



# How the arts are supporting the Welsh health and social care response to COVID-19





## Foreword

Access to arts and health initiatives can have a profound and positive impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of people in Wales. Over recent years, Wales has led the way in developing arts and health initiatives which enhance the lives of the most vulnerable in our society, keeping people healthy and close to their communities for longer.

The outbreak of COVID-19 could have undone the progress we have made, but the NHS and artists have come together across Wales to make sure we do not lose this momentum. COVID-19 has meant we have all had to make sacrifices, reducing important social interactions, and significantly altering our daily lives. This sudden change can be scary, even for those of us who are in relatively comfortable positions, so we must continue to do all we can to help those in the most need.

It is certainly a time for us to get creative and by using new technologies, we can use the arts to maintain health and help people through one of the biggest challenges Wales has faced for generations. Where members of the community are unable to use or access these new technologies, artists and healthcare staff have risen to the challenge by offering a range of bedside activities and activities for those self-isolating using more traditional approaches.

It would have been easy to look at COVID-19 as a barrier to providing services. Instead, arts and health initiatives have risen to the challenge. Across Wales, we have potentially opened these fantastic initiatives up to a great many more people who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to realise the benefits the arts can make to their health.

I am delighted to read so many heart-warming examples of how people in Wales have been able to maintain their links with community-based arts initiatives, despite restrictions on our movement. This work, taking place right across our country, will be vital in mitigating some of the indirect consequences we may see once the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

We need to come through this crisis with as few scars as possible, and this means maintaining our wellbeing as best we can, as we try to keep non-COVID related health issues to a minimum.



The message to those who are in most need is clear, if you feel you need to access health and care, please come forward so the NHS can help you through these uncertain times.

**Jayne Bryant, MS, Chair of the Senedd's Cross-Party Group on Arts and Health.**

## Voices singing united and staying connected through music

*Singing has been shown to have many health and wellbeing benefits. For example it [improves](#) breathing, circulation, muscle tension, pain tolerance and posture, especially for those who are injured, elderly or disabled. Studies have also shown that singing releases proteins responsible for supporting the [immune system](#) by reducing the stress hormone cortisol and boosting the Immunoglobulin A antibody, and acts as a natural antidepressant by releasing [endorphins](#) (so called 'feel-good chemicals'). Singing has also been well documented to improve overall [wellbeing](#) and is a fast and effective way to [form social bonds](#), and this is especially useful during current times of social distancing. The following case studies highlight some of the excellent initiatives happening across Wales to join the voices of the nation.*

### Only Men Aloud



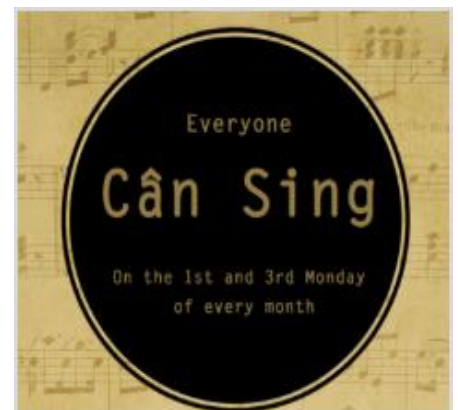
Delighting audiences around the world for over fifteen years, award winning Welsh professional choir [Only Men Aloud](#) have paid tribute to support the NHS during these trying times. The group, who sang at the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony and the Ashes in 2015, posted a video on their [Facebook page](#) covering 'Count On Me' by Bruno Mars, while showing NHS frontline staff providing round the clock services. The video has been shared

tens of thousands of times and has brought a sense of community cohesion and support while the country remains in lockdown.

### Span Arts

Organisations across Wales have been shifting their services in a way to support people coming together in a safe and virtual way that still enables the many health and wellbeing benefits singing provides.

