What the October 2026 Budget means for creative health

On 28th October 2026, the Chancellor of the Exchequer[a], John Healey, set out the 2026 Budget in Parliament. Its choices will shape public spending over the coming year and set the scene for bigger decisions due at next year's Spending Review. Understanding the Budget can help us see how to position creative health[b] so that it is more likely to be noticed by policymakers. This paper explains what the Budget said, what experts made of it, and where creative health stands to gain or lose.

Top level take away

This budget contains very little new money for health, culture or communities, and most of the hard decisions about public spending have been put off until next year.

The most important change for creative health is a promise to set up a protected pot of money for prevention. Whilst the scope of this pot has not yet been determined, the word "prevention" has been used across diverse disciplines to describe a particular approach to activity. Shaped by the disciplinary contexts it sits in, prevention can entail: services which support healthy behaviours to prevent an individuals need for clinical healthcare[1]; improving housing security to prevent homelessness; providing young people with 'a clear line of sight for high quality jobs' to prevent unemployment[2]; ensuring minimum access standards for transport so that poorer communities are not physically cut off from jobs and training opportunities; trauma-responsive mentoring to prevent at-risk youth from entering the criminal justice system; population-wide provision designed to build resilience ahead of national crises[3], and more.

Over the next year, the Government will decide what counts as prevention in the context of this protected budget. Now is the time for us to make the case for creative health's role within it!

The basics: what is a Budget?

The Budget is the Government's yearly plan for taxes and spending, set out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was the first Budget from Chancellor John Healey, and the first under Prime Minister Andy Burnham.[4] It comes with forecasts from the Office for

[a] The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the government's chief financial minister and is responsible for growing the UK economy, raising revenue through taxation or borrowing and for controlling public spending. He has overall responsibility for the work of the Treasury.

[b] Creative health means using arts, culture and creativity to support people's health and wellbeing.

Budget Responsibility, an independent body that predicts how the economy and the Government's finances are likely to do. This year, the war involving Iran, which has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, shaped those forecasts. The Chancellor said oil has risen from about $70 to well over $100 a barrel,[c] and gas prices have nearly tripled since February.[5]

Because creative health spans health, care, culture, education and communities, it is shaped by budgets and decisions across government. However, decisions about how much each government department can spend will not be made until the Spending Review in 2027.[d] Many of the experts quoted here see that as the real test.

Insight 1: power and money moving to local areas

The Budget set out a plan to give local areas more control over the money raised in them. From next year, mayors will receive 20% of business rates, a tax paid on business premises, and from 2028 they will also get a share of income tax. The aim is for all business rates to be kept locally by the end of the decade.[5]

The Budget also set out a £210 million Community Assets Programme in England. This includes £125 million to help 60 councils turn derelict buildings into what their communities need, from health centres to civic spaces, and £65 million to help communities rescue buildings and businesses at risk of closure, such as pubs and sports clubs, with details due in early 2027.[6,7] It supports the Government's new high streets strategy, *Hope on the High Street*, which names cultural spaces among the new 'anchors' that high streets need.[6]

From 2028, mayors and other strategic authorities[e] will be able to charge an overnight visitor levy – a small charge on hotel and other overnight stays.[5,8] This could help creative health – for example, the Campaign for the Arts said the new local powers, including visitor levies, could benefit culture if they are used well.[9] The Royal Shakespeare Company has called for at least half of any visitor levy to be ringfenced for culture,[10] and Edinburgh has already agreed to spend £2.75 million from its own levy on a new arts hub.[11] The Government has suggested that levies could fund cultural and visitor attractions, but it will not require this, and local leaders will set out their plans for the money by March 2028.[6]

At Prime Minister's Questions on Budget day, Burnham described Sir Michael Marmot's 2010 review of health inequalities, *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, as still being his blueprint for closing gaps in health, and spoke about a personal, "names not numbers" way of supporting people.[5] Creative health works in a very similar way, through relationships and places. Burnham is also likely to have been influenced by the success of creative health in Greater Manchester during his time as mayor. Writing in the Big Issue in May 2026, he described cultural organisations there working side by side with health services, and Greater Manchester as becoming "a creative health city region".[12]

A bigger shift is also under way. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 makes culture one of the official responsibilities of strategic authorities for the first time. The Government's plans to 'rewire the state' also promise local people more control over

[c] Oil prices are given in US dollars because oil is bought and sold around the world in that currency. This is also how the Chancellor gave the figures in his speech.

