

Pre-election Briefing on Creative Health

This paper has been put together by the [National Centre for Creative Health \(NCCH\)](#) and the [Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance \(CHWA\)](#). We've prepared some notes in case you want to talk to your prospective parliamentary candidates about Creative Health in the run-up to the general election on **July 4th 2024**.

You could do this by writing to candidates or having conversations with them when they come to your doorstep, or at local hustings. You might also wish to meet with a newly elected MP in their surgery soon after the election. You could:

- Ask candidates to commit to supporting Creative Health
- Highlight Creative Health happening in your constituency – including your work!

You can find information about candidates in your area from [The Electoral Commission](#).

Here is some key information about Creative Health and its links to policy, which you can use in your conversations.

What is Creative Health?

We define Creative Health as creative approaches and activities which have benefits for our health and wellbeing. Activities might include visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, cooking and creative activities in nature, such as gardening; approaches may involve creative and innovative ways to approach health and care services, co-production, education and workforce development. Creative Health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions and heritage sites, and healthcare settings. Creative Health can contribute to the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, and treatment and recovery across the life course.

Creative Health is also always part of a bigger picture. Its underpinning values and principles, as articulated in the [CHWA Creative Health Quality Framework](#), are shared across numerous social concerns from climate change to migrancy.

Key messages

Creative Health has benefits for individuals, communities and systems. It can help to reduce health inequalities and contribute to a healthy and flourishing society.

The [Creative Health Review – How Policy Can Embrace Creative Health](#), published by NCCH with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing in December 2023, sets out these key messages:

- Creative Health is fundamental to a healthy and prosperous society, and its benefits should be available and accessible to all.
- Creative Health should form an integral part of a 21st-century health and social care system – one that is holistic, person-centred, and which focuses on reducing inequalities and supporting people to live well for longer.
- Creating the conditions for Creative Health to flourish requires a joined-up, whole-system approach incorporating health systems, local authorities, schools, and the cultural and VCSE sectors.

Creative Health and key policy areas

Health – Creative Health supports mental and physical health and wellbeing across the life course. It can be used to prevent, manage and treat a range of health conditions including those which place significant burden on health and social care services, such as respiratory and cardiovascular disease. It offers a holistic and person-centred approach to improving quality of life and empowering people to manage their health, reducing pressures on health and social care services and supporting people to remain in employment. Creative Health interventions are **cost-effective**, resulting in savings to systems through reduced healthcare usage and unnecessary prescriptions. Creative Health also supports **workforce wellbeing** in the NHS and social care settings. Creative activities improve mental health, resilience and job satisfaction in staff, and are linked to improved retention rates.

Social Care – Evidence shows that creative activities such as music, singing and visual arts can delay cognitive decline and support the health and wellbeing of people living with dementia. Creative Health offers meaningful activity and social connection, vital in reducing loneliness and the associated health impacts, particularly in older age. Arts activities in care homes provide a good social return on investment.

Culture – Given the link between creativity, culture and health, it is vital that creative opportunities are available to all. The infrastructure for Creative Health should be supported and resourced, and the link between creative industries and health and social care should be recognised in policy, with the wider value of creativity incorporated into economic assessments and funding decisions.

Education – Creative Health can help every child get the best start in life, and therefore creativity should be a pillar of the school curriculum. In schools, creative activities equip children with the tools to support their mental health and wellbeing, and transferrable skills that will improve their future outcomes, as well as producing the creatives of the future.

Levelling Up – Creative Health addresses **health inequalities** through activities that build social capital and cohesion at community level, and that influence the social determinants of health to improve the environments in which people live. It can be a vital component of a regeneration strategy, instilling a sense of pride in place and community ownership of local creative and cultural assets. Creative Health supports health promotion and health creation, and is used in the co-design of culturally appropriate services, which meet the needs of underserved communities and encourage new ways of working within systems.

Our ask to the next government

The next government can make sure Creative Health flourishes. The [Creative Health Review](#) recommends the development of a cross-departmental Creative Health Strategy, driven by the Prime Minister, co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office and supported through ministerial commitment to ensure the integration of Creative Health across all relevant policies. Lived experience experts should be integral to the development of the strategy. Further recommendations to specific government departments are also outlined in the Review.

Further information

CHWA: <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/>

NCCH: <https://ncch.org.uk/>