[Span Arts](#) is a community arts charity based in Narberth, Pembrokeshire. They have been delivering a high quality and diverse range of music, theatre, comedy and voice events for over 30 years, alongside a wide range of arts and wellbeing projects to an area where people otherwise do not have access to the arts. In light of COVID-19, they have moved all programmes online and are developing a series of unique projects to keep people singing throughout these trying times. Their work can be seen [here](#) and includes links to online singing groups, singing clinics and an beatboxing workshop.

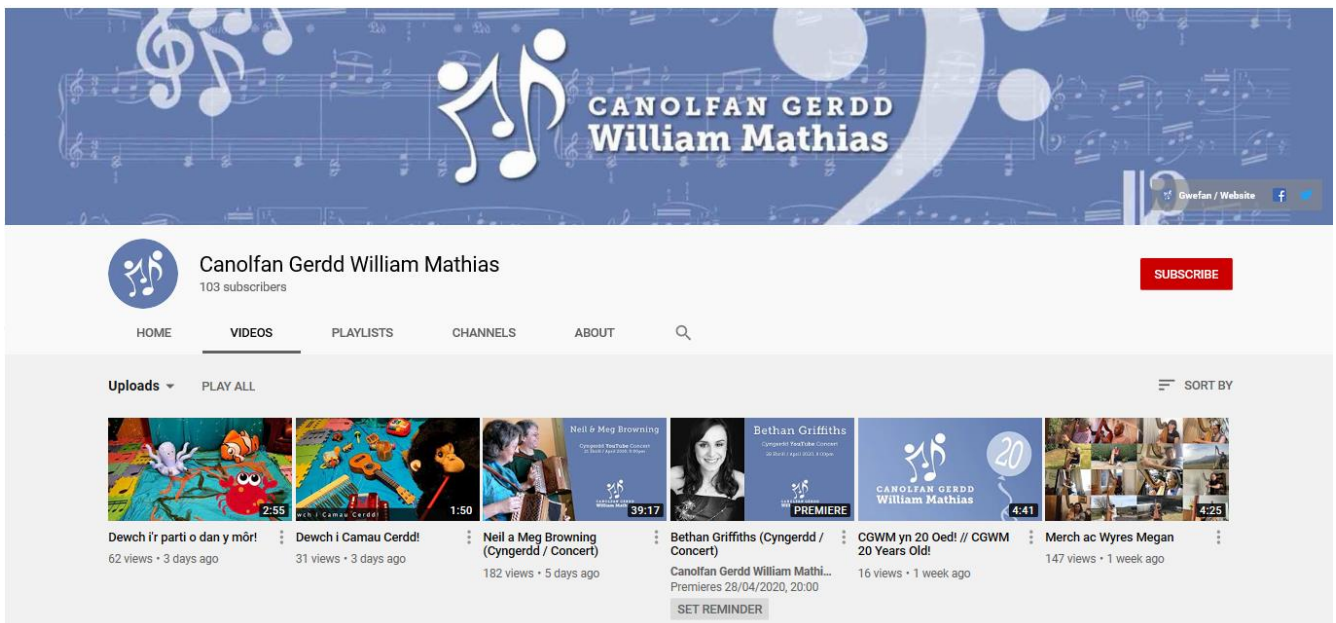


## Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias

Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias ([CGWM](#)) provides music training and performance experiences of national and international note for the people of Wales, fostering both the enjoyment of and participation in music-making.

Over the years, CGWM's activities have developed and grown and currently a team of 44 freelance tutors offer individual and group tuition to over 400 people (aged from 6months to 80+ years of age) weekly at its Centres in Caernarfon, Denbigh and Ruthin in North Wales.

Responding to a fast-changing COVID-19 situation, CGWM has shifted much of their work online, still offering tuition on a variety of instruments and voice and giving students an opportunity to take part in various events. They are currently streaming activities on their [YouTube](#) channel that includes live concerts and have plans to hold online events to raise everyone's spirits. Music is more important than ever at a time like this.



