

A SOCIAL GLUE

**GREATER MANCHESTER:
A CREATIVE HEALTH CITY REGION**

SUMMARY REPORT

A SOCIAL GLUE

***A Social Glue* is a snapshot in time of the fast-growing field of culture, health and wellbeing and its place in Greater Manchester’s ongoing cultural evolution. It’s an exploration of ways forward for the city-region in how we might think and do things differently and where creativity in all its forms, can contribute to dynamic and healthy communities.**

A Social Glue offers a panorama of research, practice and policy, asserting that culture and creativity in all its forms, has the potency to be part of the transformation of people’s lives, the communities we live in and the possibilities of living well. The full report looks to the recent past and the here and now of Greater Manchester, linking people and place with culture and creativity and the factors that underpin health and wellbeing in this thriving city-region. It positions Greater Manchester as a heartland and incubator of new thinking and action.

Creativity has the potential to inspire more connected, critical and active citizens, where the arts in all their forms help us make sense of the world and drive change forward, in the cultural sector as elsewhere.

The last decade has seen a flowering of work in this field; a rich and messy ecology variously known as arts for health; arts in health or culture health and wellbeing. Whatever the term, it describes a preoccupation with humanising clinical environments, reaching explicit health outcomes, wider participation and increasingly - addressing inequalities. Greater Manchester has recently been described as “the crucible of the Arts and Health movement”¹ and *A Social Glue* builds on this heritage holding that all these approaches are interconnected, concentric circles of practice, with a focus on communities and public health and accommodating diversity of practice. They result in a blurring of the boundaries of care, of health and wellbeing, and of creativity in all its forms.

The full *Social Glue* report reflects on Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On (2020)² which offered a scathing critique of the lack of progress made in addressing health inequalities across England and simultaneously published an evaluative case study of Greater Manchester. The case study highlights some worrying health concerns in the city region as well as reflecting on the successes and progress brought about through devolution and Greater Manchester’s “Place-Based” approach to systemic change, noting that this place-based, system-wide methodology is essential to effectively tackle the social determinants of health and subsequent health inequalities. Marmot recommends that addressing health inequalities is placed at the heart of policymaking, stating that health and wellbeing should be valued as much as measures of economic growth, and calls for investment “in the development of economic, social and cultural resources in the most deprived communities.”³

¹Gordon-Nesbitt R. Older and Wiser? Creative Ageing in the UK 2010 - 2019. King’s College London, 2019. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/kcbaringreport-a4-2019-forweb.pdf>

²Marmot M, et al., The Marmot Review 10 Years On. London: IHE; 2020. <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/marmot-review-10-years-on>

³Ibid. online

In becoming the UK's first Marmot city-region, there is a strategic commitment by Greater Manchester to “put into practice the report's recommendations by working across all public services in our city-region to ensure that policies, approaches and resources are geared towards creating a fairer, more equal society.”⁴

“A place based approach to primary care networks, integrated care systems and strategic transformation partnerships needs to be driven by much more than health and care professionals meeting once a month to agree stuff. They need to be rooted in the anthropology of place, listen to people's stories and understand the reality of their lives.”⁵

Through an exploration of research and policy, *A Social Glue* suggests that now is the time to explore the boundaries between culture, health and social care. In England, the Arts and Health movement is currently being politically driven through an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, The inquiry report that emerged from the APPG's work, *Creative Health* (2017), has galvanised much of the strategic activity in Arts and Health at a national level in the years since, and it is the basis for the recently launched National Centre for Creative Health,⁶ and its hubs, hives and huddles network which aim to advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration; helping foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems.

The evidence presented through the APPG's work demonstrates how arts-based approaches can help people “stay well, take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and enjoy a better quality of life”.⁷ *Creative Health* acknowledges the unique opportunity afforded to Greater Manchester through devolution, stating that “the devolution of powers to Greater Manchester could enable synergies between the arts, health and wellbeing to flourish”.⁸

A Social Glue draws on a body of research including *Exploring the Longitudinal Relationship Between Arts Engagement and Health* (2015),⁹ an evidence base of fifteen longitudinal studies suggesting that attending high-quality cultural events has a beneficial impact upon a range of chronic diseases over time. It also references a substantial “scoping review” of literature on Arts and Health by the World Health Organisation which references over 900 publications, including 200 reviews covering over 3000 further studies and draws on a recent synthesis for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), *Evidence Summary for Policy: The role of arts in improving health & wellbeing* (2020).¹⁰

