# Arts and creative activities for mental wellbeing during Covid-19 lockdown: report of a survey of university staff

**Skingley, A., Manship, S., Pollock, N., Price, N., Price, S. and Wright, T.**

# Arts and creative activities for mental wellbeing during Covid-19 lockdown: report of a survey of university staff

Ann Skingley, Sharon Manship, Nicole Pollock, Nikki Price, Sonia Price and Toni Wright

Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care
Arts and Health Research Hub
October 2022

**Abstract**

Purpose

There is evidence that the recent Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in stress in the UK workforce. Research also suggests that engaging in arts and creative activities may alleviate stress. The purpose was to explore how this might relate to staff at Canterbury Christ Church University, and specifically 1) to identify the overall extent of uptake and popularity of different arts activities; 2) to assess how this compares with pre-Covid levels of engagement and; 3) to identify how engagement with activities may serve to mitigate any adverse effects of the pandemic and beyond.

Design

The two-stage design comprised an online questionnaire, followed by in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of respondents.

Findings

178 individuals responded to the questionnaire, and 12 individuals were interviewed. Receptive arts engagement featured more frequently than participatory arts. 46.6% respondents reported more engagement during lockdown than before. The most frequently reported benefits related to the ability to disengage from the negative concerns of lockdown. Interview data identified four themes: creativity for wellbeing; connecting and contributing; pandemic as opportunity; and reflecting the times.

Originality

Little previous research has been conducted on the impacts of the arts specifically on university staff during Covid, particularly research including non-academic staff.

**Keywords**: Covid-19, arts, creative activities, university staff, wellbeing.

**Background**

The ongoing implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for mental health are well documented and, from its outset, the World Health Organisation predicted that it would be likely to generate stress throughout the global population (WHO, 2020). As well as care workers on the front line, those in other areas of employment have also been, and often continue to be affected, due to job uncertainty and adapting to new ways of working. This includes those working at universities, where all staff have the potential to be affected; this may be due to changes in ways of working (moving courses online, supervising students in placements, changing research protocols, working from home) but also due to self-isolation, concern for relatives, coping with home-schooling and changes to routine. A study undertaken at one Spanish University during the height of the pandemic found that both academic and administrative staff (n=586), as well as students, were experiencing increased levels of stress and concern two weeks into lockdown (Odriozola-Gonzales et al., 2020).

Current evidence for addressing stress in terms of self-care supports the value of engaging with the arts and creative activities. There is now a considerable amount of research evidence to suggest that this has the potential to enhance wellbeing and prevent a range of physical and mental health conditions (WHO, 2019; APPG, 2017; PHE, 2016). Definitions of both these concepts (wellbeing and arts/creativity) are subject to variation. One common interpretation of wellbeing is based on the terms 'eudaimonia', characterised by meaningful engagement, relationships and personal growth, and hedonic wellbeing, characterised by pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (Swindells et al., 2013). A more operational model for promoting health has been developed in the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (Aked & Thompson, 2010), a UK national public health strategy for improving mental health and wellbeing, comprising five concise public health messages that suggest courses of action people can take to improve their mental wellbeing: connect; be active; take notice; keep learning and give.

Definitions of the arts and creativity in research also vary considerably. Most reviews and commentaries have opted to provide examples (Boyce et al., 2019; Daykin & Joss, 2016; Gill et al., 2019), with music, dance, theatre, visual arts and writing being among the most popular art forms. Fancourt et al. (2019), in a more structured classification, used as a basis for empirical research, listed five types of art: performing arts (singing, dancing, acting etc.); visual art, design and craft (sewing, painting, woodwork etc); literature (creative writing, reading novels etc.); online digital and electronic (photography, film-making, graphic design etc.); and community and cultural festivals and events. In addition, arts have been characterised in terms of either their active (participatory) or

passive (receptive) nature (Davies et al., 2012) and their attendant benefits (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2019; Clements, 2011),

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the arts in many ways. Although many of the art forms listed above could still be practised during lockdown, the availability of, or means to accessing many of them changed. Many providers of arts and cultural experiences were not able to maintain their normal range of opportunities due to policies aimed at preventing spread of the disease.

