

Barnsley Creativity and Wellbeing Week

Monday 16 - Sunday 22 May
2022



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Foreword

We're so glad to be able to write this foreword together for a report on Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's first Creativity & Wellbeing Week. We have different perspectives and experiences of creativity and wellbeing but unite in a passion and belief that all of us together can make a real difference to the lives of the people of Barnsley.

Creativity & Wellbeing Week has been running for over a decade now. It began as a London-based event led by London Arts and Health, expanding to become national in partnership with the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) in 2018. Since then, hubs of energy and excitement have evolved around the week across the country – in Norfolk, Brighton, Newcastle and many other areas. This was the first opportunity that we have had in Barnsley to share some of the amazing creative and cultural activities that are already happening in our Town and to explore with a wide range of people how these can improve our wellbeing and be further developed and sustained.

CHWA has its home in Barnsley. It is a national organisation, but we know that the backbone of creative health work is local, embedded, grassroots practice. This is where the innovation has come from that has driven the creative health movement forward over the last 25 years. All the changes we now see at a national level – whether NHS England's acknowledgement of creativity in its plans for social prescribing, or Arts Council England's significant new Creative Health & Wellbeing paper – have originated in hyper-local practice. During CHWA's research through lockdown it found the biggest single enabler of this cross-disciplinary work was the passion and commitment of its practitioners – many of whom have worked against the grain of policy for many years, persistently driving forward incremental culture change where they live. This work is connected to the local community and often founded in lived experience of health and wellbeing struggles. It connects to the core of who we are and the things we all do which help us to live well.

We have a growing evidence base which describes the impact of creativity on wellbeing and a number of organisations have published new guidance to support this shift. CHWA published recommendations for commissioners and funders with the Baring Foundation, in a new [Thriving Practice Model](#), earlier this year. A research partnership between Arts Council of Wales, Nesta and Cardiff University's 'Y Lab' led to a new [HARP \(Health, Arts, Research, People\) Framework](#) to “generate, grow and learn about creative innovations that support people's health and wellbeing”. All of this is supported by stories and evidence from the creative examples we see within our community and local health and care services. It is also supported by our personal experiences of the creative/cultural things we do to keep well such as joining a choir, baking a cake or watching our local sports team

Barnsley has been investing in this work for many years, but Creativity & Wellbeing Week has been a prism through which to focus this conversation at a critical moment and drive towards a more strategic approach to supporting creative health. This report provides an opportunity to read about a small selection of the wide range of creativity activities which are already happening. More importantly the quotes and photographs provide a glimpse of the impact these can have.

We know that creativity and culture can support health and wellbeing, and we are now thinking about the infrastructure that makes this work happen consistently. Creative health projects can be transformational, but what we really need is a way to ensure projects evolve into sustainable *programmes* of work founded in trusted relationships between the people of Barnsley, creative practitioners, Barnsley MBC and health partners.

We need, too, to train and support the organisations and – crucially – freelancers who have always led this work so they can keep doing it and build a peer network to drive up excellence. You can see the benefits of this kind of peer networking in different programmes around the country. Gloucestershire County Council is just one example where consistent investment in creative health has led to both a significant reduction in GP attendance, and also powerful collaboration across the local creative health sector, meaning that small creative and cultural organisations come together to respond to a variety of need with specialist skills, rather than competing over small funds.

What's so exciting about Barnsley's Creativity & Wellbeing Week – and what's evident in the data reported in this document – is the way it brings together the personal and the strategic. In the evaluation results below, you can see significant impacts both on the wellbeing of people participating in the activities, and on the Council and anchor organisations. It provides an opportunity to celebrate this and demonstrates how bringing people together to think differently about what creativity and culture might offer can generate a huge amount of hope and openness to ideas.

CHWA will be bringing its national conference to Barnsley in late 2023, and we hope this too will act as a moment to drive the conversation forward. Our small partnership on this foreword serves as an indication of things to come and models the partnership we want to see going forward between culture and health in Barnsley so we can make a difference to the lives of Barnsley people. These national events can be useful catalysts but if we all work together Barnsley can keep this space open for people to come together and think differently and great things will come of it. This is just the start.

Victoria Hume, Director of the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance

Sue Barton, Deputy Director of Strategy and Change, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Background

This report summarises Barnsley's first Creativity and Wellbeing Week held between 16-22 May 2022, aligned to the national festival, a partnership between London Arts Festival and the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance. <https://creativityandwellbeing.org.uk/>

The planning of the week was a collaboration between Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance, BMBC Public Health, Culture and Visitor Economy, Communications team and Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board.