[d] A Spending Review sets each government department's budget for several years ahead. A Budget mainly deals with taxes and the overall totals, while a Spending Review shares the money out between departments such as health, education and culture.

[e] Strategic authorities are groups of councils that work together across a larger area, such as a city region. Many, but not all, are led by an elected mayor.

how cultural and sporting investment is decided in their areas, which could include funding currently held by Arts Council England and Sport England, with more detail due within 2026.

Arts Council England is already giving local knowledge a bigger role in its next funding round through new Regional Boards.[6] Strategic authorities must also consider how to improve health and reduce health inequalities in their regions.[13] For creative health, this makes mayors and strategic authorities increasingly important to influence, alongside national funders.

However, there are risks here too. The Local Government Association said the offer to councils themselves amounts to no more than an extra 20% of business rates, in place of existing grants, in three years' time.[14] Yet councils, rather than mayors, are the biggest public funders of culture in England, and they also manage the public health grant, so they are often the main local funders of creative health.[13] The Chancellor's examples of what mayors might fund were transport, regeneration and a sports district, rather than health or culture.[5] Centre for Cities notes that local gains from business rates can still be taken back when the system is periodically reset.[15] And because the system rewards places whose economies are growing, the areas with the poorest health may gain least, a concern the Liberal Democrat leader raised in the debate.[5]

Insight 2: culture and the creative workforce

Culture received little attention. Arts Professional reported that none of the arts sector's main requests were met, and the Campaign for the Arts said the spending plans point to a further squeeze on culture. Its director, Jack Gamble, added that the costs of cutting culture are felt in people's wellbeing and in the life of local communities.[9]

To help pay for defence, departments' capital budgets will be cut by a further 1% from 2027/28 to 2029/30, which could affect the buildings that culture and schools depend on.[16] The Office for Budget Responsibility also expects National Lottery grants, a major source of funding for arts, heritage and community projects, to stay flat in cash terms until 2031/32, which means a steady fall in their real value.[6] Lottery funding supports a great deal of creative health work, so this fall will be felt across the sector. There was also no targeted help with energy bills for cultural venues, even though wholesale gas prices have nearly tripled since February.[6]

Discussing their own position on spending, during the post-Budget debate, the Leader of the Opposition proposed £70 billion of spending cuts.[5] Moreover, the Conservatives have proposed a £1 billion cut to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with a large part falling on the arts.[17] Because the prevention ringfence will not exist until 2027 (see more below), a change in the political picture could alter it before it begins.

Nevertheless, some measures do help. Small retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will pay no business rates if their property's rateable value is under £18,000, up from £12,000.[5] The Music Venue Trust welcomed higher relief for live music venues, which will rise to a 35% discount from April 2027.[18,6] Theatres were not so lucky. Hannah Essex, chief executive of the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre, had asked for this relief to cover theatres and other performance venues, but it still applies only to leisure venues such as pubs, clubs and live music venues.[9] Theatres and cinemas should still benefit from a cap on rising bills. For retail, hospitality and leisure properties, which can include theatres and cinemas, increases in business rates will be limited to inflation in 2027/28 and 2028/29, although this is only a two-year reprieve.[6]

As many creative health providers are charities that already get relief, the main benefit is likely to come through the venues they use. Freelance artists, who deliver much creative

health work, will gain from a tripling of the tax-free trading allowance from £1,000 to £3,000 from April 2027. From April 2029, self-employed fathers and partners will also be able to claim two weeks' parental pay for the first time.[5,6]

From April 2029, the self-employed will start paying tax in smaller, more frequent instalments, and Bectu, the creative industries union, warns that freelancers could end up paying tax before their clients have paid them.[6] On the other hand, the 3.9% rise in the minimum wage adds to costs for small organisations, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations said investment in outcomes must be matched by investment in the organisations that deliver them.[19]

Insight 3: health, social care and carers

The Budget said little about the NHS beyond £190 million for winter pressures and a review of NHS productivity and artificial intelligence.[20,5] For health, the larger story is the cost of living. Rising bills and falling real incomes can widen gaps in health between richer and poorer communities, and make it harder for people to take part in activities that cost money or involve travel.

