



We support and encourage people to be creative in their everyday lives.





13 March 2026 - Maldon

- Why Creative Health? The National Picture and the key evidence
- Mapping Creative Health in Essex Report
- Essex Creative Health Network

Jess Plant

Policy Director - Creative Lives



What we do

We've spent 30 years supporting community arts to thrive across the UK and Ireland, by consistently engaging with grassroots communities as well as policy-makers and researchers.



We celebrate and promote people expressing themselves creatively with others, recognising the benefits this can bring.

[Read more](#) about our activity.





Creativity
for healthy
lives

nccch.org.uk



The National Picture - NCCH Mission

They advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration, helping foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems.

Welcome

The National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) has worked in partnership with NHS England Personalised Care Team and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in Gloucestershire; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Suffolk and North East Essex; and West Yorkshire, to develop this toolkit to support other ICSs to embed creative health in their systems.



[Creative Health in Systems](#)

[Creative Health in Context](#)

[Creative Health in Action](#)



How you can use the toolkit

The toolkit considers the enablers and barriers and is structured so as to illustrate how systems can deliver against the NHS England Maturity Matrix for Social Prescribing, with reference to the five domains: Leadership, Strategy & Governance; Planning & Commissioning; Workforce Development; Digital & Technology; and Evidence & Impact.

The toolkit will support systems to work with the assets in their communities and to develop their own approach. The aim of the tool kit is to embed the benefits of creativity in all health and social care systems, from integrated care system planning to delivery by grass roots organisations. It will support commissioners, link workers and the voluntary community social enterprise sector to work collaboratively and deliver better health outcomes for communities and individuals

<https://creativehealthtoolkit.org.u>



Region	Host ICB
East of England	Norfolk and Waveney
London	North East London
Midlands	Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
North East & Yorkshire	North East and North Cumbria
North West	Lancashire and South Cumbria
South East	Sussex
South West	Devon

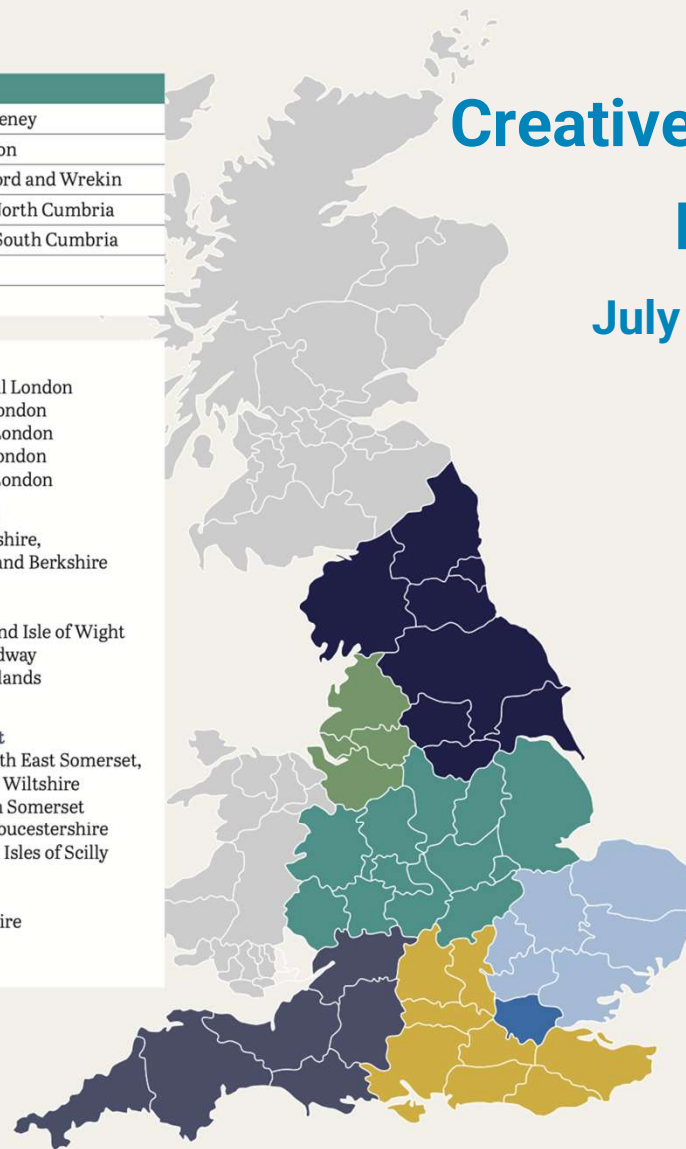
- **North West**
 - Cheshire and Merseyside
 - Greater Manchester
 - Lancashire and South Cumbria

