council funded project, delivered in partnership with Home Start supporting pandemic babies and their families
- **Messy Stories** funded by the Community Education Fund, delivered in partnership with Sovereign Housing and the Central Family Hub supporting the most in need families to improve outcomes for their children
- **Careers in the Arts** (with Watermill) funded by Greenham Trust, supporting young people to improve employment prospects and life chances through engagement with creative skills
- **Engagement with local schools** and supporting the creative curriculum across primary and secondary education
- **Links to Thrive** funded by Surviving to Thriving – pilot project supporting the delivery of arts on prescription across West Berkshire. Supported by steering group partners, with Corn Exchange leading delivery of this programme for the District
- **Volunteering opportunities** across all our programmes

4. Supporting Information

4.1 Please see Appendix B for the Links to Thrive flyer and Corn Exchange data

4.2 The Links to Thrive Programme: offers a range of creative courses for adults led by professional artists. Taking place in a range of locations across the District, these sessions are free to access for participants and currently offered by social prescribing link workers from the A34 and Kennet Primary Care Network (PCN), as well as the West Berkshire Rural and Reading West PCN. During the first six months of the pilot phase, we have had 161 referrals and 851 attendances providing vital support and social connection for those attending.

4.3 Current sessions include:

- **Singing for Recovery** with a focus on wellbeing, this session uses vocal warmups and singing techniques to promote relaxation, as well as singing along to classic songs from a range of genres. This class is suitable for anyone wanting to sing in a relaxed and friendly environment to lift their mood.
- **Art for Wellbeing** learn new art techniques in a relaxed, friendly, and sociable atmosphere under the guidance of professional artists and illustrators.
- **Creative Art Journaling** a chance to reflect and explore using mixed media, mindfulness, and lots of creative fun techniques to produce a private journal just for you.

4.4 Testimonials:

- *'At the start of the course I had terrible anxiety, I couldn't go out of the house and I would cry with my neighbour. After a few weeks attending the classes I stopped feeling anxiety and now I have even stopped feeling anxious going to other places too'.* **Art for Wellbeing participant, Pangbourne, June 2022**

- *'I need to get out of my home environment as there are many triggers, I find it hard to relax & think clearly. I rarely talk to people due to my Autism but I feel comfortable talking with this group... it is helping my anxiety and mental health.'* **Craft and Care participant, Hungerford, July 2022**
- *'I was able to tolerate the week by knowing that I get a real respite session on Thursday mornings'* – **Art Journaling Participant, Newbury, Feb 2022**
- *'I've really enjoyed these classes and they've helped me enjoy art again. Before this I felt quite lonely'* **Art for Wellbeing Participant, Thatcham April 2022**

5. Options Considered

Corn Exchange is a local charity that works hard to generate earned income, achieve donations, and secure grants and funding opportunities to sustain its broad programme of creative activity. It receives core funding from Arts Council England and Greenham Trust, but must seek project funding for all of its engagement programmes. This area falls outside of the remit of its natural domains. Failure to secure additional funding would mean that engagement programmes could not be continued.

6. Proposal(s)

Work with the Health and Wellbeing Board Partners to try and identify funding routes to maintain the Links to Thrive programme beyond March 2023.

7. Conclusion(s)

- 7.1 The Links to Thrive courses were developed with a small amount of funding to enable free access and have been well received by Professionals and Participants alike. A full evaluation report is due at the end of September.
- 7.2 The Corn Exchange would like to work with the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Corn Exchange infographic

Appendix B – Links to Thrive Flyer

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

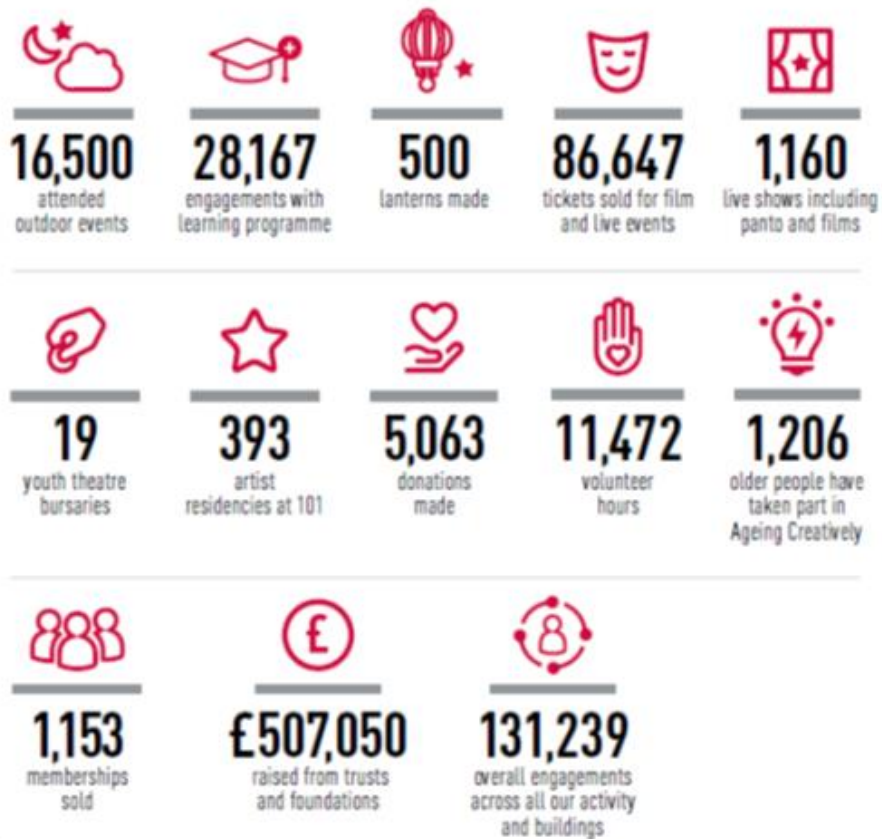
- ☒ Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- ☒ Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- ☒ Help families and young children in early years
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by