⁴ Ibid. online

⁵ Hall D. and Heppollette W. 2020. “Place” is Where The Heart is.
<https://www.carnallfarrar.com/articles/place-is-where-the-heart-is/>

⁶ National Centre for Creative Health. 2021. <https://ncch.org.uk/>

⁷ *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report. 2017. https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

⁸ Ibid. *Creative Health*. Online

⁹ Gordon-Nesbitt R. *Exploring the Longitudinal Relationship Between Arts Engagement and Health, Arts for Health* (2015) <https://www.artsforhealth.org/research/artsengagementandhealth/ArtsEngagementandHealth.pdf>

¹⁰ Fancourt D, et al., Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), *Evidence Summary for Policy: The role of arts in improving health & wellbeing*, 2020. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929773/DCMS_report_April_2020_finalx_1_.pdf

“This is the time for bold thinking and brave action, this is the time for an essential pivot towards a new way of doing things that puts tackling inequality at its heart, this is the time to take Greater Manchester to the next level, a place with good lives for all.”

THE GREATER MANCHESTER INDEPENDENT
INEQUALITIES COMMISSION. THE NEXT LEVEL: GOOD
LIVES FOR ALL IN GREATER MANCHESTER (2021)

A Social Glue explores some key areas of development around the arts, mental health and wellbeing across the city-region, with reference in particular to Social Prescribing, and advocates for the city-region as a perfect testbed for new ways of delivering the Social Prescribing agenda that are able to flex to the subtle divergences of neighbourhoods, communities and local human and physical resources.

“Many appointments at GP surgeries are down to issues around wider social determinants of health. Social Prescribing is therefore a key pillar of the Live Well approach set out in our health plan to address health inequalities in adulthood. It has the potential to reduce the clinical prescribing bill for the NHS by shifting our focus from a particular illness to the whole person, encompassing issues that we know impact on people’s health, like housing and someone’s employment situation.”¹¹

More than that, culture and the arts are offered up as one of the key ways to tackle the inequalities underpinning poor health outcomes.

Turning to children and young people’s mental health, the report describes the Thrive Framework¹² intended to achieve a national transformation of children and adolescent mental health services. GM i-THRIVE is implementing this systems change across Greater Manchester and is the only team nationally to include an Arts, Culture and Mental Health Programme in their approach, signalling again the drive to do things not only differently, but in ways that represent an appetite to work systemically with the arts and culture in all their forms across the city-region.

Greater Manchester is continuing to spearhead work in the field of creative ageing as it has done over the last decade and was named the first UK age-friendly city-region by the World Health Organisation in 2018.¹³ Culture Champions is a key strand of the ageing well agenda in GM; making space for older people to advocate for, lead and produce cultural activities for their peers and communities across the city-region. The programme plays a significant role in not only drawing attention to cultural and creative opportunities as a way of enriching people’s lives, but also as one way for older residents to instigate social change on their own terms.

From amateur hobbyists to well-funded public exhibitions and all that lies between, what is happening on our doorsteps across the city-region offers a taste of the much larger potential of human creativity as part of a health and social change agenda, where health and ill health aren’t solely understood in terms of deficit and disease, but through the social determinants of health and examples from across the city-region are surveyed as “Parallel Narratives” in a sister document to the full report.

A Social Glue stresses the importance of social movements playing a key part in social change, where peoples’ collective voices demand to be listened to - and acted on. Perhaps if we think of this new wave of culture, health and social change as something similar to social movements, there may be real opportunities to make changes in our health and the factors that underpin poor outcomes for people.

Creativity has the potential to inspire more connected, critical and active citizens, where the arts in all their forms help us make sense of the world and drive change forward, in the cultural sector as elsewhere.

¹¹Burnham A. Extract from Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. More people than ever before benefitting from social prescribing as Greater Manchester leads the way. March 2020. <https://www.gmhsc.org.uk/news/social-prescribing-day/>

¹²Wolpert et al., 2019. Thrive Framework for system change. <http://implementingthrive.org/about-us/the-thrive-framework/>

¹³The Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. World Health Organisation. 2018 <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/network/greater-manchester/>

Our contemporary attention should rightly focus on the factors that influence everyone’s health, where culture and creativity enable communities and citizens to consider themselves participants in a common venture.

