**PRESS RELEASE: Arts and health initiatives more important than ever during Coronavirus pandemic**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 MONDAY 18th MAY**

The Welsh NHS Confederation and the Arts Council of Wales are highlighting the health benefits creativity can have on the wellbeing of the population during the Coronavirus pandemic.\*

As Mental Health Awareness Week and Creative Wellbeing Week begin today, it is more important than ever we all take steps to look after ourselves and the most vulnerable in our communities.

According to the 2016-17 National Survey for Wales, 440,000 people in Wales reported feeling lonely or isolated. This number is now likely to be much higher during the lockdown period.\*\*

The effects of loneliness and isolation can be as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and puts people at a 50% increased risk of an early death compared to those with good social connections.\*\*

Artists and the NHS, including Local Health Boards, across Wales are working to continue to deliver services which benefit people in Wales using innovative new technologies and enhance people’s experience during this unprecedented time.

**Jayne Bryant, Member of the Senedd (Newport West), and Chair of the Senedd’s Cross Party Group on Arts and Health said:**

"It is only right and necessary that restrictions have had to be put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. However it does not come without its challenges.  We are estranged from our extended family and friends, out of our normal routines, and not able to be part of events or activities within our communities. We are still adjusting to the changes we are all faced with on a daily basis - not to mention the courage shown by our NHS, and our essential workers throughout all of this.

 “As Chair of the Cross Party Group on Arts & Health I often hear the benefits resulting from arts projects and services across Wales and directly in my own constituency of Newport West. Two of the repeated outcomes of these efforts are often effective in reducing isolation and loneliness and increasing the quality of life for a number of people.

“In these challenging times many of us have turned to the arts for support. Whether it's a painted rainbow in your window, or a virtual singalong you joined - the arts community has adapted to the current challenges we face, and the evidence shows arts and health to be as intertwined and important as ever."

**Commenting today, Arts Council of Wales Chair, Phil George, said:**

“The impact of arts experiences on physical and mental health is now widely understood across the world. Wales is at the cutting edge of UK developments in delivering Arts for Health opportunities across the varied communities of the nation – through the extraordinary practice of our artists and through the joint funding of Arts for Health coordinators by our Health Boards and the Arts Council of Wales.

“But now this reservoir of talent, expertise and cooperation is being called on with a new sense of urgency in this time of pandemic. The responses of artists and arts organisations, working closely with health professionals, have been innovative and inspiring – and they are driven by a profound concern for equality of opportunity and inclusion. They show yet again the central importance of the arts for our health and wellbeing in Wales”.

**Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Assistant Director of the Welsh NHS Confederation said:**

“While the NHS in Wales is focussed on dealing with the impacts of Coronavirus on our physical health, we are also working tirelessly to deliver vital services which can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

“Arts and health initiatives are being delivered in innovative new ways to comply with social distancing rules, while helping to maintain our wellbeing throughout what is a difficult time for us all, but especially for people who are vulnerable.

“The response from the NHS and the arts community has been phenomenal as we work on finding new ways to keep our support services running by utilising new technology, but also being aware of those who do not have access to digital technology. The evidence shows arts and health initiatives having a profoundly positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our population, and keeping those projects going at a difficult time will be crucial in mitigating the indirect impacts of Coronavirus and the lockdown.”

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**Notes to editors**

* **The Welsh NHS Confederation** is the national membership body representing the 11 organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards, the three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales.
* **Arts Council of Wales** is the official public body charged with funding and supporting the arts in Wales. At present it is assisting artists and arts organisations in need - as a result of the current pandemic related restrictions - through its £7.5m [Arts Resilience Fund](https://arts.wales/funding/coronavirus), with £1m from Welsh Government, £5m funding from National Lottery derived sources, contributions from Tŷ Cerdd and Literature Wales and a £0.5m contribution from the Freelands Foundation.

**References**

**\***How the arts are supporting the Welsh health and social care response to COVID-19: <https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2020/05/how-the-arts-are-supporting-the-welsh-health-and-social-care-response-to-covid-19>

**\*\*** Briefing for the Cross-Party Group on Arts and Health**:** <https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2019/03/cross-party-group-on-arts-and-health-briefing>

**DATGANIAD I’R WASG: Cynlluniau celfyddydau ac iechyd yn bwysicach nag erioed yn ystod yr argyfwng Coronafeirws.**

**DAN EMBARGO TAN 00:01 DYDD LLUN 18 MAI**

Mae Conffederasiwn GIG Cymru a Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru yn pwysleisio’r effaith gadarnhaol mae creadigrwydd yn ei gael ar iechyd pobl Cymru yn ystod argyfwng Coronafeirws\*.

Ar drothwy Wythnos Ymwybyddiaeth Iechyd Meddwl ac Wythnos Creadigrwydd a Llesiant, mae’n bwysicach nag erioed i bawb edrych ar ôl eu hunain yn ogystal â’r rhai mwyaf bregus yn ein cymunedau.

Dangosodd Arolwg Cenedlaethol yn 2016-17 fod 440,000 o bobl yn teimlo’n unig neu wedi’u hynysu. Mae’n fwy na thebyg fod y rhif hwn yn llawer uwch oherwydd y cyfnod hwn o orfod aros yn y cartref.\*\*

Mae bod yn unig ac wedi eich ynysu yr un mor niweidiol i’ch iechyd ag ysmygu 15 sigarét y dydd ac mae’r risg o farw’n gynnar 50% yn uwch o’i gymharu â’r rheini sydd â chysylltiadau cymdeithasol da.