## Keeping the visual arts connected virtually and for those that are isolated

Many [studies](#) have demonstrated the mental and physical health benefits of participation in the visual arts for rehabilitation and general wellbeing. Evidence suggests that engagement with artistic activities, either as an observer or as a participant, can enhance one's moods, emotions, and other psychological states as well as have a noticeable impact on important physiological parameters. Engagement with creative activities has the potential to contribute toward reducing stress, depression and can serve as a vehicle for alleviating the burden of chronic diseases. How art impacts both our physical and emotional health continues to be an area which attracts a large amount of evaluation. Here we have showcased some of the creative and unique ways people across communities are participating in the visual arts.

### I'm Thinking of you Cymru

Initiated by the Arts in Health Officer at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and supported by Arts Council of Wales, [I'm thinking of you Cymru](#) is a virtual postcard project inviting people to connect with themselves and others during these extraordinary times. Until mid-July 2020, the project will support young people, the wider Gwent communities and key workers by commissioning a different artist each day to create a bespoke postcard with different artforms around the 5 ways of wellbeing (connect, give, take notice, keep learning and be active) to respond to the world as it is today in partnership with the community. They offer ideas of how people can stay connected, encouraged and comforted over this time when we are being asked to stay at home. The project will encourage specific interactions on different days e.g. teachers to pupils, amongst young people and of course from everyone to the NHS.





## NHS Thank You

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has worked closely with artist [Nathan Wyburn](#) and commissioned his most recent piece ‘NHS Thank You’ to be printed onto large scale banners and posters across Health Board sites.

‘NHS Thank You’ is made up of over 200 selfies of NHS Staff workers who sent in their photographs to Nathan after his call out on social media. With these selfies, Nathan then created this digital portrait collage of a staff member wearing a mask with the words, Thank You, underneath.



These large-scale artworks can be seen by hospital staff members when they enter the hospital sites at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and act as a message of thanks and appreciation to our hard-working NHS heroes.

This artwork has received [national](#) coverage over social media and the news and has featured on the introductory video for This Morning.

## Online Art

The visual arts community has responded to the need for more creative outlets since many events and activities being postponed due to lockdown restrictions. There are now plenty of virtual ways to participate through online activities, as well as entertainment and support networks that people can engage with from the comfort and safety of their homes.

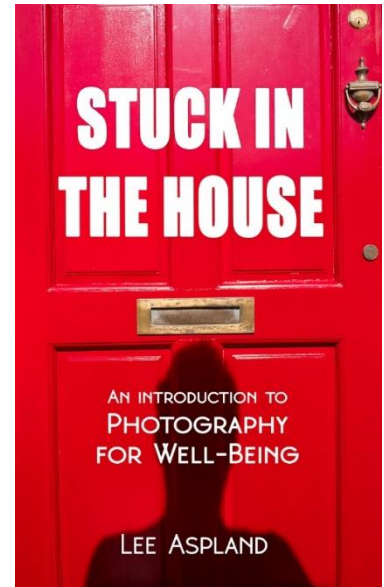
For example, [Head4Arts](#) provides participatory arts activities, creative learning programmes and memorable experiences that help people of all ages and abilities in the South East Wales Valleys to thrive individually and collectively. They believe that utilising the arts is the most effective way of making a difference to the quality of people’s lives by promoting wellbeing, unlocking potential and building resilient communities in a co-produced way. The programme includes four aspects:

- **Head4 Happiness** –weekly activities via Zoom, including the of Celtic Café groups (traditional folk music for all ages) and a singalong session with Ali Shone, open to existing and new participants.
- **Head4 Learning** – creative activities to support home education programmes.
- **Head4 Opportunities** – a series of social media “artist takeovers” designed to showcase and celebrate the work of freelance participatory arts practitioners (to be launched shortly).
- **Head4 Health** – working with voluntary community organisations to offer creative experiences remotely for individuals who are most at need, such as those who do not have access to the internet. This includes offering “craft packs” that can be included in doorstep drop-offs and communicating with older people by post and telephone to continue work on a heritage project in Blaenavon.