To help with the cost of living, the Chancellor announced a £100 payment this winter for about 20 million households in council tax bands A to D, costing £2.6 billion, and a longer cut to VAT on electricity, now running until July. Experts were critical of how the energy help was aimed. The Resolution Foundation said the £100 payment goes to around four in five homes in England, so it is not targeted at those most in need, and yet some lower-income households in higher council tax bands will miss out. It expects energy bills to average £2,210 in 2027, around £600 more than in 2026, and said the support covers less than a fifth of that rise.[21] The New Economics Foundation calculated that more than a million low-income households will not qualify.[22] For creative health, this means that many of the people who stand to gain most from creative activities may find it harder to afford to take part this winter.

For unpaid carers, the Budget ends the Carer's Allowance cliff edge, where a carer loses their whole allowance if they earn even a penny over the limit. It will be replaced by a taper, with £1 of support taken away for each extra £1 earned, from 2030/31.[23,24]

The Budget also confirmed that changes to the state pension triple lock[f] from the next Parliament will help pay for a National Care Service, giving older people in England free personal care.[24] There is no timetable or detail yet.[25] Personal care means help with everyday tasks such as washing, eating and taking medication. In Scotland, which has offered free personal care for around 25 years, it also includes support with general wellbeing.[26]

Responses have been cautious. The Nuffield Trust said that, apart from Carer's Allowance, the Budget lacked any meaningful action on social care, and warned that starving councils of money now could leave services so threadbare that the promised reforms will not be feasible.[27,28] Its earlier analysis notes that in Scotland, free personal care has often only been available to people with high needs, which limits support that could stop needs from growing. It also puts the cost at an estimated £7.5 billion by the end of the next Parliament.[26] The King's Fund points out that pressure on adult social care is expected to be greatest in the 2030s, as people born in the post-war baby boom reach their 80s, so even on a faster timetable the service would only start just in time.[24]

[f]The triple lock is the promise that the state pension rises each year in line with whichever is highest out of earnings growth, price rises or 2.5%.

For creative health, the design stage is the opportunity. If wellbeing is part of what counts as personal care, as it is in Scotland, there is room to argue that connection and meaningful activity belong in a National Care Service, and that it should help people before their needs become severe. To find out more about NCCH's position on social care reform, you can visit our Casey Commission evidence submission on adult social care,[29] and the upcoming publication of our select committee evidence submission on children's social care.

Insight 4: children, young people and education

There was some good news for young children. Up to £5 million a year for three years, £15 million in total, will help organisations such as BookTrust and Imagination Library give books to young children.[16] The Campaign for the Arts welcomed the funding in the 2026 National Year of Reading, noting that only just over a third of 8 to 18-year-olds say they enjoy reading in their free time.[6] NCCH has highlighted this kind of work in its evidence to Parliament. Its submissions on the early years and on children and young people's mental health both point to BookTrust's Bookstart scheme, which gives books to families and supports parents to read with their babies, as a way of reaching low-income families.[30,31] There will also be £60 million a year for PE and school sport partnerships from 2027,[7] but nothing similar for arts or music education, which gives a clear argument for equal treatment.[16]

Elsewhere, the picture for education is tougher. The Association of School and College Leaders noted that the Chancellor did not say the word "education" once. The Office for Budget Responsibility projects that spending on mainstream schools will fall by 2% a year in real terms from 2028/29, and that councils' deficits on special educational needs and disabilities will rise from £2.8 billion to £5.7 billion by 2027/28.[16]

The Government will respond to the Milburn Review, on young people who are not in education, employment or training, before the end of the year, followed by a white paper in early 2027 and legislation later that year.[7] The review's interim report found that six in ten of these young people have never had a job, and that their number could rise to more than 1.25 million within five years.[32] The review's final recommendations are likely to test the Government's priorities. As Chris Smyth, the Financial Times' public policy editor, put it, "Alan Milburn's recommendations on reshaping the youth welfare system — set to be published within the next two weeks — will call on Burnham to find billions of pounds more to fund employment schemes. Burnham will have to choose which path to tread between gilt investors demanding cuts on one side and Labour MPs demanding more support for young people on the other."[33]

The National Youth Agency said cuts to youth work have removed the safe spaces and trusted relationships that help keep young people engaged.[34] The chief executive of the Roundhouse, a London arts venue, said access to arts and creative spaces is essential as young people's mental health worsens.[9] The Centre for Young Lives found that spending on early help in children's services fell by more than 40% between 2010/11 and 2024/25, while spending on crisis-stage help rose by 58%.[35] Together, these make a strong case for creative and youth work approaches as part of prevention for children and young people.