But while some traditional routes to accessing such activities were not available, a range of new opportunities has opened up in what the AHRC (2020) has described as 'an outbreak of creativity,' illustrated by virtual choirs and orchestral performances, theatres and opera houses streaming live performances, virtual tours of museums and galleries, online drawing and painting, poetry online, TV and radio programmes. At the same time there has been a worldwide surge in the sale of books (WEF, 2020). Many of these experiences involve a more passive/receptive form of engagement compared to those previously available, but also a different way of experiencing 'participation', with or without others.

Examples of such flexibility in provision exist within universities. At Canterbury Christ Church University, an art and crafting group, coordinated by a staff member, for students and staff has been active for some three years, embracing crafts and arts at all skill levels to promote wellbeing. With over 300 members, its regular social meetings became virtual during lockdown and activities incorporated projects to benefit the whole university community, including large craft displays, workshops for staff and students and 'emotional support orbs' for students during the exam season. In addition, the university supported staff wellbeing during this time through the provision of a range of online resources, including access to e-books, musicals, courses on mindfulness and dealing with stress, yoga, playlists, and digital arts creation. Over one month during the pandemic, an online 'Daily Wellbeing Pause' provided new opportunities to fit in with the working day.

Previous pandemics and other times of crisis have often been accompanied by a proliferation of the arts (Klein, 2020; Jensen & Torrison, 2020) and their popularity during the recent lockdowns is reflected in recent research. There is evidence from the UCL National Covid-19 Social Study that general public engagement with the arts across the UK has increased since the Covid-induced lockdown (Mak et al., 2020). The study also highlights ways in which respondents use such activities to promote their mental wellbeing. Numerous studies currently exist that monitor physical and psychological wellbeing in various populations in the light of the Covid pandemic, but few appear to have focussed on university staff (see, for example https://www.covidminds.org/longitudinal-studies) and fewer still relate to the impact of arts engagement on this group. It was considered,

therefore, that a survey of staff would be useful to provide an initial impression of any benefits arising from the university's provision, and to contribute to the broader evidence base in this area. These issues are addressed in the current research.

**Research aims**

• To identify the overall extent of uptake and popularity of different arts activities by university staff during the period of university closure

• To assess how this compares with pre-Covid levels of engagement and which factors may help or hinder uptake

• To identify how engagement with activities may serve to mitigate any adverse effects of the pandemic and beyond

**Research methods**

The research comprised a two-stage design. Initial data collection was via Online Surveys (formerly BOS). A questionnaire was adapted from that used by the national UCL Social Study (Mak, et al., 2020). This invites a response to fixed choice options covering types and frequency of arts engagement from a selection of arts and culture formats; a comparison of use with pre-Covid levels; and degree of agreement with a number of statements about the wellbeing effects of engagement using the Emotional Regulation Strategies for Artistic Creative Activities (ERS-ACA) scale, completed with the respondent's favourite arts activity in mind. This scale has been previously found to have strong internal and test-retest reliability and validity (Fancourt et al., 2019). The list of 13 arts activities inviting a response was expanded to include examples of those more recently appearing, giving a total of 17 items, plus an option for respondents to add others. The questionnaire also requested a minimal level of demographic data.

In addition, respondents were invited to take part in a further research stage where they could expand on responses in conversation with one of the researchers. Those agreeing were asked to provide a contact email address. A short interview schedule was constructed, requesting expansion on the responses to the questionnaire and a focus on the benefits of their activities for their mental health. Interviews were divided between the team members and followed up the responses given in the survey. Individuals were contacted by email and interviews were conducted and recorded via Microsoft Teams.

Inclusion criteria

All university staff were canvassed and invited to take part. There were no exclusion criteria. Communication was via the staff page of the university website and the university staff newsletter. Information about the survey was also cascaded via relevant postholders in the university.