Our aim throughout the week was to raise the profile of the importance of creativity, arts and culture and the benefits for our resident's health and wellbeing – as a preventative measure and as part of physical and mental health recovery.

Our key objectives of the week were to:

- Outline the range of creativity and wellbeing evidence and insight demonstrating health and wellbeing benefits.
- Explore leadership roles for creating a Barnsley creativity and wellbeing offer and a longer-term Cultural Strategy.
- Summarise the role and achievements from key creative organisations, including the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance.
- Provide examples of local good practice with evidence of impact and social return on investment.
- Identify next steps for wider engagement of leaders and key stakeholders across Barnsley.

Creativity and Wellbeing Week opening event

Our opening event, on Monday 16 May, aimed to start a conversation about how we build creative leadership across the system to embed creativity into health and care systems, planning and commissioning key services and programmes.

We developed an exciting and stimulating agenda with speakers, bringing a diverse range of experience and insight around creativity and health development. This attracted over 50 leaders from health and care settings, adult social care, skills and employment, VCS, and creative organisations.

The session provided an opportunity to be involved in creative activities, including creating a journey stick and writing poetry.



14 participants returned their post event evaluation form. From those participants, all stated that the event broadened their knowledge and skills and helped them to make connections with others.

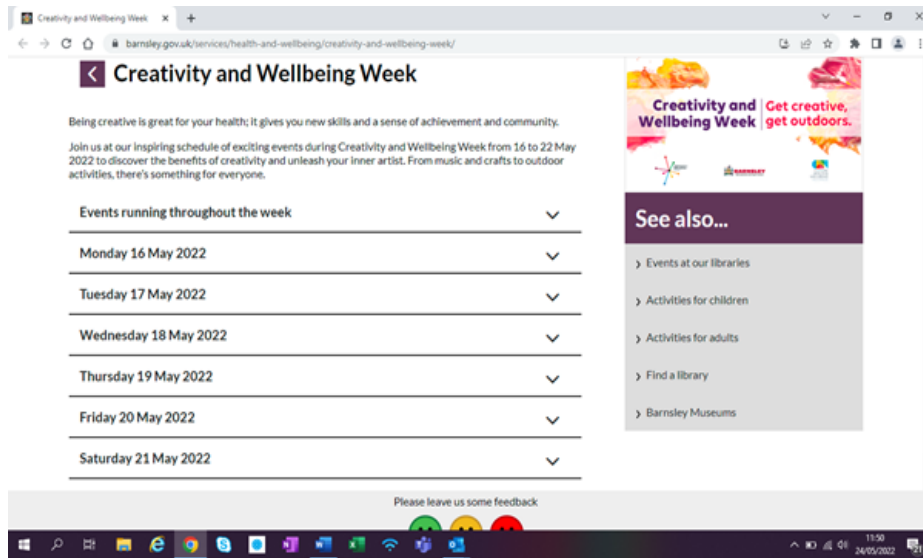
“Take away thoughts”:

- *“The value of creativity and the need to invest in it.”*
- *“The importance of creativity to wellbeing and the wealth of creativity in Barnsley.”*
- *“How creativity really can improve people’s wellbeing.”*

- *“It was really helpful for me to understand the level of cross sector commitment already in place across the MBC, and the volume of creative health work already happening in the area.”*

Creativity and Wellbeing Week activities

Working with our key partners, we developed a creativity and wellbeing programme providing access to a full range of creative activity opportunities across the borough during Creativity and Wellbeing Week. The activities ranged from music experiences and creative skills to artistic exhibitions, which were promoted on a bespoke webpage.