## Stuck in the House – Photography e-book

Artist in Residence with Swansea Bay University Health Board, Lee Aspland, has created a free Photography for Well-Being eBook for these lockdown times. [Stuck in the House](#) contains four photography activities; two of the activities are for when you are *Stuck in the House* and in need of inspiration and two for a short exercise period, out of the house, necessary to maintain your balance in challenging times. It is suitable for all abilities, smartphones, and digital cameras.

Once activities are completed, there is the option to join a Facebook group to post photos and comments to enable the community to share and comment on each other's photos.



## Traditional Nurses Cap – Free Paper Template

In a time where so many people are now working from home and juggling caring for their children, craft and keeping creative is a brilliant way to learn, keep motivated and stay positive.

The Arts for Health and Wellbeing team at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board have created a simple craft project for anyone to do at home by [downloading a free template](#) to cut out (or use as a stencil on a material of their choice) and follow simple instructions whilst using materials which are likely to be found at home.

As 2020 is the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, and the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Florence Nightingale, the Nurses Cap is an ideal symbol to have as a creative project at this moment in time. All those who participate in this project are encouraged to add messages of thanks to the NHS staff on their caps and to make them colourful and positive.

When the Hearth Gallery at University Hospital Llandough reopens, their very first exhibition will be a 'With Thanks' exhibition, where the team will display many of the caps created by the community and also showcase artwork from those who have responded creatively in thanking the NHS and its staff.



## Visual Arts in the field hospitals

Swansea Bay University Health Board's Capital Arts team have been extensively involved in commissioning and installing artwork in two new field hospitals in the Swansea Bay area. Artwork which depicts Welsh plants alongside supportive, positive words in English and Welsh have been installed around the outside of temporary mortuary areas and inside the hospitals.

Poetry panels have been installed in the corridor leading to the mortuary to support staff as they walk through the space.

Staff wellbeing rooms have been created in each field hospital and a specially commissioned film of local nature with outdoor sounds has been installed. The film is on a loop running 24/7 for all staff shifts. It lasts for 150mins and creates a calming peaceful atmosphere. Other nature films have been installed in the wellbeing rooms at other hospitals across the Health Board.



## Council arranges new addition to foodbank supplies

Family activity packs are being collated by Swansea Council's Cultural Services team, including drawing and colouring materials supplied by local businesses, as part of their community food banks.

The [Enjoy Swansea Bay Activity Pack's](#) crayons, colouring pencils, felt-tip pens and other stationery were donated by Amazon UK's Swansea depot, the city's WH Smith Quadrant store, SET Office Supplies, Home Bargains and The Admiral Group.

Also included is a Swansea cultural venues activity pack, including contributions from the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Fusion Swansea, Dylan Thomas Centre and Swansea Museum, including quizzes, crosswords, art activities as well as sunflower and vegetable seeds donated by the GRAFT garden project at Swansea's National Waterfront Museum.

In addition to the colouring packs, Enjoy Swansea Bay's [#AtHome](#) web page resources provide a great source for activities to do whilst at home.



## Remote Community Arts Programme

When COVID-19 hit in March, [Denbighshire Leisure Ltd \(DLL\)](#) Community Arts were committed to keep supporting their service users and to employing their pool of freelance creative practitioners.

For the last 6 weeks, the Community Arts team have been developing a new remote programme of work. They work with a host of partners from other local authority services such as Social Services, Housing and Education to third sector and voluntary organisations such as the Stroke Association, St.Kentigern's Hospice, MIND and Capel y Waun Day Care Centre.

