

Storytelling for Health and Wellbeing Symposium 2026



22nd and 23rd June 2026

'Unheard Voices'

University of South Wales, Cardiff, CF24 2FN

Delegate Pack



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales



University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf Morgannwg
University Health Board

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WELCOME

Public Health Wales, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, the University of South Wales and partners are delighted to welcome you to this year's gathering of 'Storytelling for Health and Wellbeing', which will take place on Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd June 2026 at the Atrium, University of South Wales, Cardiff, CF24 2FN. The focus of this event is "Unheard Voices".

At this conference we will acknowledge and celebrate storytelling for health and wellbeing, share and understand good practice, and learn from Welsh and International communities through dialogue and exchange. We are so pleased to be able to bring such a diverse and esteemed group of speakers and delegates together here in Cardiff to share some of the exceptional work that has been building on the well-established evidence for storytelling for health and wellbeing. The work being shared at this conference by speakers and delegates is innovative, creative, ethical, and, above all, disrupts the power balance and champions the voices of those who might otherwise not be heard in health and wellbeing settings.

While you are here, we hope you will make valuable connections and leave feeling inspired for your future storytelling for health and wellbeing practice.

Thania, Amy, Leah, Roiyah, Emily, and Emily

Thania Acarón, Amy Davis, Leah Salter, Roiyah Saltus, Emily Underwood-Lee, and Emily Van de Venter

Conference Conveners

KEEPING SAFE

Storytelling about and for health and wellbeing can, and should, elicit strong emotional reactions for both teller and listener. This is something that we have learnt over our careers and experienced at previous conferences. Within the programme, we have tried to incorporate plenty of time for rest and for informal sharing and conversation with other delegates. If you find that you need a short break or some additional support, please refer to the conference desk who can signpost you to resources. We also have a number of therapeutic practitioners present at the conference who will be happy to help if further intervention is needed – again, just ask at the reception desk and they can point you in the direction of someone who can support you.

ITINERARY

Monday 22nd June

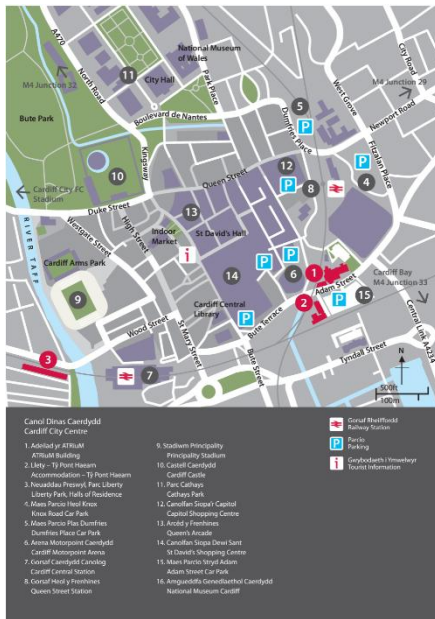
9.30am	Registration and coffee (Foyer)			Exhibitions (Foyer) WAHWN and Arts Council Wales, Artist – Pauline Le Britton, MA Arts Health and Wellbeing, Age Cymru – Jon Pountney and Kelly Barr
10am	Opening performance – House of Deviant (Foyer)			
10.45am	Welcome – Martin Steggall, Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation, University of South Wales Opening – Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (Cinema, CAB205)			
11.30am	Keynote – Lesley Goodburn, Head of Public Involvement and Engagement, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Chair: Leah Salter (Cinema, CAB205)			
12.20pm	Lunch (Foyer)			
1.15pm	Hapus Programme commissions - Public Health Wales Chair: Emily van de Venter (Cinema, CAB205)	Workshop - House of Deviant (Dance Studio, CAD006)		
2pm	Break			
2.15pm	Storytelling Through Movement Workshop Paula Jardim, Life-Centric Arts Practitioner (Zen Room, CAB403)	Stories Speaking to Healthcare Experience Anna Suschitzky, Storytelling Facilitator Katie Henderson, Arts in Health Practitioner Chair: Roiyah Saltus (Seminar Room, CAD302)	Making Visible Community Stories Gemma Jolly, Head of Health & Wellbeing, The Reading Agency Marsha O'Mahony, Writer and Oral Historian Anne Holloway, Poet and Independent Publisher, Big White Shed Chair: Sophia Kier-Byfield (Seminar Room, CAD306)	
3.15pm	Break (Foyer)			
3.30pm	Patient Stories - Healthcare Wales Digital Storytelling Network (Cinema, CAB205)	MenoMove: Moving Menopause Wellness - Thania Acarón, The Body Hotel CIC (Dance Studio, CAD006)		
4.45pm	Reflections - Jessica Jones, Aberbeeg Hospital Director, Elysium, Emily van de Venter, Consultant in Public Health / Interim Director of Health Improvement, Public Health Wales, and Prue Thimbleby, Arts and Health Practitioner. Chair: Roiyah Saltus (Cinema, CAB205)			
5.15pm	Close			

