



Reducing health inequalities using creative health approaches

As the Core20PLUS5 approach recognises, reducing health inequalities requires a whole system approach because they occur as a result of complex interactions between the wider environment, psychosocial factors and individual health behaviours.

Creative health supports the Core20PLUS5 approach because it brings together communities, neighbourhoods, the voluntary sector, local government and health systems in support of the shared goal of tackling health inequalities.

Examples of evidence

- The arts can produce positive outcomes for people who have experienced homelessness, including improvements in mental, physical and social wellbeing¹
- Arts-based programmes in the criminal justice system have demonstrated health and wellbeing outcomes including improved mental health, social skills, employability and education and learning^{2,3}
- Creative arts-based interventions can be effective in reducing symptoms of trauma and negative mood in those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, including refugees⁴
- Engagement in community arts programmes can facilitate an increased quality of life and sense of belonging in refugees and asylum seekers, and can promote integration⁵

Creative health in practice

A specific target of Core20PLUS5 is to reduce inequalities faced by people living with severe mental illness (SMI) by ensuring access to annual health checks.

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust used creative co-production to work with people with SMI to redesign an illustrated invitation to attend the service.

The initiative significantly increased uptake of the service from around 10% to around 60%. There was also a positive impact on participants in the co-design process.

"The SMI project has been an essential component in my journey, it has made a significant difference to how I coped and travel on the ongoing journey towards recovery. The end productions of our work are like a trophy. I'm proud of what we have made collectively. Losing my financial security (income) made me feel such a failure. The SMI group/project gave me my voice back." Participant in the Calderdale design group



For the full story of this initiative see page 60 of the Creative Health Review
ncch.org.uk/creative-health-review

Where next?

The NCCH has worked in partnership with NHS England to develop a **Creative Health Toolkit**, which includes examples of how creative health approaches can be used to reduce health inequalities:

- [Wider Determinants of Health](#)

Creative Health at a Glance: Core20PLUS5, Major Conditions, & Falls Prevention:
https://ncch.org.uk/uploads/Creative-Health-at-a-Glance_-_Booklet.pdf

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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i

References

- ¹ Shaw, P. (2019) A literature review of arts and homelessness - Summary. Arts and Homelessness International. Available from: https://artshomelessint.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2019-12_A-Literature-Review-of-Arts-and-Homelessness-Executive-summary.pdf
- ² Chen, X.J. et al. (2016) 'Music therapy for improving mental health problems of offenders in correctional settings: systematic review and meta-analysis', Journal of Experimental Criminology, 12(2), pp. 209–228. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-015-9250-y>
- ³ Daykin, N. et al. (2013) 'Music making for health, well-being and behaviour change in youth justice settings: a systematic review', Health Promotion International, 28(2), pp. 197–210. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/das005>
- ⁴ Morison, L., Simonds, L. and Stewart, S.-J.F. (2022) 'Effectiveness of creative arts-based interventions for treating children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events: a systematic review of the quantitative evidence and meta-analysis', Arts & Health, 14(3), pp. 237–262. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533015.2021.2009529>



⁵ World Health Organisation European Region (2022) Arts and health: supporting the mental well-being of forcibly displaced people. Available from: https://www.cultureforhealth.eu/app/uploads/2022/07/WHO_Arts-and-Health-forcibly-displaced-people-final-2.pdf