Ethics

Compliance with GDPR and university ethics guidelines was confirmed through completion and submission of relevant forms via a secure online facility. An information sheet was integrated with the questionnaire, along with a facility for gaining evidence of informed consent from those taking part. A separate briefing sheet and consent form was provided for those agreeing to be interviewed. Personal identifying data were only requested from those volunteering to take part in a follow-up interview, in order that those individuals could be contacted, and further information was given, and consent sought, for any audio-recording.

Analysis

All data were uploaded to a university-approved Cloud system and held on a virtual hub accessible only to the research team. Questionnaire analysis made use of the provision of summary statistics provided in Online Surveys (numbers and percentages within different categories). Certain data were also inputted to SPSS v.26 for further examination.

Interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams and transcribed with the assistance of Otter.ai (transcribing software). Analysis was guided by the template analysis (TA) model (King, 2002). This involves the construction of an initial coding template that reflects areas identified as particularly salient to the aims of the research. Unlike many qualitative methods, it is normal in TA to define *a priori* these areas, but they are always seen as provisional and open to addition, modification or deletion as further data are analysed. In the present research, two researchers worked separately, then together, to devise the initial template, based on both the findings of the initial survey stage and the free text from the second survey. The interview transcripts were then analysed within this framework.

**Survey findings**

Sample

Responses were received from 178 individuals to the survey (total staff employed 1,700). Of these, 9 omitted the majority of items on the arts type questionnaire and 7 chose not to complete, or only partially complete, the ERS-ACA scale. These are excluded from the relevant analyses.

Respondents were largely female (76.7%) and staff from professional services (57.4%) outnumbered academics (39.8%). The largest age group was the 45-54 category (32%).

Of the 48 providing contact details in the survey, 12 were randomly selected and subsequently interviewed.

Popularity of art forms

The fixed-choice questionnaire on types and frequency of arts engagement requested a response on a five-point scale of involvement ranging from 'not at all' to 'every day'. Related item scores were computed, ranging from 0 to 5, with the higher score indicating greater overall involvement by our sample. **Table 1** indicates the number of respondents reporting any degree of involvement of a given activity and the item scores. In the light of the evidence on different effects of receptive vs. participatory arts engagement, the 17 categories were identified as being in one or the other according to the definition put forward by Davies et al. (2012) above.

**Table 1**. Popularity of different art forms. (Note: This does not indicate the participants' favourite activity, providing the basis for the ERS-ACA scale responses)

| Art form | Participative/ Receptive | | No. of respondents | Weighted score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Music listening | R | | 166 | 511 |
| 2.Reading books or poetry | R | | 157 | 420 |
| 3.Watching arts on TV etc. | R | | 118 | 195 |
| 4.Streaming arts content | R | | 107 | 154 |
| 5.Photography | | P | 93 | 161 |
| 6.Watching a creative tutorial | R | | 78 | 111 |
| 7.Singing | | P | 67 | 127 |
| 8.Textile related crafts | | P | 66 | 144 |
| 9.Playing an instrument | | P | 53 | 96 |
| 10.Dancing | | P | 53 | 81 |
| 11.Virtual tour of museum etc. | R | | 51 | 62 |
| 12.Painting & drawing | | P | 49 | 74 |
| 13.Creative writing | | P | 42 | 65 |
| 14.Making films & videos | | P | 36 | 49 |
| 15.Crafts | | P | 31 | 38 |
| 16.Creating digital works | | P | 19 | 28 |
| 17.Wood creations | | P | 12 | 16 |

Receptive arts engagement activities were the most frequently indicated, with listening to music overwhelmingly the most popular (n=166 of 178 respondents indicating some degree of engagement). The most popular participatory art form was photography (n=93 respondents). The

relative popularity of singing and dancing suggests that even those activities which traditionally take place socially have found new ways of personal expression within the new constraints.