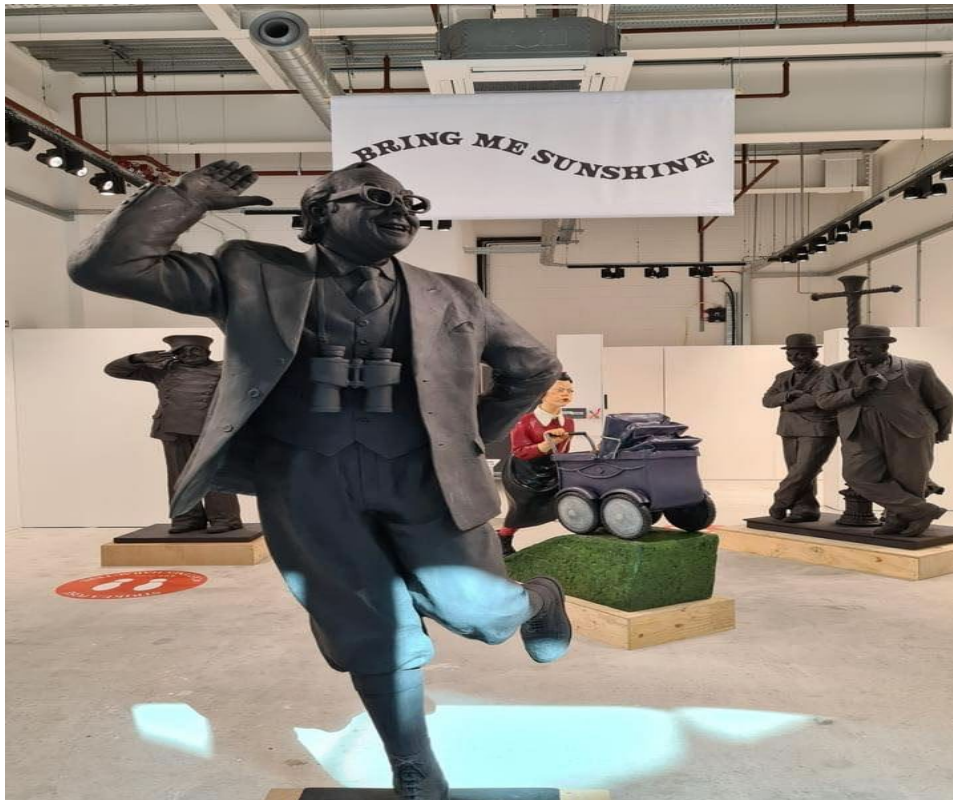


Feedback from a selection of activities:

Glass works exhibition “Casting Characters” – 953 visitors to the venue, 272 visitors to the website.

Comments:

- *“Always wanted to see the Eric Morecambe statue and now I have it has really made my day”.*
- *“It’s really cheered me up”.*
- *“They should call it Hall of smiles as you can’t help but smile when you walk in”.*



Slazenger exhibition – 305 visitors during the week, 211 – visitors to the website

Comments:

- *“Really enjoyable exhibition.”*

Discovery trail at Cannon Hall Museum, Park & Gardens - 266 visitors to the website

Comments

- *“We love this trail with our children. Excitement at every turn.”*
- *“We started the trail and found that a monster was on the loose before going in search of it. There were little woodland activities along the route which the children loved. We also took our buckets with us to collect any natural treasures we could find along the way, it encouraged lots of talk about what we found and if it would fit in our buckets. #lovebeingoutdoors #natureplay #exploringnaturewithchildren #woodlandtrail.”*



Wentworth Castle Gardens

Wentworth Castle Gardens overall had 19 led walks during May as part of the walking festival, 10 volunteers led walks, with approx. 150 participants.

A Mindful Walking event at Wentworth Castle Gardens took place on Wednesday 18 May. Seven participants took part, all of which were older people with physical and/or mental health needs. Feedback included:

- *“Perfect and peaceful. My mind feels at peace and calm. there should be more available. thank you.”*
- *“For a person with a mind in turmoil. A worthwhile experience getting close to nature.”*
- *“Calming. Brought me back to enjoyment of what is around me. So about being me.”*
- *“A wonderful relaxing way to spend a morning in these beautiful gardens.”*

Libraries activities

Feedback from some of the activities that took place across Library sites.

Story and Rhyme – Goldthorpe Library

- *“We love coming to Story and Rhyme. We wanted to introduce reading as early as possible as well as social initiation to help with her development. Making sure we go out to do something during the day is also a huge benefit to my mental health.”*

- *“L’ was a lockdown baby and this is the first and only group she has ever attended. She has enjoyed the social side, speech is developing beautifully through the singing and she is sitting better for stories. ‘S’ is a very shy little girl, she started sat on my knee and is now standing up and singing to the group. They both love to share their books with Daddy when they get home. We read the stories each night. Attending this gives us something to look forward to each week. I enjoy seeing the other parents and getting out of the house.”*
- *“ ‘A’ loves coming to Story and Rhyme group, her confidence has come on so much. We love picking books to take home and read. A is talking loads better. She is happy to play with toys in the library. ‘A’ calls the library (Book Club on Tuesday). It’s lovely to come and meet new people and chat.”*

Lego/craft session – Mapplewell Library

In terms of health/wellbeing, what did you/your child get out of the session?