Insight 5: a protected budget for prevention

The measures above will take effect over the coming months. One announcement in this Budget looks further ahead, and it may matter most for creative health in the long run. The Chancellor said that at next year's Spending Review he will ringfence prevention spending – i.e. money set aside that cannot be moved to pay for other things.[5] This new type of budget

will be called the Preventative Departmental Expenditure Limit, or PDEL.[g] The Treasury says it will help different budget holders share resources and responsibility, and will protect programmes whose benefits build up over time.[36] The idea was first put forward by the think tank Demos in 2023, and has since been backed by the Institute for Government and the Health Foundation, among others.[37,36] The Health Foundation said it should stop prevention being the first thing to go when budgets are under strain.[38] The King's Fund said it could be transformational, noting that health leaders are currently closing services such as stop-smoking and sexual health clinics.[39]

The ringfence could help with one of the oldest problems in creative health, which is that the organisation that pays for an activity is often not the one that benefits. A council might fund a community arts project, while the savings show up in GP surgeries or hospitals. The Institute for Government argues that giving each service a single prevention budget could let local agencies pool money and plan around people's needs, rather than around the boundaries between departments. It wants the ringfence passed down to councils, NHS trusts, GP practices and schools, and kept broad enough to give local areas freedom in how they use it.[3]

There are real risks, though. The Chancellor described the ringfence as protecting spending that brings down costs in the future.[5] That is a test about savings, and much of the evidence for creative health is strongest on wellbeing and connection, which are harder to turn into savings that show up in a budget.

This makes the recent work by the *Mobilising Community Assets to Tackle Health Inequalities* programme especially timely. Funded by UK Research and Innovation, the programme has developed the economic case for creative health in line with HM Treasury's own guidance, known as the Green Book and the Magenta Book.[h40] It has called for a national minimum dataset for creative health, meaning a shared, proportionate set of measures that projects collect, so that their results can be compared and added together.[41] This message was taken to Parliament in October 2026 through the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Creative Health,[i] where the Department of Health and Social Care's Creative Health Lead welcomed the programme's approach, and an economist from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport was among the speakers.[41] Shared data of this kind is what departments will need if they are to show that creative health belongs in a prevention budget.

The Centre for Young Lives argues that prevention should be judged by whether it improves people's lives, not only by the money it saves, and warns that PDEL could end up as a small pot for a handful of pilot projects.[35] The Institute for Government suggests defining prevention by programmes, such as family hubs or public health.[3] If that happens, creative health is unlikely to be named in its own right, and will need to be recognised inside those programmes. Ringfences can also be broken. The King's Fund points out that the ringfence on capital spending has been raided in hard times, which has damaged NHS buildings, and that departments have little more than a year to decide what counts as prevention.[24] The Local Government Association adds that prevention money will not, on its own, fix the gap in councils' finances.[14]

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[g]Departmental Expenditure Limits (DELs) are the spending limits for each government department. At present they are split into resource spending (RDEL), for day-to-day costs such as staff, and capital spending (CDEL), for long-lasting things such as buildings and equipment. PDEL would add a third type, for prevention.

[h]The Green Book is HM Treasury's guidance on how to judge whether a policy or project offers value for money. The Magenta Book is its guidance on how to find out whether a policy has worked.

[i]An All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is an informal group of MPs and members of the House of Lords from different parties who share an interest in a topic.

The bigger picture: the Budget through the eyes of economists

This section steps back to look at the wider economic picture, which helps to explain the choices described above. It covers the three parts of the Budget that economists paid most attention to. For each one, it sets out what the Budget said, what that means in plain terms, and what experts made of it.

Keeping to the rules and keeping the markets calm

The Government spends more than it raises in tax, so it borrows the difference by selling bonds to investors.[j] Investors will only lend cheaply if they trust that the Government will pay them back. If that trust slips, the interest the Government pays goes up, and every extra pound spent on interest is a pound that cannot be spent on services. To show that it can be trusted, the Government sets itself two fiscal rules. The first, the stability rule, says day-to-day spending must be paid for by tax income rather than by borrowing. The second, the investment rule, says a measure of government debt must be falling as a share of the economy. Both are judged in the 2029/30 financial year.

