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MEDIA RELEASE

National Creative Health Leads Programme

Funded by **Arts Council England** and **The Baring Foundation**

National Centre for Creative Health Announces First Six Successful Systems for Creative Health Leads Programme

The [National Centre for Creative Health](#) (NCCH) is delighted to announce the first six health and care systems selected for its new Creative Health Leads Programme, funded by Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation.

These six systems form the first cohort of what is expected to grow to approximately 25–30 Creative Health Lead roles across England over the next two years, marking a significant step forward in embedding creative health within mainstream health and care systems.

The programme has been designed to strengthen the strategic and operational integration of creative health across prevention, population health, neighbourhood models and clinical pathways. By embedding dedicated leadership within systems, the initiative aims to move creative health from isolated innovation to sustained system change.

The successful systems are:

- Berkshire West
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- North East London
- South East London
- Walsall Together
- West Yorkshire

They will receive support including structured learning and development, evaluation, and a two-year subsidy towards the role of their Creative Health Lead.

Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England, said:

"This marks an important step towards further embedding the transformative opportunities creativity brings to our health and care systems. I hope that by having dedicated leads around the country building on this programme, more people, in more places will be able to lead healthier, happier lives."

Dr Nick Broughton, Chief Executive Officer of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West and Frimley Integrated Care Boards said:

"This funding is a welcome step in helping us build on the strong partnership working already happening across Berkshire West. Bringing creative health into our neighbourhood teams will give people more ways to stay well and connected, particularly those who don't always find traditional services easy to access. It's a practical way for us to support communities, ease pressure on services, and make creativity part of everyday health and care."

Leighton Day, Director of Performance and Outcomes Delivery at Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust spoke on behalf of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly:

"We are delighted to receive this funding for a Creative Health Lead, which will help us strengthen neighbourhood health across Cornwall. It's a reminder that people's wellbeing is shaped by so much more than traditional healthcare, and that listening to what really matters to them is essential. It's a chance to unlock creativity and connection in our communities, helping people feel healthier in real, everyday ways".

Dr Paul Gilluley, Chief Medical Officer for NHS North East London, said:

"We're delighted to be one of the first systems chosen to take part in this exciting programme. This will enable us to build on the work we've been doing to embed creative health across our communities and develop a long term approach that delivers tangible benefits for our population. By listening to local people, and involving them in this work from the outset, we can ensure that creative health plays a key role in addressing the issues that matter to them most. Our Creative Health Lead will work closely with local communities and partners, helping us connect creative health across north east London in a way that improves people's wellbeing and tackles health inequalities."

Councillor Gary Flint, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Health and Wellbeing at Walsall Council said:

"We're pleased that Walsall has been selected as one of six systems to take part in this national programme. It recognises the strong foundations we already have in using creativity to support health, wellbeing and resilient communities. We hope the Creative Health Lead role will help us build on our neighbourhood health approach, strengthen partnerships and ensure more residents can benefit from the power of creativity in their everyday lives."

David McQuillan, Creativity & health programme manager, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust said:

"This programme represents an important step in moving creative health from inspiring projects to lasting system change. Across West Yorkshire we already

see how creativity supports people’s mental health, reduces isolation and helps communities stay connected and resilient. The Creative Health Lead role will help us build on that momentum – bringing together the NHS, local government, cultural organisations and communities to make creativity a normal part of how we support health and wellbeing. Our ambition is simple: that creative opportunities are not seen as an optional extra, but as part of how people live well, recover well and stay well.”

These six systems will work closely with NCCH, partners and communities to embed creative health priorities into local strategic and operational plans.

This first cohort marks the beginning of a broader national ambition. Over the next two years, NCCH and its partners aim to support approximately 25–30 Creative Health Leads across England. Further opportunities for systems to apply to join the programme will be announced shortly.

Alongside local impact, the programme will generate national learning about how creative health can be commissioned, support neighbourhood health models, and contribute to long-term system transformation.

We look forward to working with the six selected systems and sharing progress as this next phase of creative health leadership develops.

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Notes to Editors

About the Creative Health Leads Programme

The Creative Health Leads Programme supports health and care organisations to embed creative health strategically and operationally across their systems, enabling creative approaches to contribute meaningfully to health outcomes. The programme provides:

- A two-year salary subsidy for a Creative Health Lead (NHS Band 7 or equivalent)
- Participation in a structured learning and development programme
- Evaluation and national dissemination of learning and impact

For more about the programme, visit: <https://ncch.org.uk/creative-health-leads-programme> (National Centre for Creative Health)

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy *Let’s Create*, is that by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to

flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live. Visit [our website](#) to learn more about our work.

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