- *“Happiness, ability to express imagination, learning how to share, and communication with other children.”*
- *“Formed relationships, communicated with others and took part in activities.”*
- *“Children get to be creative and use their imagination.”*

What positive impact did it have on you?

- *“A feeling of togetherness with other parents, children and members of staff. Positive attitudes makes a happy play and creative environment.”*
- *“We all had fun.”*
- *“Was nice not to pay for children’s activity which most things do.”*
- *“Happiness as they were wanting to read.”*
- *“Was nice not to need to plan or worry about paying to go out for day.”*

What difference does attending this session make to your life?

- *“It makes a big difference as my child is learning how to bond and make friends. Her imagination and creative attitude (think this should possibly be aptitude) has improved and she is very happy in the sessions.”*

Rag Rug Group – Penistone Library

What do you enjoy about the group?

- Learning new skills
- Social aspect – making new friends
- Mental wellbeing
- Community Spirit
- Company
- Caring and support of others
- Skill sharing

What do you take from the sessions (particularly if there are any benefits to health and wellbeing as a result)?

- Something to look forward to each week
- Rugging can be meditative
- Social interaction lifts mood
- Friendship of other members – also outside the group times

- Learning new skills – there’s more than one way of rugging
- Supportive, kind people
- Calming
- Meditative
- Fun and friendship

Quotes from participants:

- *“Wellness is a connection of paths: knowledge and action”*
- *“Mental health is as important as physical health”*
- *“Sharing is caring”*

Creative Recovery Sculpture Garden and Live Arts Café event

Creative Recovery hosted a Sculpture Garden and Live Arts’ Café event to celebrate Creativity and Wellbeing Week, where participants learned a variety of skills from limestone carving, making willow bird feeders and rhythmic drumming as part of a percussion workshop. The event, part of Creative Recovery’s Green Uplift project, was enjoyed by over 50 people who produced some stunning pieces over the course of the afternoon – this was followed by a picnic and a live percussion session with pulsating rhythmic beats from drums, tambourines, triangles, and an assortment of instruments that unleashed musical creativity. The afternoon was a success, with many positive endorsements for the activities on offer:

Quotes from participants:

- *“Brilliant and relaxing”*
- *“Immensely enjoyable”*
- *“Enchanting”*
- *“Sharing in togetherness”*
- *“Uplifting and joyful”*
- *“Immersive absorption, being present, like being at a festival”*
- *“Uplifting and spiritual”*
- *“A great enjoyable day!”*
- *“Community connection”*
- *“Grateful”*
- *“Happy days!”*



Communication and engagement evaluation report

BMBC Communication team developed a full communication plan prior, and during Creativity & Wellbeing Week. The evaluation report covers how social media was utilised to promote the range of activities, as well as positive health messages relating to creativity under our Healthy Barnsley theme. The report includes how internal communications were used to raise awareness of the benefits of creativity on our health and wellbeing and to promote the week of events. It also includes media coverage gained throughout the week:

- Barnsley Chronicle
- BBC Radio Sheffield
- The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance - a monthly blog
- Around Town magazine - 'what's on' advertisement
- News Anyway
- Hoyland CAP local community news

BBC Radio Sheffield included a feature in each programme across the week. Guests included Hayley Youell (CHWA) and Dr. Jess Bone. There were valuable contributions from those who work on creativity programmes including mosaic artists, crafts and social prescribing. There was also coverage of a knitting group in Barnsley and discussion with creative guests about what creativity does for wellbeing.

