

Statement on Lived Experience

Lived experience offers the authentic voice of service users, powerfully demonstrating the real-life impact of creative health, and the frustrations and dangers that arise when services and support are unavailable or inaccessible. It is vital that such expertise is central to the development and expansion of the creative health sector, in service design and delivery, in research, in policymaking and in systems change.

Lived experience offers a unique and integral perspective, central to understanding the value and potential solutions of creative health. It demands collaborative and supportive involvement to uncover the realities of this work which cannot be accessed through quantitative data or textbooks, only through trusting relationships.

Ensuring lived experience informs our approach at all levels will result in more effective and sustainable services, representative of the needs of those who will use them. Creative health offers a different way to approach health and social care, to overcome some of the challenges we currently face - for example in mental health, health inequalities, social care, end of life care and education. The incorporation of lived experience expertise is fundamental if we are to fully maximise the potential of creative health.

Hence, it has been essential for voices of lived experience to be fully embedded across this Review. Roundtables have included the stories and perspectives of a diverse range of experiences related to the key themes, and reflected how people have used creative health in their own lives to improve health and wellbeing.

Throughout the Review, a panel of lived experience experts helped to guide the development of recommendations to government. We ask the Government to help us to create the conditions for creative health to flourish - to facilitate the establishment of sustainable partnerships across whole systems, including health, local government, schools, VCSE and creative and cultural providers, and fully incorporating lived experience expertise. This will include challenging hierarchies, and giving lived experience perspectives equal weight and power. We recommend that the Government, too, be guided by lived experience in the development of a cross-departmental Creative Health Strategy. Co-producing guidance in collaboration with lived experience expertise is integral to ensuring the inclusion of lived experience in all policies.