



Creative Health Briefing Paper

The 10 Year Plan: Neighbourhood Health

Context

In July 2025, the Government published the [10 Year Plan for England: fit for the future](#), outlining three major shifts in health delivery, including a move from hospitals to communities. This is being operationalised through [Neighbourhood Health](#) Centres and Services, starting with a roll-out to [43 places, backed by £10-million](#).

The pilots prioritise working-class areas, coastal towns, and communities where healthy life expectancy is lowest. Evidence shows that [people in deprived areas live more years in ill health](#). Women on the lowest incomes have seen [life expectancy fall](#) after decades of progress. Creative Health is proven to reduce inequalities in precisely these communities.

'Intellectual stimulation, a sense of purpose, engagement in your community and a fulfilling social life are [as important as diet, exercise and medical care](#) when it comes to living a long and healthy life'.

- [Helen Chatterjee](#), Professor of Human and Ecological Health, University College London

Those in areas of higher deprivation are [less likely to engage in creative](#) or community activities, yet they [experience greater benefits](#) to their health and wellbeing when they do. Accordingly, to reduce health inequalities we need to [create the conditions](#) for the benefits of cultural and creative activities to spread to all members of society.

The Case for Creative Health in Neighbourhood Models

Holistic Hubs Without Stigma

Neighbourhood centres can co-locate health professionals alongside community and cultural provision such as peer-support groups, libraries, foodbanks, and creative programmes. This normalises access, reduces stigma, and builds on trusted gateways already provided by cultural organisations. A example of where this approach has already achieved success is [Liskeard Library](#), who embedded health checks into the library, and [Library of Birmingham](#), hosts of the Ikon gallery-curated health promotion exhibition *What are the Odds?*

Capacity for Pressured Services

GPs face [rising workload, burnout](#), and long waits. Similarly, staff describe the [demand for mental health services](#) as 'unmanageable'. Creative Health offers relief by engaging patients on waiting lists (e.g. [Arts Boost](#) in Wales reduced CAMHS pressures; elsewhere [singing support for COPD](#) resulted in 21% decline in GP appointments).

Creative Health provisions demonstrate impact on under-performing ICB workstreams (e.g. [Gloucestershire ICB](#)'s Creative Health Data Dashboard shows creative health is their second most effective pulmonary intervention and among the cheapest). Digital ambitions in the 10-Year Plan create further opportunities to track value and impact at local level.

EDIB and Local Trusted Leaders

[Community Wellbeing Champions](#) show how local figures provide insight into barriers and pathways for change. They demonstrate that creative, trusted engagement is central to effective neighbourhood health.

Diverse practitioners are essential to reach communities misunderstood or underserved by mainstream systems (e.g. [healing racial trauma through art](#), [creatively supporting LGBTQIA+ mental health](#) and [disability-friendly music for wellbeing provision](#)). Embedding inclusive practice ensures neighbourhoods fulfil their promise of tackling inequalities rather than replicating them.

Current Practice and Case Studies

Neighbourhood Health Simulation

[PPL](#) have been working with health system leaders, VCSE groups, and those with lived experience to co-design [simulations](#) of the neighbourhood health service, in London and Manchester. They demonstrate the role of VCSE organisations as crucial, with their involvement enhancing service delivery and participant engagement. Simulations' evidence supports the integration of creative health practices, [emphasising agency](#) and hope in health service delivery.

Community Engagement

A project in Soham, East Cambridgeshire, entitled '[What Matters to Us](#)' worked with over 1,000 children to map and reimagine prescriptions for wellbeing. Led by [Full Scope](#), in collaboration with the local Integrated Neighbourhood Programme Manager, the project [integrates children's feedback](#) into the redesign of mental health services and the new regional children's hospital.

Our Stories, Our Voices by [Mimar Collective](#) offers narrative-based creative sessions at a [24/7 Neighbourhood Mental Health Centre](#) in Bordesley Green, Birmingham. Supported by Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, the sessions serve diverse, marginalised individuals from an area of high socioeconomic deprivation and have been described by clinicians and participants, alike, as a lifeline.

East Sussex County Council's Public Health teams are working with and through communities to address the structural drivers of poor health in coastal areas. Projects such as the [Mr. Hastings and St Leonard's men's health project](#) are rooted in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), lived experience, and community mobilisation. This project uses creative activities and approaches to raise awareness, engage men, share stories, build community, and produce a strong visual identity, tracing ripple effects through creative evaluation.

Community Decision-Making

[Create Gloucestershire](#) co-ordinates neighbourhood community chests, enabling residents to commission grassroots creative projects aligned to local needs.

