

# MOBILISING COMMUNITY ASSETS



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council



## **Hello and welcome to the latest newsletter from Mobilising Community Assets.**

It's been a busy few months for the programme, with highlights ranging from launching an economics of creative health workstream, to creating a new database of homelessness services in Cumbria, and running capacity-building workshops in coastal towns across England. Across all 12 projects, there have been many exciting developments - read on to discover the latest progress and highlights from the programme.

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approaches are crucial to tackling this growing public health crisis.



## **ICYMI: Blog post - trusting people with lived experience to decide what they understand**

Does simplifying language for accessibility risk making unwarranted assumptions about what people can understand? Danny Sherwood from Co-create, who are leading the lived experience work package for MCA, explores this question in a new blog, highlighting the innovative storycircling approach being used by the Creative Health Boards project. Read Danny's blog [here](#).

## LOOKING AHEAD

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **Arts4Us Event**

Saturday 27 June 2026, 10am - 5pm, Edgehill University

For the second year, Arts4Us will celebrate achievements from their project. The event will showcase ideas, creativity, and

### **AND, FROM THE WIDER COMMUNITY...**

**Webinar:** *The Art of Medicine- How art can teach the human dimension of care in medical education.* Hosted by the NCCH/RCGP Special Interest Group for

collaboration, highlighting key findings and reflections from the second year of research into supporting children and young people to access the arts as a form of mental health support.

Book your place [HERE](#)

### **Abundance Symposium**

Friday 22 January 2027, 9.30am - 7pm, Chelsea College of Arts, Millbank, London

Save the date! The Abundance Symposium will bring together researchers, policymakers, and professionals from health, cultural and VCSE sectors. This one-day event will share findings from the Abundance Project, support cross-sector collaboration, and explore creative, nature-based and community-led approaches to addressing mental health and health inequalities. Prof Helen Chatterjee will deliver the opening keynote. Full programme to follow.

Creative Health on Wednesday 3rd June, 19.30-20.30 via Teams ([sign up here](#))

**Call for papers:** The Journal of Public Mental Health has a [call out for papers](#) for their special edition *The role of the arts in mental health promotion, prevention and recovery*. The deadline for submissions is 28th August.

**Conference:** You can now book tickets for the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance's 2026 conference ([here](#)), taking place 7-9th October.

**Conference:** Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) support evidence-informed policymaking in the UK. Their conference will take place at University College London, 29th-30th June ([see here](#))

**NEWS FROM THE MOBILISING COMMUNITY  
ASSETS PROJECTS**

## The Abundance Project

The Abundance Project has completed a period of Co-design ([blog post](#)), delivering 14 workshops which brought together 95 participants from 46 organisations, including community members, creatives, and stakeholders from local authorities, VCSE, health, academia, GLAM, parks and national organisations. Six interventions are currently in development, centred around three key themes which emerged from the workshops:

- a) training and upskilling for social prescribers, cultural frontline workers and youth champions;
- b) community access schemes to enable inclusive engagement for underserved communities with museums and green spaces; and
- c) facilitation of community engagement with hyper-local, culturally relevant assets via trusted networks and digital tools.



Live illustration by Palak Garg

## See Me North

2026 kicked off with the launch of a new website, Support Me North ([www.supportmenorth.org](http://www.supportmenorth.org)) - a searchable database of services in the North-East and Cumbria for people experiencing homelessness and other complex needs, including creative and arts-based organisations. See the press release [here](#).

Project PI Dr Chris Cooper attended the Cumbria and West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership's Parliamentary Event in Westminster in March, discussing trauma-responsive work in action across the North of England. Finally, the first See Me North art exhibition '[Experts in Transient Living](#)', developed and curated by Cumbria-based arts partner, Art Gene, took place in Barrow-in-Furness.



## MigRefHealth

The team have now completed all creative methods sessions, and are deep into in-depth analysis (data gathered at 130+ collection points). A variety of creative methods (including cooking/theatre/zine-making/music) were used to engage communities and gather lived experience data focused on key themes.