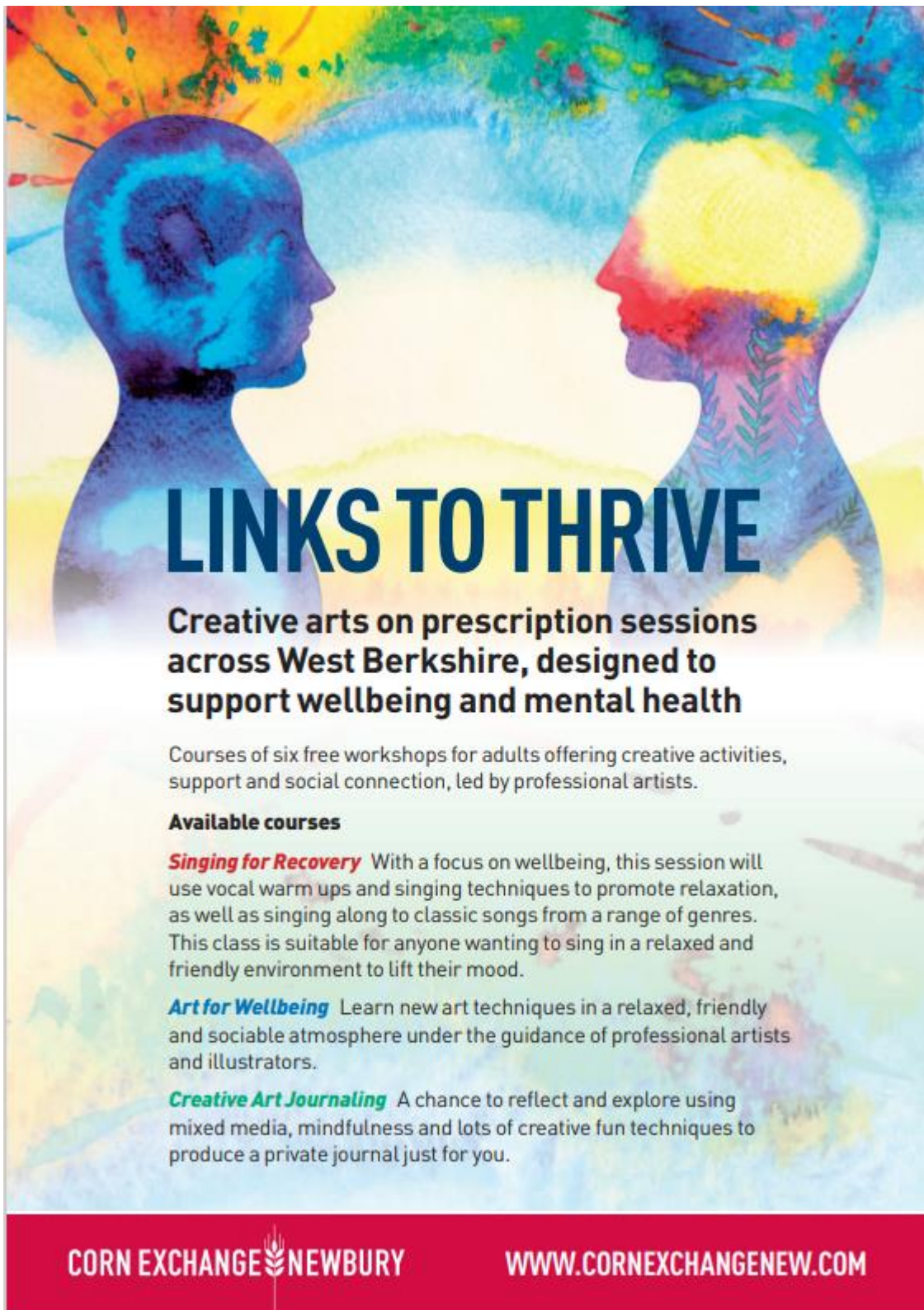
Appendix A

Corn Exchange KPIs from 2019/20

**OVER THE LAST YEAR YOU
HAVE HELPED MAKE EVERYTHING
WE DO POSSIBLE...**



Appendix B



LINKS TO THRIVE

Creative arts on prescription sessions across West Berkshire, designed to support wellbeing and mental health


Courses of six free workshops for adults offering creative activities, support and social connection, led by professional artists.

Available courses

Singing for Recovery With a focus on wellbeing, this session will use vocal warm ups and singing techniques to promote relaxation, as well as singing along to classic songs from a range of genres. This class is suitable for anyone wanting to sing in a relaxed and friendly environment to lift their mood.

Art for Wellbeing Learn new art techniques in a relaxed, friendly and sociable atmosphere under the guidance of professional artists and illustrators.

Creative Art Journaling A chance to reflect and explore using mixed media, mindfulness and lots of creative fun techniques to produce a private journal just for you.

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