



## The value of creative health approaches in adult mental health

When embedded as a care pathway, creative health can be an effective and cost-effective intervention in adult mental health. It can also improve wellbeing and prevent the onset of common mental health conditions, helping to boost resilience.

Creative health can therefore play a valuable role in addressing the growing need for mental health support, helping to make mental health services sustainable in the long term.

### Examples of evidence

Studies of creative health approaches in adult mental health show:

- Visual arts improve wellbeing, reduce depression and anxiety and increase confidence and self-esteem in people with depression<sup>1</sup>
- Group singing has mental health and wellbeing benefits, including improved quality of life, social connection and reductions in loneliness, depression and anxiety<sup>2, 3</sup>
- Gardening can improve both physical and mental health<sup>4, 5</sup>
- When adults over fifty experiencing depression engage with cultural venues it is estimated to bring NHS and social care savings of £26 per person per year and an annual society-wide benefit of £3.03bn<sup>6</sup>

### Creative health in practice

Synergi-Leeds is a partnership between the NHS, Public Health, and the local community and voluntary sector to tackle the long-standing over-representation of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities admitted to crisis mental health services or detained under the Mental Health Act.

The partnership uses the Synergi model of co-produced 'Creative Spaces' events to champion the voices of people with lived experience, challenging institutional racism and galvanising people into meaningful action.

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<sup>1</sup> Tomlinson, A. et al. (2018) A systematic review of the subjective wellbeing outcomes of engaging with visual arts for adults ("working-age", 15-64 years) with diagnosed mental health conditions. What Works Wellbeing. Available from: [https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Full-report-art-mental-health-wellbeing-Jan2018\\_0146725200.pdf](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Full-report-art-mental-health-wellbeing-Jan2018_0146725200.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> What Works Wellbeing (2016) Music, singing and wellbeing in adults with diagnosed conditions or dementia. Available from: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/wellbeing-singing-music-diagnosed-conditions-dec2016.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Williams, E., Dingle, G.A. and Clift, S. (2018) 'A systematic review of mental health and wellbeing outcomes of group singing for adults with a mental health condition', European Journal of Public Health, 28(6), pp. 1035–1042. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky115>

<sup>4</sup> Briggs, R., Morris, P.G. and Rees, K. (2023) 'The effectiveness of group-based gardening interventions for improving wellbeing and reducing symptoms of mental ill-health in adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis', Journal of Mental Health, 32(4), pp. 787–804. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2022.2118687>

<sup>5</sup> Buck, D. (2016) Gardens and health Implications for policy and practice. The King's Fund. Available from: [https://assets.kingsfund.org.uk/f/256914/x/3f83d457a4/gardens\\_and\\_health\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.kingsfund.org.uk/f/256914/x/3f83d457a4/gardens_and_health_2016.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2024) Culture and heritage capital: monetising the impact of culture and heritage on health and wellbeing: A report prepared for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/678e2ecf432c55fe2988f615/rpt\\_-\\_Frontier\\_Health\\_and\\_Wellbeing\\_Final\\_Report\\_09\\_12\\_24\\_accessible\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/678e2ecf432c55fe2988f615/rpt_-_Frontier_Health_and_Wellbeing_Final_Report_09_12_24_accessible_final.pdf)



There is also an all-age grants programme which financially supports grassroots projects. In the first year of the grants programme, 800 people directly benefited. Over 5,000 people were engaged with projects in various ways, of which 3,600 were from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The programme has influenced senior leadership within the NHS and Public Health to make changes within their own organisations, and commit to actions to reduce ethnic inequalities in mental health.

For the full story of this initiative see **page 49 of the Creative Health Review**

### **Where next?**

The NCCH has worked in partnership with NHS England to develop a **Creative Health Toolkit**, which includes examples of how creative health approaches enhance preventative programmes and support population health with:

- Self-Management of Health Conditions

### **The National Centre for Creative Health**

NCCH supports health and care sector professionals in organisations and systems to achieve the benefits of creative health approaches for patients and service users.

We publish a monthly newsletter especially created for professionals working across health and care. Please do [subscribe here](#) and/or share with colleagues working across Primary Care, Provider Trusts, ICBs, Public Health, Social Care and across the NHS, so they can access the latest news for creative health!

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