1. **Who or what is ‘Kent Arts & Wellbeing’?**

Kent Arts and Wellbeing is a not for profit company, limited by guarantee. It was set up in late 2017 by Ken Scott, Gerry Atkinson and Fay Blair following their experience with the LAPWING project. See [www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk)

Kent Arts and Wellbeing believes in the power of shared creativity to make a difference to both individuals and communities, and that is reflected in their vision and mission. Their:

***Vision: is of*** *communities that are resilient and vibrant strengthened through shared creative activities.*

***Mission: is to*** *inspire and support people through creative activities to improve individual and community wellbeing.*

1. **What do we mean by an ‘Arts & Wellbeing Network?**

There are many hundreds of organisations throughout Kent that are interested in caring for and promoting the wellbeing of older people. They include large organisations such as Kent County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), voluntary and charitable organisations, such as Age UK and Age Concerns in Kent, and smaller organisations, often private firms that include those providing domiciliary and residential care. All are expected meet national standards that include recommendations about the use of group creative activity.

The aims of the proposed ‘Arts and Wellbeing Network’ are:

* 1. To provide a channel that brings together all those organisations interested in commissioning or promoting the use of creative activity for older people;
	2. To informally work in a mutually beneficial collaboration, ‘alliance’;
	3. To agree core ‘arts & creative programme’ priorities that can achieve economies of scale and higher quality wellbeing outcomes pertinent to their organisations’ priorities;
	4. To use quality arts & creativity programmes to stimulate innovation in both care services and social prescribing and generate greater leverage for external funding;
	5. To inform commissioners’ own forward planning, and future collaborative commissioning (with pooling of spend) through future contracts, etc.
1. **Who could be part of the network?**

It is proposed that any individual, business or organisation that has an interest in commissioning or promoting the ‘arts and health and wellbeing’ agenda can be members.

1. **What is the rationale for an ‘Arts & Wellbeing Network’?**

The case for group creativity in improving wellbeing for older people has been made, accepted and incorporated in policy standards. There is, however, a gap between recommended and actual practice. That gap is not due to an unwillingness to accept the benefits of creative/cultural activity, but is due to practical barriers prevent or make uptake difficult.

While lack of awareness of what can be achieved is a factor, uncertainty of *how to implement creative activities*, concerns about staff and time availability, and issues of affordability and sustainability, are believed to be the principal barriers.

The proposed ‘Network’ would be well placed to address many of those issues.

1. **What would the ‘Arts & Wellbeing Network’ do?**

It would seek to address the barriers that prevent or make the uptake creative activity difficult, as part of helping older people to live well. This could include:

1. Identifying and prioritising need, so that there is a better match between need and creative initiatives;
2. Contributing to the development of performance standards for artists and creatives so that there can be confidence in standards of performance delivery;
3. Sharing good practice. This could include both sharing of practice between members and dissemination of information from the wider Arts, Health and Wellbeing movement.
4. Partnering in projects, to create a critical mass that would enable a customised approach, improve funding potential, enable professional support, reduce cost and improve sustainability.
5. Showcasing success, so that more organisations are encouraged to become involved.
6. Engage in high profile work using the (national) ‘Age of Creativity’ Festival (See 6. below).
7. **What is the Age of Creativity Festival, and how might this relate to the Network?**
* ‘The Age of Creativity’ Festival is a relatively new festival that celebrates the extraordinary range of Age Friendly creative and cultural work taking place across England and reaches out into our communities to help more people get involved.
* It is supported by Arts Council England, The Baring Foundation, The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, with Age UK and Voluntary Arts England taking a project management leadership role.
* Its aspirations are very much in tune with the arts and health agenda.
* The Festival in May 2019 offers a great opportunity to showcase the good work that is going on in Kent with older people, and the network can help co-ordinate a county contribution. There is time to reflect on what happens in 2019 and plan for 2020.
1. **How would the Arts & Wellbeing’ Network operate?**

Kent Arts & Wellbeing is prepared to take a leading role in creating and maintaining the Network. Its ongoing time/task contribution would depend on support and funding. It is anticipated that:

