

Arts and Health South West together with their delivery partners: Holburne Museum; Creativity Works; creativeShift; Theatre Orchard; John Wesley's New Room; For All Healthy Living Centre, will receive £180,000 in funding to support community volunteering opportunities through UK Government investment

- **Arts and Health South West together with their delivery partners will be among over 160 organisations across arts, culture, sport, civil society, youth, and heritage sectors to benefit from the £4.6 million Volunteering Futures Fund**
- **Funding set to increase volunteering opportunities for young people, and people who experience barriers to accessing volunteering, over next two years**

Over 160 community organisations, including Arts and Health South West and their delivery partners are set to support 7,800 new volunteering opportunities over the next two years, as the Government has confirmed the beneficiaries of a £4.6 million fund that will level up access to the benefits of volunteering across the country.

Arts and Health South West together with their six delivery partners from across the South West has been awarded **£180,000** by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports, delivered by Arts Council England.

Arts and Health South West (AHSW) is committed to tackling health inequalities and helping more people experience the arts and culture for the benefit of their health and wellbeing across the South West. As many of the organisations AHSW works with are small scale and grassroots, AHSW work through a collaborative regional strategy to support the direct delivery of arts and cultural activity in response to some of the most pressing health issues in South West England. Key priorities are Mental Health, Loneliness, and Social Prescribing, and the Volunteering Futures Fund will support these priorities through a new regional project '*Reaching In and Reaching Out*'.

Reaching In and Reaching Out will be co-produced with young people experiencing loneliness, social disadvantage, mental health challenges and those struggling to find work aged 16-24, who live in the West of England Combined Authority area. With young people and six partner organisations, the project will explore culture, wellbeing, community engagement and routes to volunteering through a series of creative co-produced workshops in a range of heritage venues. The project will share learning regionally and nationally in the form of a framework or toolkit that is adaptable to different types and scales of cultural and heritage venues, programmes and events.

The young people will be supported to be equal participants in the creative process and encouraged to be innovative and imaginative in the way they help the cultural and heritage practitioners to think about working and volunteering with young people. The process will be one of reciprocal learning between young people, creative practitioners and cultural and heritage professionals. As such the project will support young people to develop their creative skills and interest in cultural and heritage contexts and work opportunities.

The Volunteering Futures Fund was launched last year and will be distributed by Arts Council England. It will break down barriers to volunteering and enable organisations across the arts, culture, sport, civil society, youth and heritage sectors to continue their valuable work within local communities whilst volunteers enjoy the personal benefits of making a difference.

Those set to benefit most from the funding include young people and people with disabilities. Colleges, local councils, schools, health and wellbeing organisations are also among the recipients of the Fund.

Arts Council England have awarded these organisations in order to respond to demand from a wide range of beneficiaries, such as from those who may be experiencing loneliness or social isolation, to young people in the LGBTQ community, people with learning difficulties and complex needs.

A full list of funded projects can be found [here](#).

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“As we have seen throughout the pandemic, volunteering offers a wealth of benefits to both the volunteers and the organisations who rely on their help, encouraging acts of generosity, public spirit and neighbourliness.

“The Volunteering Futures Fund will deliver a step-change in connecting those who may be isolated, lonely or experiencing any number of potential barriers to get involved in volunteering.

“I’m delighted that more than 160 organisations will now benefit from £4.6 million in Government funding to enhance collaboration between local councils, the public sector, and civil society.”

The £4.6 million UK Government funding is being awarded and distributed via Arts Council England. Grants of £100,000 or more have been awarded following an Arts Council competitive process launched in November 2021. There are 19 lead organisations that will work with more than 160 partner organisations to deliver volunteering opportunities at a local level across England.

An additional £2.2 million has been distributed by Pears Foundation and NHS Charities Together.

Darren Henley, CEO of Arts Council England said:

“There’s an abundance of evidence to show that volunteering can be a key factor in helping people lead happier lives.

“This new investment will enrich villages, towns and cities across England, increasing health and well-being and decreasing loneliness and isolation.”

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

“On behalf of Arts and Health South West and our six delivery partners we are delighted to be awarded Volunteering Futures Funding for 'Reaching In and Reaching Out' a project supporting facilitated co-production of high quality heritage and cultural experiences for young people aged 16-24, who live in the West of England Combined Authority Area”

“Building on the good practice demonstrated by our delivery partners including the Holburne Museum, Creativity Works, creativeShift, Theatre Orchard, John Wesley’s New Room, For All Healthy Living Centre, as well health partners UHBW NHS Trust, North Bristol NHS Trust, the project will encourage a step-change for those struggling to find their way in the world”

“Focusing on those experiencing loneliness, social disadvantage, mental health challenges and those struggling to find work due to these barriers, the project will offer young people engagement with their own community and its heritage, as well as extend the reach of who they can connect with. Research shows that engaging in cultural and heritage activities can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and the development of positive self-image, confidence, and social engagement, and so this project will build self-esteem and confidence to support a young person's own potential to make change happen and to contribute to society in a positive way. Through co-production the young people will bring their own lived experience and creative energy to imagine new and relevant ways to engage other young people, helping partners to sharpen their own understanding of how to rethink heritage and culture for all”

Notes to editors:

- The first round of Volunteering Futures Fund grants was launched in September 2021 when DCMS ran a competition for matched funders [here](#).
- The second round of Volunteering Futures Fund grants was launched by Arts Council England in November 2021 [here](#).

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in [Let's Create](#) 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 everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government’s unprecedented Culture Recovery Funds. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.