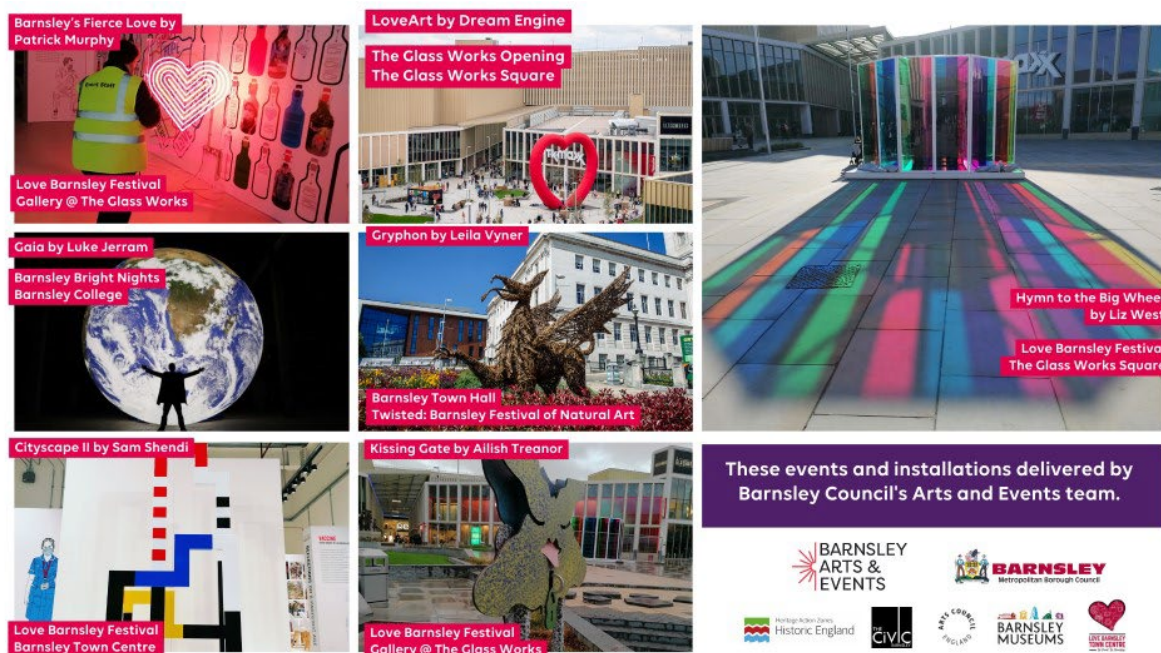
The report concludes with a section on what went well and the lessons learnt, to inform further events. The evaluation report of the Creativity and Wellbeing week can be found in the reports Webpage.

Creativity and wellbeing strategic workshop

We commissioned an online workshop which was held on Thursday, 19 May, to bring together key leaders across health, care and creativity organisations. The aim was to agree how best to collaborate strategically to embed creativity into our health and care leadership and everyday practice across the borough.

The event attracted 23 participants from health and social care, VCS and creative organisations.

We commenced the session by reflecting on the broad range of exciting creative activities available prior to, and during the week.



Throughout the session, participants considered several challenges:

- How do we develop our system wide leadership to create a Barnsley creativity and wellbeing offer and develop a longer-term Cultural Strategy?
- How can we make creativity, arts and cultural experiences more accessible for our most vulnerable communities and groups that don't currently access existing offers?
- How can we enhance the offer to health and care service users and wider community groups?
- What intelligence do we have about how people in Barnsley currently access arts and cultural activities, how can we better use the insight and what are the gaps?
- What are the opportunities to collaborate around – system wide changes, joining up culture and health service provision, funding/resources and sustainability?
- What can we do differently together to make an impact for cultural and health inequalities?

The following key themes emerged from the discussion groups:

- Connection, collaboration and co-production
- Communication - enhancing existing communication channels to let people know what is already happening across the borough and development of a central hub to share this

information

- System leadership
- Citizen-led approach - through public consultation and empowering people to define their expectations of culture in its broadest sense, ensuring it is accessible to all
- Sustainable funding opportunities
- Changing the language /culture to ensure that it is people-centric
- Infrastructure – support to develop local practitioners to give them the skills and confidence in this realm

Seven participants returned their evaluation forms with everyone stating that the event fulfilled its purpose of providing knowledge, skills, and opportunities to collaborate and share ideas.

Take away thoughts included:

- *“There is collective thought on how to progress and people are keen to collaborate.”*
- *“Create more time and space for convening; always think about how conversations are going to lead to change and communicating next steps/opportunities.”*
- *“People really care to make Barnsley a better place to live in.”*
- *“How we can achieve so much more together.”*

The full evaluation report for the Discussion Workshop is available in the report webpage.

Recommendations / Next steps

- Disseminate this report outlining participants’ insight and feedback of Creativity and Wellbeing Week widely to leaders across the system.
- Seek endorsement from Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Care Board and other leaders involved in key strategic boards to invest and scale up efforts to embed creativity and wellbeing into system leadership
- Explore and agree actions to develop creative leadership across health & care organisation
- Draw out the themes from the activities to contribute to the development of the citizen-led Barnsley Cultural Strategy
- Create a plan on a page and full programme plan, co-produced with key partners.

We would like to acknowledge the huge amount of support from all key partners involved in making this an inspirational first Creativity and Wellbeing Week for Barnsley.