With this in mind, Healey chose a cautious Budget. He did not borrow much more, and he did not announce big new spending. Instead, he put many of the biggest decisions off until next year's Spending Review, including how to pay for higher defence spending, the future of disability benefits and support for young people, and plans for social care.[42] Chris Smyth, the Financial Times' public policy editor, noted that this turns the usual pattern on its head. A Budget is normally where a government sets out its direction. This one was low-key and made up of many small policies, and the big decisions that will define Burnham's government will come over the next few months instead.[33] These include his response to the Milburn Review, a white paper on devolution, and a 10-year plan expected in December or January. Smyth argues that the biggest choice of all comes at next year's Spending Review. Burnham will then have to decide whether to make big cuts to public services, so that he can stick to his plan to reduce the deficit while spending more on defence, or to raise taxes significantly instead.[33]

For now, Healey said borrowing would fall from 4.2% of the economy this year to 1.8% by 2031/32.[7] Financial markets stayed calm, and the interest rate on ten-year government bonds held at around 5.3%. Craig Veysey, a bond fund manager at the investment firm Guinness, described it as "the boring Budget that bond markets demanded".[4]

A calm reaction from the markets has not undone the effect of the Iran war, though. Higher energy prices have pushed up inflation and interest rates, and the Office for Budget Responsibility expects the Government to spend an average of £14 billion a year more on debt interest than it forecast in March.[7] This eats into the Government's headroom, which is the gap between what the fiscal rules allow and what the Government plans to do – a contingency budget, if you will. The Chancellor said the Office for Budget Responsibility had confirmed £15 billion of headroom in 2029/30.[5] Before rounding, that is £14.5 billion, down from £23.6 billion in the spring,[7] and analysts at Deutsche Bank and Capital Economics put the fall mainly down to higher interest rates pushing up debt costs.[43] In other words, around £9 billion of the Government's safety margin has gone in about six months.

Paul Dales of Capital Economics summed the Budget up as "better times now, harder times ahead", and said the plans still rely on things that are unlikely to happen, such as planned rises in fuel duty.[43] The Office for Budget Responsibility itself says the real outcome could be

[j] These bonds are called gilts. A gilt is a loan to the Government. The yield on a gilt is, roughly, the interest rate the Government pays to borrow. When investors are worried, yields go up and borrowing costs more.

a good deal better or a good deal worse than its forecast.[44] With such a thin buffer, the Government has little room to cope with another shock without changing its plans.

For creative health, this means large new public investment is unlikely in the near future. While the Iran war keeps interest rates high, the Government's priority is to protect the economy and keep investors' trust. Arguments for creative health are therefore more likely to be heard if they show how existing money could be used better, rather than asking for more.

The money for public services

In the Budget, the Chancellor kept the overall amount planned for government departments roughly the same in cash terms. He pointed to next year's Spending Review as the place where choices about priorities will be made, and the Treasury warned that not every department can expect a real-terms increase.[45] Real terms means after taking rising prices into account. If a budget stays the same in pounds while prices go up, it buys less. Because prices are now expected to rise faster than the Office for Budget Responsibility thought in March, keeping budgets the same in cash means they shrink in what they can actually pay for. The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that departments would need around £7 billion more a year, on average, just to keep the buying power planned in the 2025 Spending Review.[16] The pressure falls hardest on departments without protected funding. Health and defence have firm funding commitments, so the squeeze lands on other departments, such as justice and transport.[45] The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is also unprotected, and its budget was already set to shrink by 1.4% in real terms over the three years of the 2025 Spending Review.[46] Its budget looks larger in this Budget, but only because it has taken on digital responsibilities from another department, and there is no sign of more money for culture.[6]

The Institute for Fiscal Studies called these tight spending plans the weak spot in the Chancellor's plan to bring borrowing down, and said next year's Spending Review looks very tough for many departments.[42] It added that, whilst the plans point towards real-terms cuts for some public services, it doubted that this Government would want to carry them out.[47]

The Office for Budget Responsibility's figures point to real-terms cuts of 2.6% a year for unprotected departments in the final years of its forecast.[45] The Resolution Foundation, a think tank focused on living standards, estimated that departments such as Justice, Transport, and Work and Pensions face real cuts of 6.7%, or £12 billion in total.[21] Deutsche Bank put the gap the Government may need to fill next year at between £25 billion and £40 billion, once the Spending Review, higher defence spending and social care are included.[43] Before the Budget, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research had urged the Chancellor to raise taxes and move money around rather than borrow more, to deal with a £24 billion squeeze caused by inflation.[48] If ministers will not make the cuts their own plans imply, next year's choice will be between higher taxes, more borrowing, or changing the plan.

