



Creative health in practice in acute trusts

Creative health has a long history within acute care and hospital settings and is proven to improve patient outcomes.

Creative health can also be used in preventative approaches. This reduces demand for services and helps to build a sustainable health service that's fit for the future.

Examples of evidence

Studies of creative health approaches show:

- Visual arts in paediatric hospitals enhance the wellbeing of children and families because they improve the hospital environment and stimulate communication¹
- Dance and movement promote physical activity and movement in older adults and aid recovery from brain injury^{2, 3}
- The arts can be used to improve the health and wellbeing of healthcare professionals⁴
- Social prescribing can reduce A&E attendance by an average of 24%⁵

Creative health in practice

Fresh Arts on Referral at North Bristol NHS Trust is an arts programme within an acute hospital setting. Patients with cancer, chronic pain or chronic breathlessness are offered six-week programmes of visual arts or creative writing activities to support them to self-manage their conditions. The programmes are led by professional practising artists trained in facilitating groups.

Access to high-quality, enjoyable creative activities in a safe group setting allowed patients to reconnect with themselves, recognise and value their individual skills and resources. This often led to a change in perspective that led to increased self-care, renewed agency and energy to make changes in their lives.

An evaluation of the pilot of the programme showed participants' wellbeing improved from 41.62 to 47.2 as measured using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

You can find out more about Fresh Arts on Referral at: www.nbt.nhs.uk/support-us/fresh-arts/fresh-arts-our-outpatients

You can read the evaluation of the programme pilot at: www.willisnewson.co.uk/assets/files/fresh-arts-on-referral-evaluation-doc-260319.pdf



Extend your understanding

National Arts in Hospitals Guidance - a practical and inspiring resource to help you plan, deliver and grow arts programmes in hospital settings

<https://nahn.org.uk/arts-in-hospitals-guidance/>

Where next?

The NCCH has worked in partnership with NHS England to develop a **Creative Health Toolkit**.

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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References

¹ Ullan, A. and Belver, M. (2021) 'Visual Arts in Children's Hospitals: Scoping Review', HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal, 14(4), pp. 339–367. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/19375867211003494>

² Bungay, H. et al. (2022) 'Dance for Health: the impact of creative dance sessions on older people in an acute hospital setting', Arts & Health, 14(1), pp. 1–13. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2020.1725072>

³ Kipnis, D. et al. (2023) 'Dance interventions for individuals post-stroke - a scoping review', Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation, 30(8), pp. 768–785. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749357.2022.2107469>

⁴ Phillips, C.S. and Becker, H. (2019) 'Systematic Review: Expressive arts interventions to address psychosocial stress in healthcare workers', Journal of Advanced Nursing, 75(11), pp. 2285–2298. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14043>

⁵ Polley, M. and Pilkington, K. (2017) A review of the evidence assessing impact of social prescribing on healthcare demand and cost implications. University of Westminster. Available from: <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/q1455/a-review-of-the-evidence-assessing-impact-of-social-prescribing-on-healthcare-demand-and-cost-implications>