Tuesday 23rd June

9.30am	Registration and coffee (Foyer)		
9.45am	Welcome: Opening - Ciara Rogers, National Director for Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, NHS Wales (Cinema, CAB205)		
10.15am	Break		
10.30am	Resilience, Protest and Change Emma Bevan-Henderson, Community Project Facilitator, The Community Shawl Project William Powell, Applied Theatre Practitioner, Daiva Ivanauskaitė-Brown and Trinidad Cabezón Droguett, The Village Storytelling Centre Chair: Leonie Sharrock (Zen Room, CAB403)	Elder Wisdom and Meaning Making in Dementia Care Liz Morrison, Carer and Writer, Eleanor Glover, Artist and Teacher Leah Salter and Thelma Rees, Lead Family and Systemic Psychotherapist and Psychotherapist, CTMUHB Chair: Eileen Little (Seminar Room, CAD306)	An Introduction to Open Theatre Practice Richard Hayhow (Company Director) and Holly Bateman (Teaching Differently Lead and Practitioner), Open Theatre Company (Studio, CAB414)
11.30am	Break		
11.45am	Community and Agency Michael Brown, Professor, University of South Wales Eva Ritter, Independent Researcher, Founder and Head of Nordic Perspectives Nina Worthington and Jacqueline Tallent, Principal Research Fellow and Research Fellow, Canterbury Christ Church University Chair: Roiyah Saltus (Seminar Room, CAD302)	Co-Production and Lived Experience Sophia Kier-Byfield Senior Research Assistant, University of South Wales Glenn Miles, Child Sexual Abuse Survivor, Independent Researcher, Trainer, Evaluator, Networker Chair: Leah Salter (Seminar Room, CAD306)	
12.45pm	Lunch (Foyer)		
1.45pm	WAHWN Panel - Rosie Dow, Head of Arts Health and Wellbeing, Arts Council Wales, Dr Helen Munro, Consultant Community Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and Clinical Lead Women's Health Network, Sarah Goodey, Arts Lead, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Claire Furlong, Executive Director, Literature Wales. Chair: Angela Rogers, Executive Director, WAHWN. (Cinema, CAB205)		
2.45pm	Break (Foyer)		
3.00pm	Performing the Self - Leah Salter and Emily Underwood-Lee (Studio, CAB414)	Storytelling Reflective Practice Network Hilary Dyer and Anna Suschitzky (Zen Room, CAB403)	
3.45pm	Reflections Jessica Jones, Aberbeeg Hospital Director, Elysium, Amy Davies, Principle Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales, Prue Thimbleby, Arts and Health Practitioner. Chair: Roiyah Saltus (Cinema, CAB205)		
4.15pm	Closing performance – Sparky Samba (Foyer)		
5.00pm	Close		

Exhibitions (Foyer)
 WAHWN and Arts Council Wales, Artist – Pauline Le Britton, MA Arts Health and Wellbeing, Age Cymru – Jon Pountney and Kelly Barr

GETTING HERE



Google maps [link](#)

The postcode is CF24 2FN.

By Train

The University of South Wales Cardiff campus is a 10-minute walk from Cardiff Central train station and a 5-minute walk from Cardiff Queen Street train station.

By Car

From junctions 29, 32 or 33 of the M4:

There is a large car park opposite the University building on Adam Street, alternative parking can be found at Knox Road. You need to turn left off Fitzalan

Place to reach Knox Road car park if you are coming from the University building.

By Coach

Cardiff is served by regular National Express services from Sofia Gardens and Megabus coaches from Kingsway. Sofia Gardens is a 25-minute walk from the Atrium while Kingsway is 15-minutes away on foot.

By Plane

Cardiff International Airport is just 11 miles from the city centre and is serviced by regular bus and rail links. London's Heathrow Airport is about two-and-a-half-hour drive away. There is also an airport at Bristol.