The arts and culture aren’t being held up as a utopian palliative for all life’s ills and the report acknowledges the need to remedy the deficit of useful evidence identified in Evidence Summary for Policy: The role of arts in improving health & wellbeing (2020), particularly around “research on arts and the prevention of mental illness in children and adults, including whether arts engagement at different stages of the lifespan is associated with lower risk of incidence of depression, anxiety or other mental illnesses.”¹⁴

Cultural policy and the post-Covid priorities of funding bodies and think tanks offer Greater Manchester a myriad of opportunity. The introduction to Arts Council England’s (ACE) new Ten-Year Strategy sets out a vision for a nation of creative people who experience high quality culture but where culture fosters community, is made by and with communities, and is just as present in village halls and the streets where we live as it is in arts centres. ACE’s renewed vision states that “by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experience.”¹⁵ This is a vision which talks directly to Greater Manchester’s ambitious Cultural and Creative Strategy; Grown in Greater Manchester. Known Around The World (2019),¹⁶ which prioritises: generating the conditions for creativity to flourish, enriching the lives of all our people through engagement with the culture and heritage of Greater Manchester, and celebrating, protecting and developing Greater Manchester’s unique culture, heritage strengths, assets, and ecology and the strategy explicitly champions the role of culture in improving health and wellbeing.

The narrative of *A Social Glue* offers a unique platform to spearhead a change in the cultural agenda, from one where Arts and Health is focused on ill health and deficit to one where human creativity is seen as a liberating social asset and a means to effecting individual and communal change. It warns too, of the dangers of the arts being seen as a blunt instrumental tool, acknowledging the nuance and complexity that creativity opens up. *A Social Glue* suggests that crucially, we need to support artists, activists and those working in health and social care to develop their skills to respond to this agenda and have increased opportunities to network. Greater Manchester certainly has the spirit and drive to make this happen, building on its arts and health lineage and rich cultural and heritage sectors; the time has never felt more appropriate to connect the strands of health with social and civic life.

Building on and learning from exemplary established agendas, like the systemic approaches to a collaborative age-friendly city-region, our knowledge of inequalities across communities and with the burgeoning mental health crisis across the life-course in mind, the opportunities for connected thinking to shape key strategic priorities are now ripe. *A Social Glue* has illuminated some of the pathways that Arts and Health has taken, from its early connections with clinical environments and desired clinical outcomes, to a contemporary understanding of a broader public health and social change agenda.

¹⁴Op.cit. Fancourt D, et al., 2020.

¹⁵Arts Council England. Let’s Create. Ten-Year Strategy 2020 - 2030. Published 2021. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/our-strategy-2020-2030>

¹⁶Grown in Greater Manchester. Known Around The World. Greater Manchester Culture Strategy, 2019.

“By 2024 Greater Manchester will be the UK city-region where heritage, culture and the arts play a key part in the health and wellbeing of its diverse residents and workforce; a global leader addressing systemic inequalities across the life-course, demonstrating and nurturing the power of collective, creative action for social change.”

THE MANCHESTER DECLARATION

We have seen the strength, power and traction of social movements, and this narrative positions collective care and empathy at the heart of dynamic, evolving and healthier communities. Culture, heritage and the arts can be key drivers in addressing pressing health and social care issues, in a city-region uniquely placed to go sustainably beyond Social Prescribing.

Through shared values and collective endeavour, there is a real possibility to contribute to public sector reform, where communities are at the heart of change, central to both vision and implementation. Our contemporary attention should rightly focus on the factors that influence everyone's health, where culture and creativity enable communities and citizens to consider themselves participants in a common venture.

In discussion of the creation of a system for change in Greater Manchester, The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission aspires to achieve a vision of 'good lives for all' and A Social Glue suggests that creativity and culture is a critical part of this vision.¹⁷

A Social Glue suggests that the conditions are right to pull these strands of possibility together, where one size, doesn't fit all and where work that is hyper-local is nurtured with communities as well as being part of a city-wide vision. At the very heart of this narrative, we place participatory and socially engaged artists and practitioners. We place equally high value on the people at the centre of our communities and those citizens, activists and emerging change agents who will drive the reimagining of our city-region into reality.

We will achieve all this through sophisticated collaborations, learning from our pasts to inform all our futures. The Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and Greater Manchester Combined Authority alongside local authorities; arts and heritage organisations; education; the voluntary sector; community groups and funders are some of the critical components of this social glue. What we need to do here and now, is realise the value and skills of the health and arts communities and set in place some key actions to begin this cultural shift. What is necessary, is that we drive this work forward systemically.

