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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 Second Cohort of Successful Systems for Creative Health Leads Programme

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

This second phase builds on the announcement in March 2026 of the first six participating systems and marks continued progress towards establishing approximately 25–30 Creative Health Lead roles across England over the next two years.

The programme supports health and care systems to embed creative health strategically and operationally across prevention, population health, neighbourhood health models and clinical pathways. By investing in dedicated leadership, the initiative aims to ensure creative health becomes embedded within long-term system transformation and mainstream health and care delivery.

The successful systems announced today are:

- Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire
- Greater Manchester Public Health Network
- Portsmouth
- North Central London
- South West London
- Wigan

They join Berkshire West, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, North East London, South East London, Walsall and West Yorkshire from the first phase of applications.

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

Shane Devlin, Chief Executive Officer at NHS Gloucestershire and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB Cluster, said:

"We're really pleased that our health and care system has been selected to join the

Creative Health Leads Programme. This is a valuable opportunity to build on the excellent creative health work already happening in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, and bring activity together across neighbourhoods and places. We are very focused on reducing health inequalities and this will support our work to strengthen how creative health is embedded through commissioning and prevention strategies and in practice, helping to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities."

Helen Gollins, Director of Public Health for Trafford and Chair of the Greater Manchester Public Health Network, said:

"In Greater Manchester, we know creative activity is a powerful tool for inclusion, connection, and health improvement. We look forward to further embedding creative engagement into the GM Live Well Programme and our emerging Neighbourhood Health model."

Helen Atkinson, Chair of Health and Care Portsmouth (a partnership between the council, NHS and VCSE in Portsmouth) and Director of Public Health at Portsmouth City Council, said:

"We know the positive impact creativity can have on an individual's health and wellbeing and are delighted to be part of this programme which will support us to embed creative health within our health and care system in Portsmouth. It is particularly exciting as we celebrate 100 years of Portsmouth this year with a plethora of creative activities across our city, and as we look to becoming the UK City of Culture in 2029."

Guy Noble, Arts Curator at UCLH NHS Foundation Trust and partner in the North Central London Alliance:

"We are delighted to be part of the Creative Health Systems Leads Programme, building on already strong partnerships and existing creative health activity across North Central London. By bringing together health, local authority, voluntary and cultural sectors, this programme will help embed creative health within neighbourhood care, strengthen prevention and support more equitable outcomes for our communities, particularly those most underserved."

Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon, said:

"We are delighted to have been awarded this funding, which recognises the importance of creative health to improve residents' health and wellbeing. Croydon will host this programme and work with partners across South West London to lead its delivery. This builds on our success to get more people taking part in

creative, culture and arts activities where they feel happier, healthier and more connected with their communities. We look forward to working closely with the NHS, local authorities, and the voluntary, community, faith and cultural sectors on a joined-up and sustainable approach that supports people to benefit from creative health opportunities."

Rachael Musgrave, Director of Public Health at Wigan, said:

"Here in Wigan Borough, we've understood for a long time that health doesn't start in hospitals or clinics; it starts where people live. We know that health is shaped by place, relationships and community, and that art, culture and creativity can have a major positive impact on people's health and wellbeing; improving mental health, reducing isolation, building confidence and helping people make sense of their lives. While the evidence in favour of creative health continues to grow, the impact is already being felt locally with stronger social networks, improved wellbeing, greater confidence and, in some cases, reduced reliance on health services."

The newly selected systems will work closely with NCCH, partners and communities to embed creative health priorities into local strategic and operational plans, while contributing to national learning about how creative health can support prevention, reduce inequalities and strengthen neighbourhood health.

Together with the first cohort announced earlier this year, this latest phase represents growing national momentum behind creative health and its role in supporting healthier, more connected communities.

A further application round is now open, with a closing date of 18 September 2026 and more details of how to apply can be found [here](#).

NCCH looks forward to working with all participating systems and sharing learning and impact as the programme develops.

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Notes to Editors

About the [National Centre for Creative Health](#)

The National Centre for Creative Health aims to advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration, helping to foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems.

About [Arts Council England](#)

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture.

Its strategy, *Let's Create*, aims for England to be a country in which the creativity of each person is valued and everyone has access to high-quality cultural experiences.

About [The Baring Foundation](#)

The Baring Foundation, founded in 1969, is an independent grantmaker with a focus on human rights and challenging discrimination and disadvantage. The Foundation funds across the UK, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2020 the Foundation's arts funding has focused on creative opportunities for people living with mental health problems and over that time has made several hundred grants.

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