Many of the groups they work with are vulnerable and a new way of working was needed for far beyond any initial lock down. They are still in the process of redesigning their programme and are in discussions with partners about the best way forward to engage with service users and communities through alternative delivery methods. Some of the programmes they have already established include:

- ***Lost in Art – a project for people living with dementia in the community.*** Those living in the community with dementia will now receive a materials pack delivered to their doorstep and a weekly tutorial film will be emailed to them. There will also be two phone calls a week – one land line and one 'face time' What's App call to support the members in their creative practice. A What's App group has also been set up so peer support can continue, and a sharing of work will take place with participants posting images of their work on an online gallery. The Lost in Art team are in touch with social services should they need to signpost members to additional support.
- ***Care Homes.*** In the short term, they are emailing creative activity sheets to the care homes so staff can support residents with creative activities. In the long term, they hope to be able to support the homes in accessing better WIFI and equipment such as iPads. They will then be able to support staff training and enable the care homes to engage in online creative engagement including accessing virtual concerts and workshops. They will also re-establish intergenerational activities and develop a project where schools will continue to be able to interact with residents even though they cannot be in the same room, using remote visual arts, music, and dance.
- ***Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.*** Denbighshire's Community Arts Team continues its close relationship with the Creative Well department at BCUHB and is currently supporting Andrea Davies, Arts in Health and Wellbeing Coordinator for the Health Board, as she leads on a project to [install artwork in the new 3 field hospitals in North Wales](#). They received applications from over 200 artists who wanted to donate their work for the pop up Enfys hospital sites at Bangor, Llandudno and Queensferry. The work is now being installed before the sites open for patients in the coming weeks.

## Laughing and relaxing through theatre and drama

*There are many mental health benefits for both participating in and simply watching a theatre performance. According to a study commissioned by [major theatre organisations](#), while watching a performance on stage the audience's focus puts them into a state of 'flow'; this sense of total concentration and engagement leads to positive feelings such as happiness and fulfilment. By watching how the characters develop on stage, this 'emotional workout' and sense of sharing an experience with others is a great way to increase overall mindfulness. Positive benefits of the theatre are also extended to our physical health. [Research](#) has shown that watching a live show increases your heart to an optimum range to stimulate cardio fitness and stamina. [Laughter](#) has also been shown to relax blood vessels (which increases blood flow and reduces blood pressure), lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and improves memory recall. The following examples highlight some of the ways the theatre and drama can keep us connected despite social distancing and self-isolation measures.*

### National Theatre Wales

National Theatre Wales (NTW) has launched [Network](#) - a new digital programme of opportunities for theatre makers, delivered in partnership with two of Wales's leading theatre organisations, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and Sherman Theatre - developed in response to impact of COVID-19 lockdown.

The Programme, with commissioning and digital partners BBC Cymru Wales and BBC Arts, is designed to create vital job opportunities for the performance industry while connecting and engaging with audiences and communities online during this period of social isolation by sharing moments, reimaging live theatre and nurturing the performing arts in Wales. The Network programme features two key projects:

- **New Digital Commissions:** this will be done in partnership with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru to invite theatre artists of Wales in an open call to come up with innovative, exciting and human responses during the ongoing lockdown.
- **Play Readings:** NTW and Sherman Theatre will work together with a range of independent companies and artists to produce play readings, showcasing the talent of playwrights, companies and creatives across Wales. The partnership will enable Welsh directors, actors, and designers to be fully supported and funded to deliver the reading, while providing a platform to share homegrown work, alongside contemporary classic titles that may not yet have been performed here in Wales.

### Theatr Fran Wen – Nyth

As part of the development of their new home in Bangor, [Theatr Fran Wen](#) Nyth workshops are continuing with a community of people over 65 years young in the local area.

Because of the COVID-19 situation, workshops are currently happening over the phone and the community are developing a piece of new writing that looks to the past to make sense of, and celebrate, the present.

## Hijinx Presents First Online Festival

Cardiff based theatre company, Hijinx, has launched its first free, online theatre and film festival, [Hijinx Online/ Ar-lein](#) running from 24 April – 22 May. The company, which makes theatre productions with learning disabled and/or autistic actors, invites people who are self-isolating to a screening of a world premiere, streamed theatre shows, workshops, Q&As with artists, and an end of festival party.