Changes in arts engagement due to Covid

Respondents were asked to say how their arts engagement during lockdown compared to normal practice. Of the 178 respondents, 83 (46.6%) reported more engagement than pre-Covid, 52 (29.2%) reported the same and 43 (24.29%) reported less.

Respondents were also asked to select from a list of options the reasons behind any differences, with the possibility of selecting more than one option if desired. The most common reasons for increased engagement in arts practices were having more time (75% of respondents), more flexible or convenient timing (68.5%) and greater accessibility (36%). The most frequent reasons given for less engagement were venues being closed (60.4%) and having less time (29.2%). Clearly, the university closure has affected staff in different ways.

Benefits of arts engagement

The most popular 'favourite' items chosen in our study as a basis for completing the ERS-ACA scale were listening to music (n=27) and textile crafts (n=21). These activities were used to represent receptive and participatory arts respectively, in order to explore whether they conferred different types of benefits, as suggested in the literature.

The ERS-ACA scale scores responses to items, capturing degrees of agreement with statements ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale authors (Fancourt et al., 2019) identified 3 subscales representing three major types of beneficial strategies:

- Approach strategies e.g. acceptance, reappraisal, problem solving (6 items)
- Avoidance strategies e.g. distraction, disengagement, detachment (7 items)
- Self-development strategies e.g. enhanced self-identity, increased self -esteem, improved agency (5 items)

Applying these strategies to our data, responses to scale items for both groups (music and textiles) were ranked and allocated a strategy (**see tables 2 and 3**).

**Table** 2 Why do respondents engage in textile crafts?

| Ranked score | ERS question no. | Factor 1 (approach) | Factor 2 (avoid) | Factor 3 (self-development) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7.It gives me a sense of purpose | | | x |
| 2 | 11.It helps me to disengage from things bothering me | | x | |
| 3= | 4.I feel I am in my own little bubble, away from worries | | x | |
| 3= | 8. It helps me forget worries | | x | |
| 5= | 1.I can block out unwanted thoughts or feelings | | x | |
| 5= | 3.I can shake of anxieties in my life | | x | |
| 5= | 6.It boosts my self-esteem | | | x |
| 5= | 9.It helps me refocus on what matters in my life | x | | |
| 9 | 18.It redirects attention so I forget unwanted thoughts | | x | |
| 10 | 14. It makes me feel detached from negative things. | | x | |
| 11 | 5. I feel more confident in myself | | | x |
| 12= | 2. I can contemplate what is going on in my life clearly | x | | |
| 12= | 17.It reaffirms my identity | | | x |
| 14 | 15. It makes me feel stronger in myself | | | x |
| 15 | 12. It helps me to put worries or problems in perspective | x | | |
| 16 | 10. It helps me come to terms with my own emotions | x | | |
| 17 | 16. It makes me reflect on my emotions | x | | |
| 18 | 13. It helps me understand my feelings/things on mind | x | | |

Both textile crafters and music listeners favoured avoidance strategies. One difference between the groups is the greater focus on self-development for the textile crafters (a participative activity), which ranks very low for the music listeners (a receptive activity). Indeed, the highest ranked item (7, 'it gives me a sense of purpose') for the textile group ranked lowest for the music group. These responses were expanded in the interviews.

**Table 3** Why do respondents listen to music?

| Ranked score | ERS question no. | Factor 1 (approach) | Factor 2 (avoid) | Factor 3 (self-development) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11. It helps me to disengage from things bothering me | | x | |
| 2 = | 1. I can block out unwanted thoughts or feelings | | x | |
| 2= | 4. I feel I am in my own little bubble, away from worries | | x | |
| 4 = | 16. It makes me reflect on my emotions | x | | |
| 4 = | 18.It redirects attention, so I forget unwanted thoughts. | | x | |
| 6 = | 8. It helps me forget worries | | x | |
| 6= | 10.It helps me come to terms with my own emotions | x | | |
| 8 = | 2. I can contemplate what is going on in my life clearly | x | | |
| 8 = | 3. I can shake of anxieties in my life | | x | |
| 8 = | 14. It makes me feel detached from negative things | | x | |
| 11 | 17. It reaffirms my identity | | | x |
| 12 = | 5. I feel more confident in myself | | | x |
| 12 = | 15. It makes me feel stronger in myself | | | x |
| 14 = | 9. It helps me refocus on what matters in my life | x | | |
| 14 = | 13.It helps me understand my feelings/things on mind | x | | |
| 16 | 12.It helps me to put worries or problems in perspective | x | | |
| 17 = | 6. It boosts my self-esteem | | | x |
| 17 = | 7. It gives me a sense of purpose | | | x |