Mae artistiaid, y GIG a’r byrddau iechyd yn parhau i weithio’n galed i gynnig gwasanaethau o fudd drwy ddefnyddio technoleg i gynnig profiadau newydd i bobl yn ystod yr amser anarferol hwn.

**Dywedodd Jayne Bryant, Aelod o’r Senedd (Gorllewin Casnewydd) a Chadeirydd Grŵp Trawsbleidiol sy’n gyfrifol am Gelf ac Iechyd:**

“Mae e’n iawn fod cyfyngiadau mewn lle i geisio atal lledaeniad COVID-19. Fodd bynnag, mae’n cynnig sawl her. Rydym ni ar wahân i’n teuluoedd a’n cyfeillion, mae’r patrymau beunyddiol a’r ffordd rydym ni’n cymryd rhan mewn digwyddiadau a chymdeithas wedi newid. Wrth inni i ddod i delerau â’r newidiadau hyn, rhaid talu teyrnged hefyd i ddewrder y GIG a’r gweithwyr hanfodol.”

“Fel Cadeirydd Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Iechyd a’r Celfyddydau rwy’n clywed yn aml am y budd sy’n dod o gynlluniau a gwasanaethau celfyddydau trwy Gymru ac yn fy etholaeth, Gorllewin Casnewydd. Mae dau ganlyniad sy’n amlygu’u hunain dro ar ôl tro yn aml yn arwain at leihau unigrwydd ac ynysu ac yn gwella bywyd llawer o bobl.”

“Mae nifer fawr ohonom wedi troi at gelf am gefnogaeth yn ystod yr adeg anodd hwn. Boed yn enfys wedi’i pheintio mewn ffenest neu’n gymanfa ganu rithiol - mae’r gymuned gelfyddydol wedi addasu i wynebu’r heriau, ac mae tystiolaeth fod celfyddydau ac iechyd yn parhau i gydblethu a chyn bwysiced ag erioed.”

**Meddai Phil George, Cadeirydd Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru:**

“Mae effaith gweithgareddau celfyddydol ar iechyd corfforol a meddyliol yn cael ei werthfawrogi erbyn hyn dros y byd yn grwn. Mae Cymru ar flaen y gad yng ngwledydd Prydain wrth inni weithio yn ein cymunedau amrywiol. Gwneir gwaith aruthrol gan ein hartistiaid a’r cydlynwyr celf yn ein Byrddau Iechyd a noddir ar y cyd gan Y Byrddau a Chyngor y Celfyddydau.

“Ond nawr, mae galw o’r newydd ar y gronfa hon, sy’n llawn talent a phrofiad, i gydweithio’n ystod argyfwng. Mae ymateb yr artistiaid a’r sefydliadau sy’n gweithio’n agos â gweithwyr iechyd yn arloesol ac ysbrydoledig - maen nhw’n cael eu hannog gan eu diddordeb dwys mewn cynnig cyfleodd cyfartal a chynnwys pawb. Maent yn dangos unwaith eto, bwysigrwydd y celfyddydau ac iechyd i lesiant yng Nghymru.”

**Dywedodd Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol Conffederasiwn GIG Cymru:**

“Tra bo’r NHS yng Nghymru’n canolbwyntio ar effeithiau’r Coronafeirws ar iechyd corfforol, rydym yn gweithio’n ddiflino i gynnig gwasanaethau hollbwysig all gyfrannu’n bositif at iechyd meddwl a llesiant.”

“Mae mentrau celfyddydau ac iechyd yn cael eu cynnig mewn ffyrdd arloesol er mwyn cydymffurfio â rheolau ymbellhau ond ar yr un pryd yn helpu ein llesiant ar adeg syn anodd inni gyd, ond yn arbennig felly i unigolion mwy bregus.”

“Mae ymateb y GIG a’r gymuned gelfyddydol wedi bod yn anhygoel wrth ini ddod o hyd i ffyrdd newydd o gynnal ein gwasanaethau a defnyddio technoleg newydd. Ond rydym hefyd yn ymwybodol iawn na allith pawb ddefnyddio technoleg ddigidol. Mae tystiolaeth yn dangos fod y cynlluniau celfyddydol ac iechyd yn cael effaith gadarnhaol ddwys ar iechyd a llesiant a bydd cynnal y prosiectau yn ystod amseroedd anodd yn hanfodol wrth leihau effeithiau negyddol Coronafeirws a’r cau mewn.”

**Cyswllt**

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**Nodiadau i’r golygydd**

* Mae **Conffederasiwn GIG Cymru** yn gorff aelodaeth sy’n cynrychioli’r 11 o gyrff sy’n rhan o’r GIG yng Nghymru: y saith Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol, tair ymddiriedolaeth y GIG ac ‘Addysg a Gwella Iechyd Cymru’.
* **Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru** yw'r corff cenedlaethol sy'n ariannu a datblygu'r celfyddydau. Ein gweledigaeth yw Cymru greadigol lle mae'r celfyddydau wrth wraidd bywyd y genedl. Ar hyn o bryd, mae’n cefnogi artistiaid a sefydliadau mewn angen oherwydd yr argyfwng presennol. Sefydlodd Gronfa Wytnwch y Celfyddydau ar y cyd â Llywodraeth Cymru gydag arian o'r Loteri Genedlaethol a chyfraniadau gan Dŷ Cerdd, Llenyddiaeth Cymru a Sefydliad Freelands. Gwerth y gronfa wytnwch i’r celfyddydau yn ei chrynswth yw £7.5 miliwn.

**Cyfeiriadau**

\*How the arts are supporting the Welsh health and social care response to COVID-19: <https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2020/05/how-the-arts-are-supporting-the-welsh-health-and-social-care-response-to-covid-19>

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