

Belfast Healthy Cities News Release

CULTURE & ARTS CAN SUPPORT WELLBEING



Nigel McMahon, Chair, Belfast Healthy Cities; Speaker: Johanna Reiman, Executive Director of the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association; Culture Minister; Joan Devlin, Chief Executive, Belfast Healthy Cities and Speaker Maurice Kinkead, East Belfast Partnership.

The role of Northern Ireland's cultural and arts sector in promoting good health and wellbeing was examined at a seminar in Belfast. The event "Promoting Culture and Arts is Good for Health" was organised by the World Health Organization (WHO) body, Belfast Healthy Cities and took place at the MAC.

Research has shown that participating in cultural activities helps to enhance quality of life and has a positive impact on self-esteem and mental wellbeing.

Joan Devlin, Chief Executive, Belfast Healthy Cities, said Belfast boasted a rich, diverse and unique cultural sector and that there is a clear link between culture and community wellbeing.

"Culture, the arts and heritage can help address social inclusion, strengthen mental health and tackle inequalities by creating opportunities for people to engage positively within their communities and in turn with their city,"

Speakers included Johanna Reiman, Executive Director of the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association and Toni Ekroos, Youth Services, Turku, Finland, who shared their experiences of embedding cultural activities for health and wellbeing in their city and how these have impacted on the health of children and adults alike.

The delegates from Turku also shared the learning and legacy of being the European Capital of Culture 2011 and highlighted their strategic approach and current initiatives.

Joan Devlin said culture and the arts also contribute towards economic prosperity.

"Culture and the arts can also create wealth by supporting jobs and attracting visitors.

"Research has shown the importance of social participation and the sense of belonging for health and wellbeing. Culture and the arts can be used as tools to strengthen community development; encourage integration of communities; promote health and wellbeing and social regeneration particularly in areas of high inequalities and deprivation."

She added: "We were delighted to welcome our Finnish guests to the seminar."

The seminar was addressed by Culture Minister Carál Ní Chuilín, who said,

“The arts have a very important role to play in delivering the transformation of our society. Arts and culture can strengthen communities, bring people together and remove social barriers.

“My Department’s objective is to fully harness the power of the creative and cultural sectors to contribute to the wellbeing of our communities and towns and cities. Across the Department we encourage innovative approaches to address social exclusion, enhance education and support health and wellbeing.

“Today’s event supported the development and promotion of arts and culture and includes examples of good practice from elsewhere. It was an opportunity to learn from international speakers, and for Belfast and the north of Ireland to build on this learning.”

[View presentations from the seminar](#)

[View videos from the event](#)