Where to Stay

Search for and book accommodation at: www.visitcardiff.com/accommodation

Food, Drink and Shops

The University building is approximately 5 minutes' walk from the food and shopping hubs in Cardiff city centre, with a variety of independent and chain outlets. Exit via the back of the building and walk out of the car park up to Guildford Crescent and then onto Churchill Way. From here you can head along to either Queen Street or the St David's Centre and on into the city centre.

Storytelling for Health Conference Manifesto

Written by Prue Thimbleby and Emily Underwood-Lee, January 2021

We **AIM** to embed storytelling within healthcare settings through:

- creating cross disciplinary conversations and collaborations between artists and health practitioners
- showcasing good practice
- building evidence for the impact and outcomes of storytelling for health

STORYTELLING FOR HEALTH

Storytelling might include traditional tales, performance telling, first person narratives conveyed digitally, or through literary, visual, performance, or other creative means. Central to our understanding of Storytelling for Health is that it places the experience of the teller at the centre of the tale - through listening to subjective experience we can develop empathy and knowledge. Storytelling is not a case history but will enable us to understand how another person experiences a particular situation - the truth of emotion and consequence. Storytelling is a way of understanding our current situation and imagining how things might be different.

PRINCIPLES

1. Storytelling for Health is **INTERACTIVE**

We include performance, dance, art exhibitions, films, poetry, and boat trips, as well as short talks, provocations, interviews, workshops, and panels. All sessions include a large element of audience dialogue. We believe that conversations and activities are key to generating ideas and insights.

2. Storytelling for Health is **INCLUSIVE**

We work hard to make the conference truly cross disciplinary with artists, academics, healthcare staff and patients all equally valued and welcomed. The conference is open to new ideas; embraces a variety of perspectives; recognises that storytelling and health are different but equal; and explores what we can learn by listening to one another, exchanging ideas, and working together.

We believe that a broad range of presentations from a diverse group of people creates energy and commitment. We actively include people of all races, backgrounds, genders and abilities.

3. Storytelling for Health is **AFFORDABLE**

Most conferences are not affordable by individual artists or health professionals. We waive conference fees whenever possible through a bursary scheme that anyone can apply for in exchange for volunteering either to run an activity or write a reflection. The bursary scheme is not means-tested or dependent on professional or educational status – anyone who feels they can benefit from a bursary can apply.

4. Storytelling for Health is **ACCESSIBLE**

We strive for accessibility in all aspects of the conference from the venue to using simple, plain, language to present, advertise, document, and to disseminate the content of the conference. We ask all participants what they need as part of our booking process and attempt to meet those needs whenever possible. We recognise that increasing access benefits everyone.

5. Storytelling for Health is **RIGOROUS**

We recognise our expertise and the limitations of our expertise. We value the expertise of others. Claims made at the conference must be backed by evidence. We acknowledge that evidence will take many forms. Submissions are selected through a peer-review process. Space for critical conversations is provided after each presentation. We create an environment of supportive questioning that helps to develop the discipline, rather than combative examination that seeks to catch people out.

6. Storytelling for Health is **HOSPITABLE**

We believe that a welcoming, hospitable environment where care is taken and shown will generate a community and enable us to think deeper and in more challenging ways. We provide: good food; plenty of space for conversation, breaks, and reflection; lots of performance storytelling and music; staff on hand to help, lend an ear, locate people, and show care.

7. Storytelling for Health has **WELSH ROOTS AND AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

We recognise the origins of the conference without retaining ownership in one organisation or individual. We welcome international contributors to Wales and take Wales out into the world. We let go of the conference so that it can spread to where it is needed, all the while paying respect to where it has come from.

FUTURE

The original conference conveners hope that Storytelling for Health can become a social movement that draws together practitioners from storytelling, health, the arts and academia. This will place stories at the heart of improving health care provision and enable first person narratives shared through story to inform all that we do. Our ambition is that the conference becomes peripatetic, with individuals and organisations able to create their own storytelling for health conferences and events guided by these principles.

BACKGROUND

The first Storytelling for Health conference was initiated by Prue Thimbleby, Arts coordinator at Swansea Bay Health Board, and convened in partnership with Emily Underwood-Lee, Associate Professor at the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales. It took place on 15th – 17th June 2017 at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea. We created a conference that considered the particular role that storytelling might have in relation to health and well-being. The second Storytelling for Health conference took place on 27th – 29th June 2019 at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea and the University of South Wales in Cardiff. The conferences drew together a community of over 400 practitioners from across the globe.

A variety of Storytelling for Health events have since been planned. We have created this manifesto to promote the growth of this community whilst acknowledging its roots and keeping faithful to the original ethos.