MigRefHealth recently jointly convened a symposium at Prevention Research 2026, with the REALITIES, Abundance & RomaPlaceAge projects; they have presented on MigRefHealth at key stakeholder events including the East of England public health conference and London/Suffolk health network sessions, and met with the Deputy Mayor of London with responsibility for housing to share findings and discuss knowledge transfer.



copyright Dr Runa Lazzarino

## Coastal Community & Creative Health



2026 began strongly for the Coastal Community & Creative Health project, with another three cross-sector community forums taking place in Blackpool, Hastings, and Weston-super-Mare. As well as increasing participants numbers – 120 across the three events – it was noticed that attendees at the 6-monthly forums are staying longer to connect, share practice, and build relationships. This sustained engagement is translating into tangible outcomes, with new collaborations emerging between health, social care and creative organisations, embedding creativity locally.

Alongside this, capacity-building work has gained momentum with the introduction

of communities of practice, moving from one-off workshops towards sustained, collaborative learning. Read about it on a recent [blog](#).

## ReCITE

The first of a series of ReCITE Learning Events took place on 30 April 2026, designed to explore how community-led, creative health approaches can support neighbourhood change and help tackle health inequalities. This is the first step towards a wider Knowledge Uptake Event, which will showcase the full ReCITE programme, including both intervention and research findings to regional and national stakeholders.

The first set of creative advocacy workshops are also being launched as part of the ReCITE programme, bringing together local communities to explore health inequalities. Through storytelling and creative methods, participants will share lived experiences and co-develop ideas, culminating in performances that amplify community voices and support more equitable health systems. More information on the Sefton workshops can be found in the attached image.





## CHOICE

CHOICE are developing a community asset training package aimed at raising awareness of severe mental illness (SMI) and supporting community spaces to become more inclusive and welcoming. This work was discussed at a recent Community Advisory Board meeting, where members shared suggestions on what community assets need and how the training can be made accessible and practical. Development of the training is also being informed by a stigma survey, which will gather insights from community assets to better understand current attitudes and identify learning needs. In addition, members of the project lived experience group, REALISM, are contributing to the training by creating short videos that share what inclusion means from a lived experience perspective.

## Arts4Us

It has been a busy and exciting period for the Arts4Us project, with continued progress across research, collaboration, and public engagement activities, including:

- Prof Vicky Karkou and team recently travelled to Greece to present findings from the project at the Arts on Prescription Conference.
- A successful event was held in April in collaboration with Shakespeare North Playhouse and the Jameel



Arts and Health Lab, featuring contributions from Christopher Bailey and members of the Young Arts4Us panel.

- The upcoming Arts4Us event in June will bring participants together once again. [Book here](#)

The team also submitted evidence to the Government Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry.



## Rural Health Equity

Lesley McKee, Project Co-ordinator (Change Mental Health), has organised a series of working groups for a wide range of stakeholders on the following themes:

- Rural Health Inequalities and Supporting Pathways to Healthcare
- Heritage, Culture, Place and Co-Production in Support of Health Equity
- Access, Inclusion and Stigma in Rural Contexts

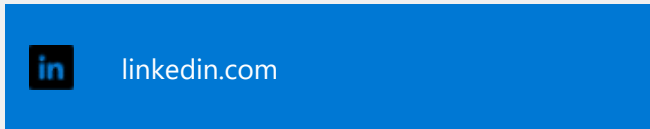
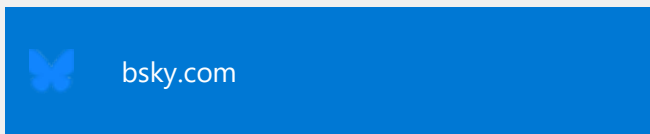
The next stakeholder meeting is on 7th July, and programmes of participatory arts/heritage-based events are starting in Caithness, Lochaber and the Western Isles in the coming weeks. In addition, Dr Liz Ellis is supporting a community research group in Wick (Caithness) in partnership with mental health recovery organisation, Highland Discovery College.

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