- **Midlands**
 - Birmingham and Solihull
 - Black Country
 - Coventry and Warwickshire
 - Derby and Derbyshire
 - Herefordshire and Worcestershire
 - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
 - Lincolnshire
 - Northamptonshire
 - Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
 - Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
 - Staffordshire and Stoke-On-Trent

- **North East & Yorkshire**
 - Humber and North Yorkshire
 - North East and North Cumbria
 - South Yorkshire
 - West Yorkshire

- **East of England**
 - Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
 - Hertfordshire and West Essex
 - Mid and South Essex
 - Norfolk and Waveney
 - Suffolk and North East Essex

- **London**
 - North Central London
 - North East London
 - North West London
 - South East London
 - South West London
- **South East**
 - Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West
 - Frimley
 - Hampshire and Isle of Wight
 - Kent and Medway
 - Surrey Heartlands
 - Sussex
- **South West**
 - Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire
 - Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire
 - Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
 - Devon
 - Dorset
 - Gloucestershire
 - Somerset



Creative Health Associates Programme

July 2023 – March 2025

7 Associates hosted by ICBs, one in each NHS region. Roles designed to:

- Build bridges between arts and health sectors
- Embed creative health into strategic planning
- Support local initiatives and partnerships

APPG - Neighbourhood Health and Creative Health Roundtable

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Creative Health Roundtable

**Neighbourhood Health and Creative Health Roundtable
Monday 17th November 2-4pm**

Reflections from the latest APPG on Creative Health session

On **Monday 17 November 2025**, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Creative Health brought together speakers from health, local government, research, creative practice and lived experience for a roundtable exploring how creative health can support the Government's new Neighbourhood Health Services.



Accessibility

Definition

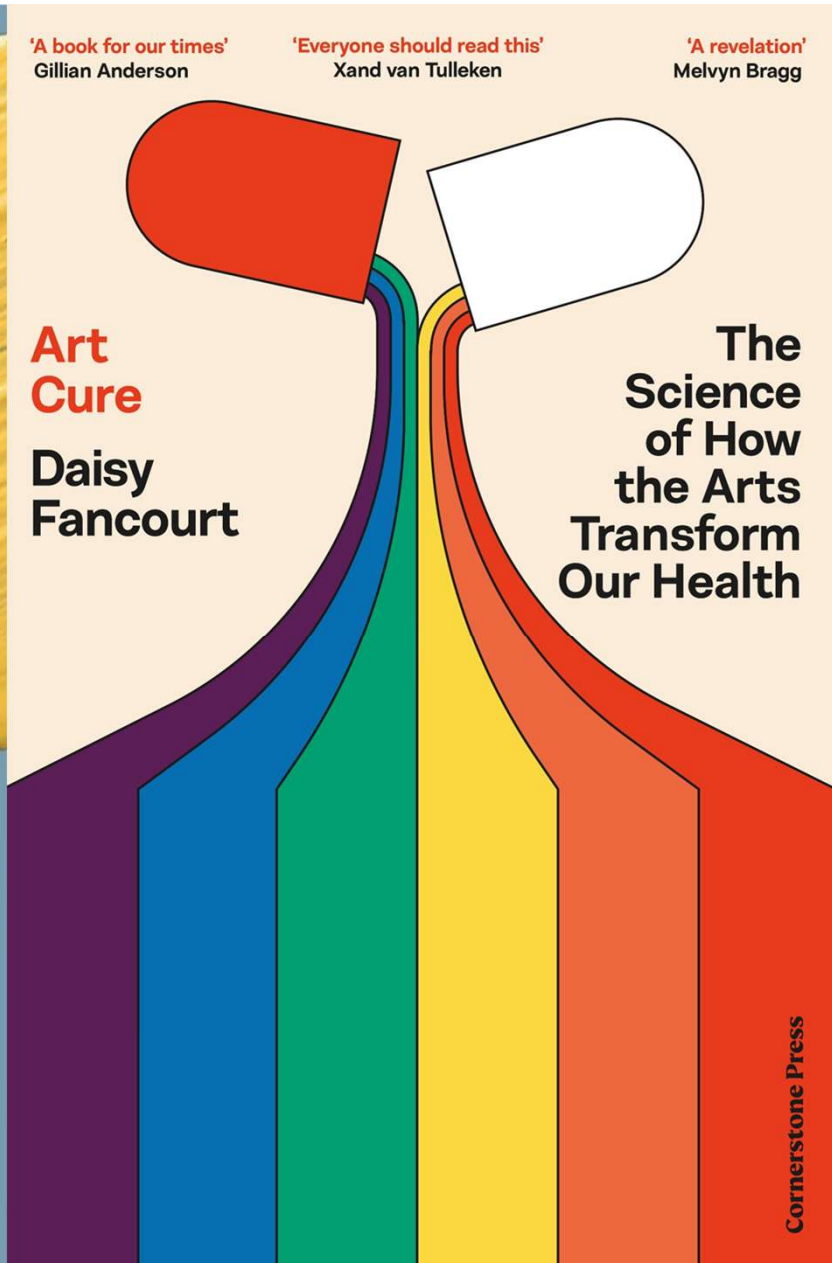
The National Centre for Creative Health defines Creative Health as creative approaches and activities which have benefits for our health and wellbeing. Activities can include visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, cooking and creative activities in nature, such as gardening; approaches may involve creative and innovative ways to approach health and care services, co-production, education and workforce development. Creative health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions and heritage sites, and healthcare settings. Creative health can contribute to the prevention of ill health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long term conditions, and treatment and recovery across the life course.