Similarly, in North Somerset, partners from health, mental health, social care, and VCSE sectors pooled resources to create a creative health community chest. This builds upon their previous work in establishing a creative health board. Locality Director, [David Moss](#) – who supports the coordination of a Wave 1 Neighbourhood Health Implementation Pilot (NHIP) – notes that neighbourhood transformation requires “unlearning” hierarchical behaviours and working at “the speed of trust”, with change emerging through relationships rather than short-term metrics. This supports a move towards neighbourhood-based, creative approaches to health, and community-led responses.

In [NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICS](#), a [Creative Health and Wellbeing Partnership](#) brings together culture, arts, public health and the VCSE sector, ensuring the creative/cultural sector is part of the neighbourhood care conversation. Their neighbourhood-health model has also been selected as part of the national pilot.

Creative Health Strategy

St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub in Havering as a live example of integrated creative health in a neighbourhood health centre. In their [Creative Health Strategy](#), the three stands are: 1) permanent artistic design features inside and outside the building, 2) tailored creative interventions linked to specific conditions, and 3) socially oriented programming to prevent poor health, reduce isolation, promote social engagement and healthy living. The strategy has been endorsed by Lord Darzi, the NHS Medical Director, Arts Council England, the National Centre for Creative Health, and the late Lord Howarth.

Creative Health Bridging Roles

The [Creative Health Associates Programme](#) demonstrated the importance of “bridging” roles that support local networks and enable knowledge mobilisation around the benefits of arts and creativity for health and wellbeing. Neighbourhood presence will help this knowledge to be [spread to members of the community](#). An example of best practice in embedding creative health at the neighbourhood level is [Number 11 Arts](#), who use a model of Local Arts Forums.

Joined up Working

NHS Derby and Derbyshire is [recognised nationally](#) for its [Team Up](#) and [place-alliance](#) approach neighbourhood health. [Penelope Blackwell](#), Chair and Clinical Director of Neighbourhood Health and Care, hopes to co-develop a creative health strategy, building upon initiatives such as their [Creatives in Place](#) pilot and [Non-Prescriptive](#) social prescribing magazine.

[Walsall Together Partnership](#), leaders of another National Neighbourhood Implementation site, are developing teams with integrated neighbourhood care as the backbone. They have long delivered creative health offers and hold plans to continue this successful approach within their neighbourhood partnership working.

Suffolk and NE Essex ICB have also been embedding creative approaches into neighbourhood support. Examples include [creative health social prescribing](#), which links patients to artist-led modules, and the [libraries](#) and [museums](#) sector working in partnership with health and care to improve wellbeing in older people and those with long-term conditions.

Expert Discussion

Dr Minal Bakhai, National Director for Primary Care and Community Transformation and Improvement, NHS England, emphasises [the necessity of a partnership approach](#) to healthcare, recognising that the NHS cannot address the complex needs of patients at the neighbourhood level alone. The Implementation Programme aims to create a framework for success, extending beyond traditional metrics towards patient-reported outcomes and other new approaches.

Professor Martin Marshall, Chair of the Nuffield Trust and National Centre for Creative Health, maintains that the NHS must better comprehend the concepts of neighbourhoods, [recognising them as vibrant communities](#) rather than mere localities. True devolution of power and resources is necessary for effective community engagement in health. Investment in infrastructure and practitioners is essential.

Teresa Salami-Oru, Consultant in Public Health, [Coastal Community & Creative Health](#), positions creative and community-engaged research as [essential to understanding and addressing health inequalities](#). She explains that this type of research uncovers local disparities, brings forward the real experiences of those most affected, and shapes targeted neighbourhood interventions.

Dr Alexandra Caulfield, National Medical Director's Clinical Fellow in Mental Health at NHS England and Honorary Research Fellow, Nuffield Department of Primary Care, Oxford University, identifies [several barriers to participation](#), including cost, transport, safety concerns, fear of patronisation, and perceptions of the arts as exclusive or skills based. She argues that research must better document practical conditions such as referral routes, venue types, and engagement models to allow replication.

Recommendations

1. **Embed Creative Health in Neighbourhood Health Services** – co-locate creative provision in new centres as a routine, not peripheral, offer.
2. **Invest in diverse, local leaders** – expand models such as Community Wellbeing Champions and Community Chests to ensure trusted access and representation.
3. **Develop new roles in Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs)** – including Creative Health Leads, to support creative health literacy and patient access.
4. **Support evaluation and data** – scale the use of Creative Health dashboards to evidence impact on long-term conditions, inequalities, and cost savings.
5. **Join up national programmes** – ensure alignment between DCMS/Arts Council strategies and DHSC/ICS delivery, so creative health is integral to the 10-year vision.