To connect with audiences during lockdown, Hijinx will be sharing archive shows and brand-new material, including the world premiere screening of *The Matthew Purnell Show*. Hijinx's first in-house short film is a fast-paced comedy set in the near future where learning disabled and/or autistic people have taken over the world of film & TV. At the forefront is *The Matthew Purnell Show*, the world's biggest chat show, which is about to give its 100th episode. As part of this online exclusive, audiences will have the opportunity to join the creative producers of the film in an online Q&A after the screening.



Other initiatives in this festival include releasing a theatre show every Monday; Wednesday Workshops; live Q&As with the artists/ production team of the shows on Thursdays; streaming a surreal and energetic five-part comedy series *Flatmates* on Fridays; and concluding with an *End of Festival Party*.

## Volcano Theatre launches Encounters Unknown

Swansea-based [VOLCANO THEATRE](#) has launched a programme called ENCOUNTERS UNKNOWN, new and continuing, for the duration of the lockdown.

The flagship project is [NOTES FROM THE INTERIOR](#), a series of performance tasks to which anyone is invited to respond. Each week the company releases a new public task based on a text, an image, or some other stimulus. NOTES FROM THE INTERIOR is partly the company's lockdown answer to what would be a period working in the studio with actors on a new piece of work. In lockdown, the process is both much more private (created alone in the participants' own homes or localities) and much more public (in that each response or idea is shared as we go along, and everyone is invited to join in).



The actors working on the project get advance notice of the task and each of them films a creative response to it. The company then publishes their videos as examples to inspire or intrigue and opens the floor to the public. People can have a go at the task privately, just to challenge or entertain themselves, or they can send their responses to the company, who will share them on social media.



## Dancing Queen – the role of dance in health

*Dance is both an artform and a widely accessible and enjoyable form of exercise which, over the years, has been well documented to show benefits for our physical and mental health. It is a way to ensure [regular movement](#) throughout the life cycle and is a way to directly express ideas as well as our emotions through movement. Dance is a way to make physical activity ‘fun’ which leads to a higher level of sustained physical activity. More than a creative art form, dance can also be viewed as an intrinsic, mind-body restorative experience. The physical benefits of dance range from increased flexibility, increased muscle strength and tone, whilst neurological benefits include improved balance, coordination and cognition, and overall wellbeing. Dance has been especially shown to improve the physical fitness and wellbeing of the [elderly](#) by combining musical and movement skills engaging the mind and body. There is also a positive correlation between [dance and mental health](#) such as improved mood and happiness, reduced stress and anxiety, and even reduce depression by releasing mood-enhancing chemicals.*

### Impelo

Under normal circumstances Impelo, a community dance company, based in Powys, deliver a regular programme of weekly dance classes for all ages. In response to COVID-19, and no longer being able to provide these classes in real life, they recently launched an online programme of classes, [Impelo @ Home](#).

Care homes and day care centres who bring adults with disabilities to these classes have expressed problems they have accessing activities online, so DVDs are being produced to address this. This programme was launched directly from community feedback saying they really wanted to dance with the practitioners, doing similar classes to the ones they attend in real life (this is particularly true of the participants of our Senior Moment(um) sessions for older adults).

They have also discussed the programme with the people at Hwb, as they know from the Challenge Advisors in Powys that schools are keen to have dance content they can use in the hubs for the children of key workers, and to share with learners at home, particularly through the medium of Welsh.

Their YouTube channel can be accessed [here](#). Each week in lockdown, they have put out a [Tuesday Challenge](#) on social media, as a way to build their online community.



## **Jukebox Collective - Staying in but staying connected**

In response to the COVID-19 lockdown and the closure of physical dance classes, [Jukebox Collective](#), based in Cardiff, want to continue creating a space to connect during these unsettling times. They have announced some exciting updates and projects to ensure students and the public can stay active, healthy and creative at home.

Children and young people are especially vulnerable at this time, when they are socially isolated instead of being in school at key stages or taking exams.