**Interview findings**

Conversational 1-to-1 interviews were conducted with 12 respondents. The initial coding template consisted of 23 codes which provided the basis for the analysis of individual transcripts by all six researchers. From these, four response areas were identified: creativity for wellbeing, connecting and contributing, pandemic as opportunity, reflecting the times. The response areas supported a process of moving to a more interpretive stage in exploring the experiences of university staff's engagement in arts and wellbeing during the pandemic/lockdown.

Creativity for Wellbeing

Creativity for wellbeing was not an unexpected theme to emerge from the data, given previous research findings. For many, this took the form of the ability to disengage from work and other distractions as they talked about 'switching off' by crafting or knitting, keeping them 'separate from the work side'. Others referred to stress reduction, or the act of facilitating a state of mindfulness:

> '*Returning to the medium of carving, physically carving in lino was really important because actually, it was immersive and mindful….So I just draw the tree. I transfer it to the block and there's hours of carving involved. So actually, it was about the art of patience … . For me the act of slow carving …the physicality of it was great*'(**Fig.1**).

**Fig. 1** Carving in lino (reproduced with permission)

The immersive experience that this engagement created also led for some to a sense of achievement and this was the case with one participant who took up again the piano playing that they had enjoyed when younger:

> *'I felt a little bit like it got me back because I played, I played piano from the age of six …. it really gave me something to do and something too that actually felt like I was achieving something… I started at the really easy grade ones and worked my way back up..'*

Connecting and Contributing

Connecting with, and contributing to others through a creative task or event, were sentiments expressed in many responses in terms of enhancing relationships. The use of online means to accessing material during lockdown was a key factor in facilitating feelings of social connection and was illustrated by a respondent who accessed the Cheltenham Literature Festival online:

*'I was looking for opportunities like this really to feel connected…it's enabling me to feel connected…and so it gives you hope for the future, because you think actually, you know, all of these things can survive in some form.'*

A growth in online events, communication and opportunities through other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Teams and Zoom, also provided a mechanism through which creativity was facilitated, and provided hope and reassurance for the future that social connections and creativity did - and therefore could - continue. The university's art and crafting group supported ongoing creative connections to colleagues via Facebook, while other respondents reported accessing externally run activities.

As well as facilitating connections, arts engagement also led to examples of prosocial behaviour, apparent in gifting to others, whether through offering their creations displayed in a front garden to passers-by, or through giving to family and friends:

*'I made a knitted snake for my brother's little boy, which he loves because he calls it 'hiss' and then another friend of mine was having a baby and she said 'will you make me a miniature animal?''* (**Fig 2**).

**Fig. 2** Knitted snake (reproduced with permission)

Pandemic as Opportunity

Working at home during the pandemic provided some staff with more free time for arts engagement and to switch off from pressures:

> *'While I'm at home all the time, all of these gaps in my day have suddenly appeared … I just love getting into a story … just to sort of a switching off and exploring different people's lives and escaping … You know, that feeling where you, you can't quite put the book down because you're so like losing myself, I suppose. Taking myself into a different place'.*

The pandemic also provided the context within which participants could continue, take up or engage again with the activities which contributed to their wellbeing. There was also a sense of nostalgia through engagement with activities that were perhaps a larger part of childhood than current times.

