



*******PRESS RELEASE*******
Monday 25th March 2024

Arts & Health South West closes down after 18 years
South West organisation leaves creative health legacy nationally

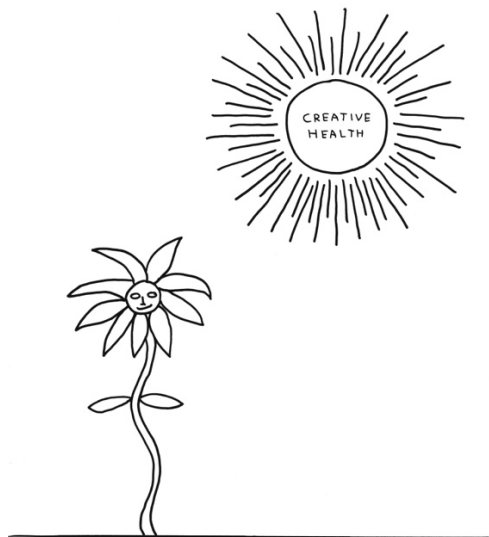


Illustration by David Shrigley for the Creative Health Review 2023

The organisation at the heart of arts and health in the south west is to close but leaves a flourishing creative health ecosystem nationally.

Arts & Health South West :

- 'incubated' the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance
- played a key role in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing and the publication of *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing 2017*
- hosted the National Centre for Creative Health

[Arts & Health South West](#) was founded in 2006 and has been a leader in developing the creative health ecosystem regionally and nationally for 18 years. The organisation delivered international Culture, Health and Wellbeing conferences in 2013, 2017 and 2021 which helped raise the profile of the work across the world.



In 2021, after a year of pandemic trauma, the online conference brought together 561 speakers and participants from 30 countries over 3 days for 122 live sessions to explore the themes of inequality, power and sustainability.

Partnership working and collaboration have led to myriad developments across the south west. Arts & Health South West's current [Reach In Reach Out project](#), co-produced in partnership with museums, creative organisations and young people who are struggling with various challenges, explores creativity, wellbeing and community engagement. The project will have a legacy in a [toolkit hosted on the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance website](#).

Arts & Health South West 'incubated' the [Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) for two years until it became an independent CIC in 2020. Arts & Health South West also played a key role in the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing](#) and the two-year inquiry that led to the publication of the [Creative Health](#) report in 2017. Arts & Health South West then hosted the [National Centre for Creative Health](#) until it became independent in 2021 under the leadership of Lord Howarth of Newport and Alex Coulter, Director of Arts & Health South West from 2010-2024 and now Director of the National Centre for Creative Health.

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance and the National Centre for Creative Health are working together to ensure the legacy of Arts & Health South West has a tangible presence into the future, with the National Centre for Creative Health hosting an [Arts & Health South West Legacy Resource](#) and the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance taking forward the networking support for practitioners.

The recent publication of the [Creative Health Quality Framework](#) by the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, and the [Creative Health Review](#) and the [Creative Health Toolkit](#) by the National Centre for Creative Health, provide a suite of resources to support the ongoing spreading and embedding of the work. There is an urgent need to find ways for creative health to be sustainable in the context of the current challenging financial and social context.

Alex Coulter, Director of Arts & Health South West said:

"I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved since Arts & Health South West was set up 18 years ago. Not only have we helped to create a strong network of arts and health practitioners across the region, we've also worked nationally to set up two important organisations. I'm sad that the organisation is closing at this challenging time financially, but I'm optimistic that the work we have done will lead to great things in the field."

- End -



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IMAGES by David Shrigley available here and to be credited 'Illustration by David Shrigley for the Creative Health Review' :

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Pok7fW9Jr8cFqm11W6pC_IKpYoJX7PoW?usp=sharing

Note to Editors:

Arts & Health South West (AHSW) is a learning, advocacy, networking and development organisation with the aim that more people can experience the arts and culture for the benefit of their health and wellbeing. AHSW provided learning programmes and resources, advocated for decision-makers and funders, delivered networking events and supported the development of partnerships and collaborations. Founded in 2006, it will close on 31st March 2024.

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA) is the free-to-join membership organisation for creative health across England. It provides networked, collaborative advocacy, support and resources, supporting health and wellbeing for all through creative and cultural practice. CHWA is based in Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

The National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) aims to advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration, helping to foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems. It was set up in response to Recommendation 1 in the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing's report: [Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing](#) and became a registered charity in 2020.

In December 2023, the **National Centre for Creative Health** and the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing** published a major report, the [Creative Health Review: How Policy Can Embrace Creative Health](#), evidencing that creative health needs to form an integral part of a 21st-century health and social care system to reduce health inequalities, increase life expectancy and build social capital.

More information on the National Centre for Creative Health is available at <https://ncch.org.uk> @TheNCCH



Definition of creative health

Creative health is defined as creative approaches and activities which have benefits for our health and wellbeing. Activities can include visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, cooking and creative activities in nature, such as gardening; approaches may involve creative and innovative ways to approach health and care services, co-production, education and workforce development.

Creative health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions and heritage sites, and healthcare settings. Creative health can contribute to the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, and treatment and recovery across the life course.