Type of creative health activity	Explanation
Arts therapies	Targeted therapies in healthcare settings delivered by therapists/clinicians. Art therapy delivered by NHS or private providers
Arts, heritage and museums work for health outcomes	Artists/practitioners and clinicians, working towards a defined clinical aim
Arts, heritage and museums learning and out reach programmes	Arts, heritage and museum organisations reaching out to specific vulnerable groups in the community
General arts, heritage and museums engagement, which may have the added value of a well being out come	Arts and cultural experiences without health and well being aims

Adopted from the Social Biobehavioural Research Group at UCL, the following table and definitions was used as part of our survey to differentiate types of Creative Health provision.





Why the Arts are the Forgotten Fifth Pillar of Health

Professor Daisy Fancourt

Professor of Psychobiology & Epidemiology,
University College London

Director, WHO Collaborating Centre on Arts & Health

Evidence and evaluation

Rigorous evidence that creativity can have a positive impact on health outcomes is comprehensive and growing.

- The World Health Organisation 2023 report '*What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping review*' looked at the results from over 3,000 studies and identified a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan.
- The UK government's Evidence summary for policy: *The role of arts in improving health and wellbeing*, found 'there is strong evidence that arts can support wellbeing in adults'.
- Led by King's College London, the SHAPER Scaling-up Health Arts Programmes Implementation and Effectiveness Research is demonstrating statistically significant evidence that Creative Health interventions can impact outcomes in reducing postnatal depression, improving motor function, decreasing pain, and improving non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's and strokes.

Evidence and evaluation

A rapid review of the literature by RSPH found that participating in creative activities positively impacts **behaviour, self-confidence, emotional regulation, relationship building and sense of belonging, contributing to resilience and mental wellbeing.**

Randomised Controlled Trials have found that **music therapies and dance improve wellbeing in children and young people.**

The Wellcome Trust's review states that arts activities have been identified as 'active ingredients' that help young people with **anxiety and depression**, particularly those with experiences of trauma, with evidence of significant decreases in symptoms in experimental studies. Reviews have indicated that music-based interventions can be effective in reducing depression and anxiety in children and adolescents.



⁹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1757913912466946>

¹⁰ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15257662/>

¹¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30008444/>

¹²

<https://wellcome.org/insights/reports/what-science-has-shown-can-help-young-people-anxiety-and-depression>

¹³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28889050/>

¹⁴ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17533015.2021.2009529>

Evidence and evaluation

Cost effectiveness

A recent report prepared for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport used methods aligning with HM Treasury's approach to valuation to estimate the monetary impact of culture and heritage on health and wellbeing. It found that weekly organised arts activities to support mental health in young adults could result in benefits to an individual's quality of life equating to £748/person and a societal impact of £0.8bn annually.

<https://www.frontier-economics.com/media/21bntjtz/monetising-the-impact-of-culture-and-heritage-on-health-and-wellbeing.pdf>

Skills Economy

Participation in creative activity helps develop communication and technical skills, and the **creative economy** should be included in any strategic thinking about work and skills in Essex. Creativity can generate economic value through volunteer contributions, material purchases, revenue from fundraising, and savings for health and social services. ***The role of grassroots arts activities in communities - a scoping study*** (2011), demonstrated that participation in arts activities can help people develop new skills and bring educational improvements.

