



## Implementing creative health in public health strategies

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Creative health approaches are proven to offer cost-effective interventions that have positive public health outcomes.

This case study gives an insight into how Birmingham City Council has evolved and enabled its creative health programme.

### Developing a person-centred approach to public health

The arts have always been a critical part of Birmingham's cultural identity. Birmingham City Council's public health division frequently drew on that, commissioning one-off creative public health initiatives, typically via the council's cultural development services division.

The public health division's use of creative public health first started to expand during the COVID-19 pandemic. The division wanted to take a more person-centred approach to engage with communities, build resilience and drive behaviour change. Creative health activities provided a valuable way to do this. For example, film and photography projects gave people opportunities to share their experiences of lockdown or the realities of being hospitalised with the disease.

The success of these creative public health projects led to a desire to scale up their use.

Several one-off creative public health commissions were developed around significant cultural events for the city and its communities. These included the Commonwealth Games, which were held in Birmingham in 2022, as well as the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jamaica's Independence Day and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pakistan's Independence Day.

These one-off commissions enabled the public health division to build an evidence base for creative public health interventions. This, in turn, gave the confidence to establish a creative public health programme with £500,000 of funding across five years.

### The shape of the creative public health programme

The creative public health programme has three strands.

The first is at city-level and involves partnerships with major cultural institutions such as the Birmingham Museums Trust and the Birmingham Hippodrome. Researchers in residence work with each institution's leaders to explore the challenges, opportunities and effects of implementing effective public health policy in a cultural context.



The second strand is an innovation, partnership and impact fund. This funds hyper-local organisations to run projects that focus on creative public health interventions within their communities.

To secure funding, organisations need to evidence how they will provide people with choice and control over managing their health. They also need to demonstrate that outcomes are focused on prevention, promotion, management, or treatment.

The third strand twins hyper-local organisations with city-level institutions to help them build capacity and gain skills.

### **Building effective relationships with hyper-local organisations**

The public health division found the organisations it is working with in several ways.

It held an open commission so organisations could bid for funding. Officers also went out into the community to talk to organisations, leaning on the knowledge of the council's cultural development services division for initial connections.

The division also held surgeries for the organisations to provide useful advice in areas such as applying for funding. This helped minimise any barriers to tendering for work with the council, as well as other funders, helping to build long-term sustainability.

### **Using evaluation to develop the programme**

When gathering evidence of impact, the public health division has found it needs to be mindful of the requirements it places on the smaller organisations it is working with. It is working with organisations to build an evaluation framework that is rigorous but not onerous.

To track and monitor progress, the division uses the Public Health Outcomes Framework and the World Health Organisation's indicators for arts and health. It keeps records on all the work that has been commissioned. This means it can run gap analyses to understand where new work might need to be commissioned.

It also looks at its work through a psychosocial lens. This provides vital insight into how its interventions help build civic pride and community connections, ultimately helping to address wider health inequalities and boost public health.

### **More information**

More information on Birmingham City Council's creative public health programme [www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50313/creative\\_public\\_health](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50313/creative_public_health). Details of the Council's Creative Public Health Evaluation Tool (including a downloadable template)



[www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50313/creative\\_public\\_health/3045/creative\\_public\\_health\\_evaluation\\_tool\\_cph-et](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50313/creative_public_health/3045/creative_public_health_evaluation_tool_cph-et).

## Where next?

The NCCH has worked in partnership with NHS England to develop a [Creative Health Toolkit](#) >>

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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