Online street dance classes are being hosted on Instagram Live (Mondays and Wednesdays at 6pm) covering wide styles of dance, and via Zoom (Tuesdays at 4pm for children and Thursdays at 7pm for experienced dancers).

## **National Dance Company Wales - KiN: Connected – new online initiative to connect artists and audiences through dance**

[National Dance Company Wales](#) (NDCWales) launched its new online programme, KiN: Connected, across its website and social media channels as part of the Company's desire to create a community for dance online with audiences, participants and the sector.

At this critical time, how stories are told through dance is fundamentally important. KiN: Connected is an online programme including some of the most popular, and previously unshown works, as well as running dance classes for adults and children, and a new commissioning opportunity to support the sector and freelance artists at this time of creative need.

KiN: Connected consists of 4 basic strands: Watch Together; Dance Together; Create Together; and Learn Together, with content in each strand for Adults, Children and Professional or training dancers.

NDCWales is also working in partnership with BBC Culture in Quarantine and BBC Cymru Wales to help reach those self-isolating over the next few weeks. The first event was broadcasted on BBC iplayer and NDCWales' daily classes will be shared across Wales and the UK. For example, one week, a ballet class was taught to the company dancers in isolation, and viewers could join in from home. In the next few weeks, the Company will also be launching its new initiative, Progression Routes Wales, which will be a new commission for freelancers.

## NoFit State Circus

NoFit State is the UK's leading large-scale contemporary circus company, producing professional touring productions and a wide variety of community, training, and education projects for people of all ages. Over the last ten years, NoFit State's touring productions have visited 19 different countries, played to audiences of over 460,000, as well as receiving critical acclaim and winning numerous prestigious international arts awards.



Not even the current circumstances of COVID-19 can stop this company from making an impact across communities. NoFit State virtual classes are now available, to keep spirits up and bodies moving during lockdown. The team of teachers has come together to deliver online classes – completely free. Classes range from Circus HIT, to active flexibility and even juggling! Their programme, which is updated weekly can be viewed [online](#).



## The written word

Like other art forms, [the written word](#) is known to generate many physical and mental health benefits. There is evidence to suggest this type of art is linked to relieving depression, improving memory, decreasing pain, creating a sense of community, and reducing the sense of isolation and sadness in chronic conditions. Writing poems, short stories, [journals](#) or even letters (sent or not) have been shown to help articulate problems and concerns, track and keep in touch with how you are feeling over time, aid as a coping or healing mechanism and lead to long term benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)).

### My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19

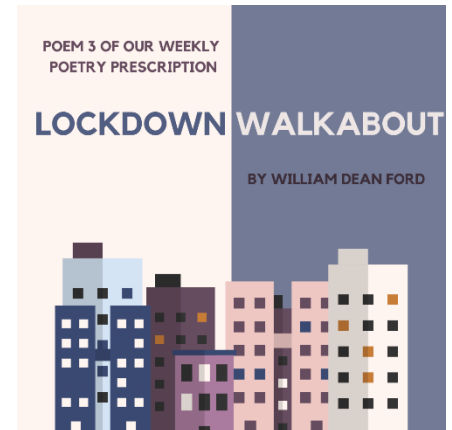
A story book has been released to [help children and young people](#) aged 6-11 years old in Wales coping with the impacts of COVID-19. It has been produced by a collaboration of more than 50 organisations. This includes organisations such as the World Health Organisation and Save the Children. “My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!” explains how children can protect themselves, their families and friends from COVID-19 and how to manage difficult emotions when confronted with a new and rapidly changing reality. This book is a project by [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#), a unique collaboration of United Nations agencies, national and international nongovernmental organisations and international agencies providing mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings. To create the story more than 1700 community members made up of parents, children, teachers and caregivers internationally shared how they are coping with the impacts of the pandemic. The story is set to be translated into over 30 languages.