> '*I was doing the sketching, and drawing, as I say I'm not proficient at it, I haven't done anything artistic like that in my life... and in lockdown it just gave me the opportunity to think, you know, what sort of things do I have time for here? And that was something I used to do and it helps me, which is really good*'

Reflecting the times

This extra 'opportunity' time was used by some respondents to reflect on and process their experiences of living through the times in their art. For one respondent, this took the form of representing everyday lockdown rituals and preoccupations through quilting - for example, the daily walk for exercise, the increased awareness of birdsong or coffee time:

> *'[This] is a fabric book, and one of the groups that I was involved in they, in the first lockdown, they set up these sort of challenges. And the first one was set by, or one of them was set by an artist and this is the piece that I made in response to that.. I was just sort of struck by the idea of daily rituals. So, this has got our coffee pot on it here' (**Fig.3**)*


**Fig. 3** Fabric book (reproduced with permission)

The respondent's experiences highlighted how everyday tasks became a source of interpretation and inspiration and continued to support social connections through creating artistic challenges.

The passing of time under lockdown was also reflected in conversations about the changing seasons, reflected in participants' creative gardening:

> *'Our garden was alive over summer and then everything has just kind of come to an end. I tried sourdough, like everyone…that very quickly died a death'*

**Discussion**

The findings from this limited sample of university staff suggest that, despite the changed circumstances, engagement with the arts retained and often increased its attraction during the pandemic. This is in line with findings from the larger, more diverse sample from a national study (Mak et al., 2020), which similarly reflected a variety of different arts and creative practices. Although other studies have explored the mental wellbeing of students and staff in universities during the pandemic (Dinu et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2021; McGaughey et al., 2021), most have tended to focus solely on academics. By contrast, this study has captured the experiences of all university staff and offers insights reflective of a wider sample.

The wellbeing benefits of the arts, as encapsulated in the concept of eudaimonia (Swindells et al., 2013) and 'approach' orientated activities (Fancourt et al., 2019), can be identified in both survey and interview findings. For example, survey respondents engaging in textile crafts clearly found that it contributed to a sense of purpose (meaningful engagement), while piano playing for one interviewee gave rise to a feeling of achievement. At the same time, for those participating more passively in art forms, the active nature of eudaimonia is less in evidence than a need to disengage from, or avoid, negative feelings and experiences - as characterised by hedonia and 'avoid' orientated activities. Survey responses showed that 'avoid' activities, and music in particular, were the most popular, while the interviewee who took up reading clearly used that as an escape from daily pressures rather than as a means of self-expression. Kiernan et al. (2021) similarly found in their research that music was considered the most effective of the arts for making people feel better, while pointing out that this appears to be at odds with other findings that proactive, approach-orientated strategies are more effective at managing emotions (Kiernan et al., 2021). It appears that this is still a subject for further research.

The theme of connecting and contributing (both contributors to wellbeing – Aked & Thompson, 2010) appears paradoxical, perhaps, at a time when the population was being urged to isolate and practise 'social distancing.' However, preliminary research has suggested that technology-mediated connections may have contributed to a reduction in negative affect during a pandemic (Mote et al., 2021), as in the case here. It has also been reported that pro-social behaviour and altruism are widespread, even in situations of threat and uncertainty (Grimalda et al., 2021), motivated by a concern for the needs of others.

The opportunity presented by the pandemic may also be a counter-intuitive finding, though in most cases this seemed to be linked to the extra time it afforded several staff (75% of respondents reporting more arts engagement in the survey). For others, though, the opposite was true, meaning this theme was not universal and rather reflected the general inequality and contrasting effects which pandemics and other emergencies exacerbate (Gibson et al., 2021).

Finally, reflecting the times through the arts, though a less prominent finding in this research, echoes the apparent need throughout history to provide a record of contemporary experiences of living through difficult times. Rittershaus and Eschenberg (2021), for example, have drawn attention to the personification of death, popular in the Middle Ages during the waves of plagues of the time. While the motivation (and any wellbeing benefits) of these historical practices can only be a matter of

conjecture, these authors suggest that they do provide opportunities for reflection ('taking notice' Aked & Thompson, 2010) as a component of wellbeing, also reflected in the 'daily rituals' depicted in one interviewee's quilting.