For creative health, the picture is mixed. Culture is likely to face further real-terms cuts, as the Campaign for the Arts has warned.[9] Health is better protected, but much of its extra money is already spoken for, and the King's Fund notes that even the NHS has had to give up some planned spending on buildings and equipment to help fund the Defence Investment Plan.[24] With defence one of the few areas set to grow, showing how creative health can support the nation's resilience and readiness may become more important. NCCH – in partnership with the *Mobilising Community Assets to Tackle Health Inequalities* programme – has already made this case to Parliament's Defence Committee, arguing that the relationships built through creative health and community groups help communities cope when a crisis comes.[49]

Prices, interest rates and household incomes

Prices are rising faster again because energy costs more. The Office for Budget Responsibility now expects inflation to average 3.3% across 2026 and 2027, compared with 2.1% in its March forecast. When prices rise faster than incomes, people can afford less. The Office for Budget Responsibility now expects household income per person, after allowing for prices, to fall slightly over these two years, when in March it expected a small rise. It also expects the Bank of England's interest rate to average 4% over the same period, up from 3.4%.[44] Higher interest rates make mortgages and loans more expensive for families, charities and businesses alike.

The Bank of England is widely expected to raise interest rates from 3.75% to 4% on 5th November. The Financial Times expects one more rise in February 2027, then a long pause, with cuts starting towards the end of 2027, although financial markets are betting on more rises than that.[50] Looking further ahead, the Resolution Foundation said household incomes are set to grow by just 0.6% a year over this Parliament, the second-worst record since the 1950s.[21] The New Economics Foundation said the Chancellor had the right instincts on the cost of living, but not the right scale.[22]

For creative health organisations, rising prices and interest rates will wear down the value of grants and contracts that are fixed in cash, unless they are increased to keep up. For participants, tighter household budgets may make it harder to take part, as described in the health section above.

Not every reaction was negative. The Institute for Public Policy Research called it a strong start, pointing to measures it had recommended, such as the extra tax on banks and giving local areas more control over taxes.[51] The Social Market Foundation welcomed the higher gambling tax and called the changes to local government funding potentially transformative, though it noted that details on social care, welfare and student loans are still to come.[52]

Next steps: positioning creative health strategically

This Budget sets the scene for the 2027 Spending Review. Five areas look most important for creative health over the coming year.

Help shape what counts as prevention

Over the next year, government departments will decide which spending qualifies for the new prevention ringfence. If prevention is defined by programmes, as the Institute for Government suggests, creative health is unlikely to be listed by name. A more useful aim is to make sure the programmes creative health already works within are included, such as social prescribing,[k] community mental health support, family hubs, youth services and public health, and that creative activity is clearly allowed within them.

Bring outcomes and economics together

The new ringfence is designed to reward spending that lowers future costs. To align with this lens, creative health will need to demonstrate what the outcomes of their services mean for public money. Work on the economic case for creative health, including through the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Creative Health, fits well here.

[k]Social prescribing is when a GP or other professional connects someone with non-medical support in their community, such as an arts group, a walking group or an advice service, usually through a link worker.

Alternatively, creative health advocate might choose to support stakeholders, such as the Centre for Young Lives, who argue that prevention should be judged on outcomes as well as savings.

Present creative health as part of a healthy economy

The Government's main story is growth – that is, an increase in the total value of the goods and services the country produces, which tends to bring more jobs, higher wages and more tax income for public services. The Health Foundation argues that rebuilding the nation's health should be a central part of the plan for growth.[38]

Creative health can make the same case by showing how it helps people stay in work, supports young people back into education or jobs, and helps carers keep working alongside caring.

Work with local leaders

As money and decisions move towards mayors and councils, local plans will matter more. Useful steps the field can be taking over the next year include making the case for some visitor levy income to support culture and health, and asking to be part of any pooled local prevention budgets as they are set up. With new responsibilities for culture and a duty to consider health inequalities, strategic authorities are a natural place to start.

Prepare for a hard Spending Review

Economists agree that the 2027 Spending Review will be difficult, especially for departments without protected funding. Organisations that rely on public money, such as through Arts Council England or councils, should plan for budgets that stay flat or fall in real terms. For each organisation, that is likely to mean one of three routes. Some may need to plan how to scale back services with care, supporting participants through any changes or endings so that no one is left without support. Others may look to replace public money with income from other sources. And some may focus on building the evidence and partnerships that could win them a stronger share of the money that is available.

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