

News Release

London festival of culture announced to tackle mental health unfairness

London's citywide movement to improve mental health, Thrive LDN, has announced it is organising a festival of cultural activity in London to coincide with World Mental Health Day (WMHD) on Wednesday, 10 October 2018.

In partnership with Mental Health Foundation and the Mayor of London's Culture Team, the *Thrive LDN Culture* initiative will join up with Brixton Reel Film Festival to enable Londoners to share their experiences directly with a wide audience through filmed story telling.

This year's WMHD theme of 'Young People's Mental Health in a Changing World' will steer the *Thrive LDN Culture* programme and Thrive LDN and partners will work with young Londoners on the festival. Poor mental health is more prominent in some groups of society than others. The festival will particularly seek to engage with young Londoners who are at greater risk of developing poor mental health, such as African-Caribbean, Latin, Portuguese speaking, Black LGBTQ+ and Asian LGBTQ+ Londoners, to amplify traditionally unheard voices and perspectives on mental health and wellbeing in the capital.

As part of the festival's programme of events participants will be encouraged to record their stories on their mobile phone, discussing their experience of poor mental health and how they overcame this, or have learned to live with it. They will be mentored by local community film production facilitators and these films will be screened in community spaces on World Mental Health Day.

Elsewhere, Brixton Reel will organise a series of screenings from a new range of films from Cannes and other international film festivals featuring diverse young people and children's experiences, as well as facilitating cabaret, debate, food, and music events.

At City Hall the Mayor's Peer Outreach team is working with partners to present an amazing day of activities and films which showcase all the fantastic work being done by young people with support from organisations across the city. The day will start with a short film festival from midday, followed by an evening of showcase and performances. It is expected that over 300 young people will be involved and attend.

The *Thrive LDN Culture* initiative follows recommendations from an independent report conducted earlier this year which identified opportunities for arts and cultural activities to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Londoners.

The report, carried out by Nikki Crane Associates, concluded that whilst arts and culture in London has great potential to support wellbeing, tackle inequalities and engage people from all backgrounds, there remains a disparity of access to arts and culture across London with a lack of joined up activity in this area.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "The wellbeing of children and young Londoners is vital if we are to build a healthy and successful future for our capital. It's important that all

communities feel able to speak openly about their mental health and the support they need, and that's why we are working so hard to improve awareness. The Thrive LDN Culture festival will be a great opportunity for young people to share their experiences about mental health and learn more from each other in an entertaining and educational way."

Mental Health Foundation's director of development and delivery, Isabella Goldie, said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with Thrive LDN and the Mayor's Culture Team to create a unique mental health focussed film programme alongside young people from right across the city. The arts provide one of the most effective ways for people to enter into discussions around issues that can be difficult to explore in other ways.

"Stigma creates an environment where people often feel ashamed to talk about mental health, however through film we are able to create a safe distance that can facilitate open and honest debate. We know that young people are facing a great many pressures that are impacting on their mental health with rising numbers showing signs of distress such as self-harm, emotional problems in young girls and youth violence."

Cary Rajinder Sawhney, Brixton Reel Film Festival lead and director, ImagineAsia Productions, said: "Brixton Reel Film Festival uses film and arts to pioneer awareness of mental wellbeing amongst some of the UK's most excluded minority communities. This year we are delighted to be joining forces with Thrive LDN to take this free entry festival more widely across London. The partnership will allow the festival to serve a greater diversity of London residents and bring a much needed understanding of mental health and wellbeing to people who may experience economic or social exclusion. That said we pride ourselves on being a feel good event where everyone is welcome."

Dr Paul Plant, London deputy director for Public Health England, said: "Poor mental health has a negative impact on young people's physical health, educational attainment, employment prospects and social relationships, so it is important that we find new and innovative ways to put it in the spotlight. The *Thrive LDN Culture* festival is a positive opportunity to tackle stigma and ensure that young people from a wide range of backgrounds have their voices heard."

Una Carney, who heads up Thrive LDN, said: "Minority ethnic stories are rarely 'told', as mental health issues are often socially stigmatised and individuals sometimes face discrimination. Research outlines that there are few positive role models for minority communities to build their personal view of themselves on, especially in the area of mental health. The *Thrive LDN Culture* initiative will be a great way to amplify unheard or often excluded voices."

Various events and activities are planned throughout the autumn. For more information please email culture@thrivedn.co.uk or visit www.thrivedn.co.uk.

Ends

- For more information about the festival, please contact Thrive LDN via culture@thrivedn.co.uk.
- For further media enquiries, please contact james.ludley@nhs.net / 07795 665680.

Notes to Editors

Thrive LDN is a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners. It is supported by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan and led by the London Health Board, in partnership with Greater London Authority, Healthy London Partnership, NHS England (London Region), Public Health England (London Region) and London Councils. More information can be found at www.thriveldn.co.uk.

The Mayor of London's Culture Team deliver the Mayor's vision for culture ensuring that the city's amazing arts and culture continues to thrive and unite us. They create, commission and catalyse partnerships to bring to life ambitious outdoor events and contemporary culture for all to enjoy.

In its 9th year, **Brixton Reel Film Festival** is firmly established as the UK's leading outreach project on mental health and mental wellbeing for hard to reach BAME communities and has mainly worked in Lambeth, but also in Southwark, Lewisham and last year Camden.

The **Mental Health Foundation** is the UK's charity for everyone's mental health. With prevention at the heart of what they do, they aim to find and address the sources of mental health problems.