



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 May 2023

The power of art and Hip Hop in mental health recovery

Creative endeavours have long been extolled as a powerful way to promote mental health and wellbeing. The month of May sees Mental Health Awareness Week focus on anxiety. It gives us all an opportunity to reflect on how we can tap into creativity to help such a prevalent problem and celebrate those campaigning for support for mental health through creativity.

One person, Debbie Teale, is doing just that. Her mental health recovery journey through art has changed her life, and she is using her experience to promote the transformative powers of creativity. Despite being in the mental health system since age eight, Debs found little solace in clinical interventions. She reached a crisis point, which left her feeling hopeless and like a burden to her children and society.

However, Debs' life changed forever when she attended a taster session at Artworks, an art studio for well-being. Despite having no prior interest in art, Debs took a chance and discovered a newfound passion for creativity. Through regular art sessions, Debs reduced her medication. She began to think differently and had a new zest for life.

Debs' experience highlights the importance of holistic approaches to mental health recovery, which go beyond traditional clinical interventions. Creativity allowed her to redefine her identity, which helped her recover from her struggles.

Debs now promotes creative expression as treatment in her roles as trustee for the National Centre for Creative Health and Patient Ambassador for the College of Medicine and Integrated Health.

Another inspirational pioneer of creative health is Kiz Manley, founder of Hip Hop HEALS. Her initiative aims to address mental health inequalities through Hip Hop.

After the tragic death of her sister in a car accident in 2000, Kiz was compelled to share her experiences with creativity to help cope with grief and trauma. This became more urgent as she discovered the lack of culturally competent care in the mental health system.

Hip Hop HEALS offers a resource toolkit to help people manage symptoms of mental illness, especially Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is renowned for being difficult to manage or treat. Therapeutic Hip Hop uses the culture of Hip Hop with various creative health modalities, for example, music and narrative therapy. It also offers a creative outlet which allows individuals to reflect on lyrics as they relate to their life situations. This approach provides a safe space for youth and marginalised groups to explore their emotions



and learn stress-coping skills. With the help of a trained practitioner, it can also be used in therapy; for example, narrative and music therapy, to promote emotional regulation and aide the processing of difficult memories.

Hip Hop HEALS challenges structural racism in mental health care. The Birmingham-based project is reaching global communities by helping professionals reach those previously not served by traditional forms of therapy, like homeless communities. Ben Rafiqi, Co-Founder of Tabor Living, Birmingham's Independent Shelter Project, says after completing a Hip Hop HEALS programme: "it was clear to us that having this facility was essential to helping people experiencing homelessness improve their chances of gaining back control over their lives."

The project also hosts a lived experience podcast and training webinars, making its YouTube channel a go-to resource for helping professionals to better serve people, in alignment with their cultural heritage.

Creative therapeutic approaches provide promising ways to improve mental health. They foster resilience and empower people towards recovery. From a cathartic release of emotions through art to the empowering use of Hip Hop lyrics to promote self-awareness.

Creative health is emerging as a holistic and integrative approach beyond traditional talking therapies. It offers an outlet for people to express themselves and process their emotions in a safe and supportive environment. Moreover, it can reach diverse populations and address mental health inequalities. One participant says: "The creative writing was really inspirational. It was totally life-changing and has helped me overcome numerous things."

In a world where mental health challenges are prevalent, creative health offers a unique and practical approach that taps into the inherent creativity of the human spirit. As we recognise Mental Health Awareness Week, it is an opportunity to champion the power of the arts and creativity. These initiatives are paving the way to promoting positive mental health and recovery, hoping that more such services will become accessible to all.

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Note to Editors:

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Images available [here](#)



The National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) aims to advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration, helping to foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems. It was set up in response to Recommendation 1 in the APPG AHW report: [*Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*](#) and became a registered charity in 2020.

More information is available on the National Centre for Creative Health at <https://ncch.org.uk> @TheNCCH

About the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPG AHW)

The APPG AHW was formed in 2014 and is a cross party group of parliamentarians with a shared interest in the field of arts, health and wellbeing. The aim of the APPG AHW is to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to health and wellbeing and to stimulate progress towards making these benefits a reality across the country. The APPG AHW led a two-year inquiry 2015-17, which resulted in a report, [*Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*](#).

The National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) has data processing responsibility for the APPG AHW. The [Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) hosts information about the APPG AHW [here](#).

The creative health review is supported by a **panel of commissioners** with a wide breadth of expertise to help translate evidence for creative health into recommendations for policymakers, to encourage and inform the development of a cross-governmental creative health strategy. The panel includes:

- **Tracy Brabin**, Mayor of West Yorkshire, former Shadow Minister for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Shadow Minister for Cultural Industries.
- **Madeleine Bunting**, Author of *Labours of Love: The Crisis of Care* and former associate editor at Guardian
- **Tracey Crouch CBE MP**, Co-Chair of the APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, former Minister State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage and Minister for Loneliness.
- **Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP**, former Minister in Department of Health and Social Care and Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
- **Professor Baroness Ilora Finlay, Baroness Finlay of Llandaff**, Professor of Palliative Medicine and Crossbench Peer
- **Monty Don OBE**, leading garden writer and broadcaster.
- **Dr Darren Henley CBE**, CEO, Arts Council England
- **The Rt Hon. Lord Howarth of Newport CBE**, Chair of NCCH and Co-Chair of APPG AHW, former Schools Minister and Minister for Higher Education and Science; Employment, Equal Opportunities and Disabled People.
- **Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE**, Artistic Director, Young Vic



- **Professor Sir Michael Marmot**, Professor of Epidemiology at University College London and author of The Health Gap.
- **Professor Martin Marshall CBE**, Chair Royal College of General Practitioners and GP in Newham, East London
- **The Rt Hon. Baroness Estelle Morris of Yardley**, former Minister for Education and Labour Peer
- **James Sanderson**, Director of Community Health and Personalised Care, Community and Personalised Care Directorate at NHS England, previously CEO of The National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP)
- **Rob Webster CBE**, CEO NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
- **Alice Wiseman**, Director of Public Health, Gateshead
- **Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey OBE**, Crossbench Peer and currently Chair of the LGA Commission on Culture, former professor of Cultural Studies and Head of Culture at the Greater London Authority.