**Conclusion**

As the evidence base grows for research on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, individual studies can act as both confirmatory and complementary contributors to what is known. A very recent study (Wilson et al., 2022) has provided initial findings on the role of the arts on the wellbeing of university staff very similar to those reported here, both in terms of favoured activities and expressed wellbeing effects. This can, to a certain extent, offset the limitations of individual studies, such as the small, self-selecting sample in this study, and build claims to broader generalisability. In addition, the particular contribution of the research presented here is in isolating findings relating to all staff within a university community.

Responses by Western universities to the pandemic have, perhaps understandably, tended towards being corporate minded, meaning their focus has been on fiscal stability and sustaining business (Watermeyer et al., 2021). This has meant leadership actions and decision-making have not always attended to the emotional support staff and students may need during a time of crisis (McNamara, 2021). To ensure greater emphasis is on mitigating any adverse effects of the pandemic and beyond, (APPG, 2017), other universities may like to consider enhancing existing mechanisms and strategies through provision of arts-based activities, such as the art and crafting group, described above, at Canterbury Christ Church University.

**Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the staff who responded to the questionnaire, to those who took part in interviews, to Ms Esther Coren, who was involved in the initial discussions and to Jae Fowler, coordinator of Canterbury Christ Church Creatives (the crafting group).

**References**


AHRC (2020). *Coronavirus – an outbreak of creativity*. Arts & Minds, the official blog of the AHRC: [ARCHIVED CONTENT] Coronavirus – An Outbreak of Creativity – Arts and minds (nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Aked, J. & Thompson, S. (2010). *Five Ways to Wellbeing: New applications, new ways of thinking*. NHS Confederation. [Online]. d80eba95560c09605d_uzm6b1n6a.pdf (neweconomics.org) . Accessed: 21 January 2022.

APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2017). *Creative health: the arts for health and wellbeing*. APPG: https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017_-_Second_Edition.pdf

Boyce, M., Bungay, H., Munn-Giddings, C. & Wilson, C. (2017). The impact of the arts in health care on patients and service users: a critical review. *Health and Social Care in the Community* doi:10.1111/hsc12502.

Davies, C.R., Rosenberg, M., Knuiman, M., Ferguson, R., Pikora, T & Slatter, N. (2012). Defining arts engagement for population-based health research: art forms, activities and level of engagement. *Arts & Health 4(*3), 203-216. https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2012.656201

Daykin, N. & Joss, T. (2016*). Arts for health and wellbeing: an evaluation framework*. PHE, London: https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/arts-for-health-and-wellbeing-an-evaluation-framework/

Dinu, L.M., Dommett, E.J., Baykoca, A., Mehta, K.J., Everett, S., Foster, J.L.H. & Byrom, N.C. (2021). A Case Study Investigating Mental Wellbeing of University Academics during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Education Sciences 11(11)*, 702. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11110702

Fancourt, D., Garnett, C., Spiro, N., West, R. & Müllensiefen, D. (2019). How do artistic creative activities regulate our emotions? Validation of the Emotion Regulation Strategies for Artistic Creative Activities Scale (ERS-ACA). *PLOS One 14*, 2:e021 1362. https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0211362

Gibson, B., Schneider, J., Talamonti, D. & Forshaw, M (2021). The impact of inequality on mental health outcomes during the Covid-19 pandemic: a systematic review. *Canadian Psychology 62*(1), 101-126: https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000272

Gill, N., Ellis, V. & Clift, S. (2019). Cultural activities linked to lower mortality. *BMJ 367*:16774 doi:10.1136/bmj.16774

Gordon-Nesbitt, R. (2019). *Older and wiser? Creative ageing in the UK 2010-19*. KCL/Baring Foundation: https://baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/older-and-wiser-creative-ageing-in-the-uk-2010-19/