“By 2024 Greater Manchester will be the UK city-region where heritage, culture and the arts play a key part in the health and wellbeing of its diverse residents and workforce; a global leader addressing systemic inequalities across the life-course, demonstrating and nurturing the power of collective, creative action for social change.”¹⁸

¹⁷The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission. “The Next Level: Good Lives for All in Greater Manchester” 2021. https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/4337/gmca_independent-inequalities-commission_v15.pdf

¹⁸Parkinson C. The Manchester Declaration, 2019. (updated for A Social Glue) <https://www.miahsc.com/manchester-declaration>

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve this vision, *A Social Glue* offers a set of recommendations:

ONE

Greater Manchester should identify appropriate leadership to take this agenda forward, leading from within the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership in a connective role with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and alongside local authorities; cultural, arts and heritage organisations; education; the voluntary sector; community groups and funders. This is a collective endeavour, where locating leadership within the health sector has the potential to unlock possibilities, resources and opportunities not currently accessible from within local government or the cultural or voluntary sectors.

TWO

Greater Manchester should work to embed creative approaches spanning all areas of devolved health policy and strategic health plans. We should build the identity of Greater Manchester as the first Creative Health city-region in the UK - going beyond the recommendations set out in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing's report, Creative Health (2017).

THREE

Greater Manchester should focus on the intersections between people, place, culture, heritage and their creativity. Hyper-local and neighbourhood models building on local assets, co-production and imaginatively evidenced work that is owned by communities, will enable innovative cross-sector partnerships and support cultural and municipal venues and organisations to reimagine their civic and social offer.

FOUR

Greater Manchester should redefine the potency of the arts and creativity and health from a medical to a social model, focusing on assets and potential, not deficit and ill health. The arts and culture are rarely a cure for illness, but they can prevent the onset of ill health and contribute to us living healthier, happier and fuller lives. Our plans should recognise the unique potential of culture and creativity to help us live well, positioning the arts at the heart of all future developments in the inequalities agenda.

FIVE

Greater Manchester should be marketed as a legitimate UK centre of culture, health and social change including rethinking the role of the high street and communities as destinations for wellbeing-enhancing experiences.

SIX

Greater Manchester should nurture, support and value its artists and creative practitioners, recognising the work that this diverse community bring to a health and social care agenda. Serious consideration should be given to the training needs of those working in this field and the possibilities of mentorship programmes for emerging artists as well as professional development.

SEVEN

Greater Manchester should move beyond Social Prescribing, linking green and blue spaces, heritage and the arts to the potential to live well. We should not be afraid to move our focus to where there are high levels of various deprivations and where communities fall outside the system for reasons of culture, ethnicity or religion. Key themes should include mental health and addressing a lack of evidence, particularly around children and young people in the context of Social Prescribing.

EIGHT

Greater Manchester should develop a collective culture, health and social change research hub that is outward-looking, proactive and systemically connected to, and collaborating with, its citizens, practitioners, artists and activists, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. This will build on our assets, offer opportunities to develop test and learn sites, inform evidence-based practice, enable a more robust understanding, develop methods to support co-design, and build on a heritage of socially engaged creative practice and co-produced healthcare.

Greater Manchester is uniquely placed to combine its strengths in advancing the

“Greater Manchester is uniquely placed to combine its strengths in advancing the Creative Health and the Marmot agendas. From way back, the area that is now Greater Manchester has pioneered best practice in arts and health initiatives. More recently Greater Manchester has seized the opportunity to pioneer the integration of health and social care services and work proactively to mitigate the damage to health caused by social and economic disadvantage. Combining those two traditions, as *A Social Glue* proposes, will enable the people of Greater Manchester to enjoy longer lives better lived in a more healthy and health-creating environment.”

RT HON. LORD HOWARTH OF NEWPORT
CO-CHAIR, ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON ARTS,
HEALTH AND WELLBEING

HERE & NOW

Greater Manchester retains its vision and tenacity to do things differently and perhaps now, this mantra is more relevant than it has ever been.

The structures and people are almost in place to support this work systemically, and as we have seen on the ground, individuals, groups and organisations have the appetite to conjoin this Creative Health agenda, where evidence of the reach and impact of cultural participation on health and wellbeing, is rich and is growing.

A combination of an increased public understanding of health and creativity, and a national drive to embed culture and creativity in a public health agenda, means the time has never been better to champion and deliver this agenda. The opportunities for reimagining the ways health and wellbeing are nurtured, through cultural investment in all our communities, is *here and now*.

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