## William Dean Ford

William Dean Ford is a poet and spoken word performer and through collaboration with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, he is providing a [weekly 'Poetry Prescription'](#) for the Health Board and community, in response to the uncertainties we are all facing due to COVID-19.

William's poems are real, relatable, and uplifting. Since starting them in mid-March 2020, they have become a great weekly addition to the programme and have received many comments and praise from the community over social media platforms and website.



## Wrexham carer and the COVID-19 poem

According to care practitioner, Michelle Williams, who works at Pendine Park's Hillbury Care Home in Wrexham, she put her feelings into verse because she was struggling to cope. She feared how the virus would impact the residents she looks after and wanted to celebrate the team she works with which includes one of her three daughters. Entitled '[COVID-19, the Carers' Poem](#)', this piece highlights her team's determination to "*keep the virus at bay*" through social distancing, hand washing and wearing masks. The poem can be read below:

The alarm goes off I raise my head  
Thinking of the day ahead  
How things have changed in many ways  
Bringing sleepless nights and worrying days

But my role as a carer remains the same  
Keeping my residents safe is my main aim  
Lockdown is on, family they miss  
I reassure them... I can do this!

Social distancing and masks I wear  
Regular hand washing this shows I care  
I strive to keep this virus away  
With my amazing team, we can keep it at bay

Regular bulletins from our boss  
Without these we would be at a loss  
Important guidance on what we should do  
And a little humour thrown in there too

COVID-19 you plan to be mean  
But the staff at Pendine... we're a great team  
You're taking lives more and more  
But I'll do my best! You won't get through our door!!!

## Supporting those who support us

During these strange times, communities at large are relying on those in the frontline and key workers to provide the essential services needed to follow social distancing and self-isolation advice. Health and social care workers, teachers, retail workers and so many more keyworkers are working tirelessly to ensure we can stay safe. The art community too has demonstrated real value to communities, providing entertainment, movement, and safe social contacts to those that need it the most. The initiatives highlighted within this briefing are just some examples of how artists are expressing how much they are thankful for all those people who we rely on.

### Support for artists

Other organisations have set up funds to support local artists and organisations. For example, the Arts Council of Wales launched their [Resilience Fund](#) aimed at supporting organisations and freelance practitioners who are struggling in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Together with the Welsh Government they have reallocated money from existing budgets to create an urgent response fund of £7.0 million. Their absolute priority is helping artists and cultural organisations to survive this crisis and to find ways of getting back on their feet. Deadlines for applications can be viewed on their website throughout April and May.

### Support for schools

In addition, the Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government have recently announced that they are to extend [Creative learning through the arts – an action plan for Wales](#) for a further two years. As schools work diligently to adapt to new ways of interacting with their learners in response to COVID-19, Arts Council of Wales continues to explore how they can support schools in realising the continuation of learning and put the arts and creativity at the heart of education. Their aim is to provide creative, engaging and arts-focused online learning tools to support teachers and pupils in both school and home settings.

Their work will include the commissioning of artists from a range of arts disciplines to deliver online masterclasses and workshops and to continue to lead creative learning experiences. Teams will also be delivering online creative learning workshops and seminars and we will continue to see the arts sector support schools as they develop creative approaches to teaching and learning.

The re-imagined Lead Creative Schools Scheme will support schools and teachers to develop creative approaches to learning. The new offer will provide opportunities for teachers and pupils to explore creative skills and approaches to all areas of learning by drawing on the skills and knowledge of existing Creative Professionals. In addition to this, there will be online professional learning sessions to support teachers to plan for the immediate future and Curriculum for Wales 2022.



### How can the Welsh NHS Confederation help you?

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body which represents all the organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards, the three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW).

In September 2017 the Welsh NHS Confederation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Arts Council of Wales. The aim of the MOU, through briefings like this one, is to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to health and wellbeing.

You can visit our website at [www.welshconfed.org](http://www.welshconfed.org) or follow us on Twitter  [@WelshConfed](https://twitter.com/WelshConfed)

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