Grimalda, G., Buchan, N., Ozturk, O., Pinate, A., Urso, G. & Brewer, M. (2021). *Altruism in the time of Covid-19: We are all in this together*. Research Square [online]: DOI:10.21203/rs.3.rs-139076/v1

Jensen, A. & Torrisen, W. (2020). Arts and health in the time of Corona. *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health 2*(1), 5-7. Available at: https://www.idunn.no/doi/pdf/10.18261/issn.2535-7913-2020-01-01

Kiernan, F., Chmiel, A., Garrido, S., Hickey, M., & Davidson, J. (2021). The role of artistic creative activities in navigating the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.696202

Klein, B. (2020). *Art in the time of crisis*. Carnegie Magazine. Available online at: https://carnegiemuseums.org/carnegie-magazine/summer-2020/art-in-the-time-of-crisis/

Knight, H., Carlisle, S., O'Connor, M., Briggs, L., Fothergill, L., Al-Oraibi, A., Yildirim, M., Morling, J.R., Corner, J., Ball, J., Denning, C., Vedhara, K. & Blake, H. (2021). Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and self-isolation on students and staff in higher education: A Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 18(*20), 10675. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182010675

Mak, H.W., Fluharty, M. & Fancourt, D. (2020). *Predictors and impacts of arts engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic: analysis of data from 19,384 adults in the Covid-19 Social Study*. Available at: https://psyarxiv.com/rckp5/

McGaughey, F., Watermeyer, R., Shankar, K., Rathnadeep Sun, V., Knight, C., Crick, T. Hardman, J., Phelan, D & Chung, R. (2021). 'This can't be the new norm': academics' perspectives on the Covid-19 crisis for the Australian university sector. *Higher Education Research and Development*: https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1973384

McNamara, A. (2021). Crisis management in higher education in the time of Covid-19: the case of actor training. *Education Sciences, 11*(3), 132. Doi.org/10.3390/educsci11030132.

Mote, J., Gill, K. & Fulford, D. (2021). 'Skip the small talk' virtual event intended to promote social connection during a global pandemic: online survey study. *JMIR Formative Research 5*(9), e28008: https://formative.jmir.org/2021/9/e28002/PDF

Odriozola-Gonzales, P., Planchuelo-Gomez, A., Irurtia, M.J. & de Luis-Garcia, R. (2020). Psychological effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown among students and workers of a Spanish University. *Psychiatry Research 290 (special issue)*. doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113108.

Public Health England (PHE) (2016). *Arts for health and well-being: an evaluation framework*. PHE, London: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arts-for-health-and-wellbeing-an-evaluation-framework

Rittershaus, L. & Eschenberg, K. (2021). Black Death, plagues and the danse macabre. Depictions of epidemics in art. *Historical Social Research Supplement 33*, 330-339: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27087287

Swindells, R., Lawthorn, R., Rowley, K., Siddiquee, A., Kilroy, A. & Kagan, C. (2013). 'Eudaimonic well-being and community arts participation', *Perspectives in Public Health, 133*(1), 60–65. doi:10.1177/1757913912466948

Watermeyer, R., Shankar, K., Crick, T., Knight, C., McGaughey, F., Hardman, J., Sun, V.R., Chung, R. & Phelan, D. (2021). 'Pandemia': a reckoning of UK universities' corporate response to COVID-19 and its academic fallout, *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 42*(5-6), 651-666, https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.1937058

WHO (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. WHO, Copenhagen: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553773/

WHO (2020). *Mental Health and psychosocial considerations during the Covid-19 outbreak*: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf

Wilson, C., Munn-Giddings, C., Bungay, H. & Dadswell, A. (2022) Arts, cultural and creative engagement during Covid-19: enhancing the mental wellbeing and social connectedness of university staff and students. Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health 4, 1-13. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/njach.4.1.2

World Economic Forum (WEF) 30th April 2020: *Coronavirus escapism – book sales surge during lockdown*: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-escapism-book-sales-surge-covid-19/