* Working groups may be formed for specific issues;
* Dissemination and collection of information will be managed electronically;
* Quarterly meetings on selected subjects of interest will be held;
* Linkages with existing local and national organisations, such as the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, and South East England Forum on Ageing will be established and maintained;
* It would be run and organised as a formally constituted voluntary organisation;
* It would be a highly proactive, advisory group;
* It would inform and help shape innovatory, highly cost-effective commissioning;
* It would be focused on harnessing arts and creativity to promote and contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes.
1. **How is the ‘Arts & Wellbeing Network’ to be funded?**
* Funding, to initially set up and create the network has been supplied from a grant from the Big Lottery, ‘Awards for All’.
* The intention is to make membership a no, or low, cost and attractive option. Membership for the first 2 meetings will be free.
* It may be that some elements of network activity will attract a charge to cover costs, such as venue costs associated with quarterly meetings.
* The hope would be that members would offer to rotate hosting the meetings.
* it is proposed that invitations will be circulated to potential interested parties in April 2019.
1. **When and where will be the first ‘Arts & Wellbeing Network’ meeting?**

Assuming a level of support, it is proposed that the first meeting will take place during the week commencing **Monday 3rd June** 2019 at a location to be agreed**.**

The agenda for this first meeting, will be developed in conjunction with those interested in being part of the network.

A baseline paper would be drafted and presented by Kent Arts and Wellbeing setting out the scene regarding the profile and needs of older people in Kent

Among the core questions for the ‘Network’ to consider are:

1. What should the ‘Network’ aim to do as a priority? Statutory and recommended practices required to promote the wellbeing of Kent’s older people?
2. What could/ should the network do to improve the contribution of group creative activity to meet the needs of older people?
	1. Consideration of the older people’s profile demographic in Kent:
	How many older people are there and what are their key characteristics
	2. What do they need in terms of both care and wellbeing support?
	3. High level needs summary;
3. What is our collective capability to meet these needs? Profile of suppliers;
4. Where can creative activity fit in to help meet needs? Profile of current creative activity?
5. Agreeing succinct terms of reference for the ‘Network’ in the light of the above.
6. **What is ‘Our Work of Art’?**

‘Our Work of Art’ project is about building and extending the volunteer base in ‘arts for wellbeing’, to upskill *younger people in later life (50-75yrs)* to find a new, rewarding and meaningful purpose through engaging and *supporting older frail and vulnerable people (50-100 years)*, particularly those who are lonely and suffer from isolation or have chronic and long-term, debilitating conditions (e.g. dementia).

Around 150 people from the Whitstable, Herne Bay and Canterbury and neighbourhood areas, supported by 40 ‘arts and wellbeing creative volunteers’ have been involved to date in a creative ceramic mug and mural making programme.

Mentoring support was provided by the project team for volunteers. Most volunteers welcomed and found mutual support between each other of great value.

Although not initially planned, an important additional outcome has been the creation of a ‘volunteer network’. This is a private facebook group and regular face-to-face structured meetings to share insights, experiences and develop skills, at Espression Arts. This has been volunteer driven.

Volunteers have also taken significant responsibility for the developing and designing the exhibition including the production of a photobook of the project.

Information and highlights of the ‘Our Work of Art’ story can be viewed on Twitter feed **#OurWorkofArt2018** and on the website [www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk)

**11. What makes the ‘Our Work of Art’ project/approach different?**

The project has been particularly successful in:

* Creating partnership working between clients, creatives and project managers that built on each other’s strengths;
* Developing multiple sources of funding to extend the project’s beneficial impact
* Jointly agreeing needs and creative solutions;
* Developing creative activities that could engage a wide range of abilities, but offered both challenge and evident pride in achievement;
* Recruiting, training and developing 40 ‘younger older’ volunteers who have:
	+ Significantly extended the capacity of the professional artist, at minimal cost;
	+ Not only benefitted from involvement, but have taken an important role in developing and implementing the project;
	+ Added to local social capital, which will have broader and longer term benefits.

**For further information contact:**

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[**www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk**](http://www.kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk)

**The ‘Our Work of Art 2019 – With these hands’ Exhibition 18-31st March 2019** (Free)

At Garage Coffee @ Fruitworks, 1-2 Jewry Lane, Canterbury, CT1 2NR