<https://epapers.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1555/>





MAPPING CREATIVE HEALTH IN ESSEX

Exploring the Role of Creativity in Health and Wellbeing

Research report prepared for Essex County Council
by Creative Lives - March 2025





DATA CULTURE CHANGE

Overview

Essex County Council Culture Team commissioned Creative Lives to report on the Creative Health landscape in Essex by:

- Mapping the current activity
- Uncovering challenges and opportunities
- Identifying workforce needs
- Highlighting good practice
- Building strategic alliances

Outputs

- A working definition
- A shareable resource mapping Creative Health activity
- A report summarising findings

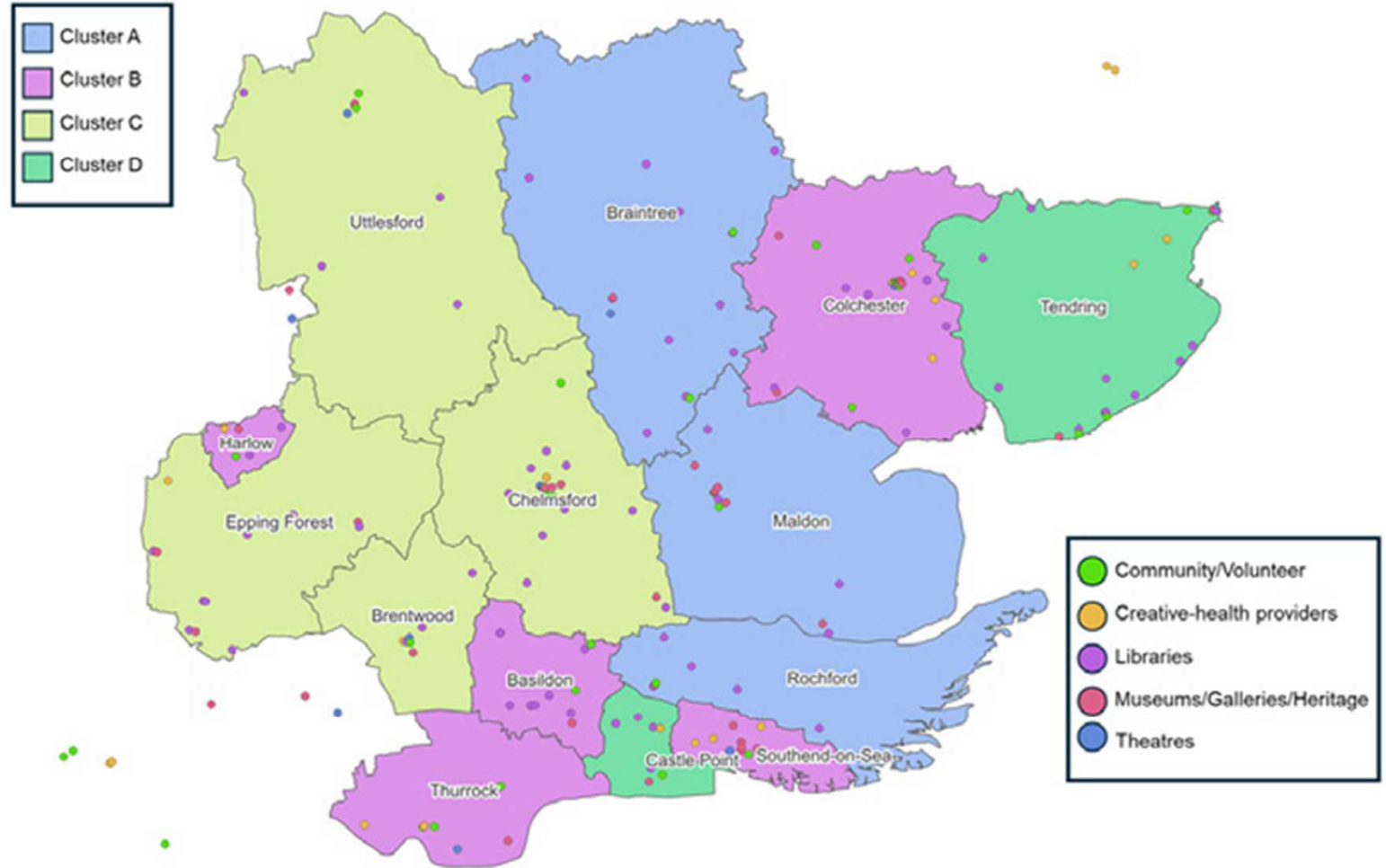
The Team

- Jess Plant
- Natasha Richards-Crisp
- Damien Hebron
- Creative Lives team
- Data Culture Change

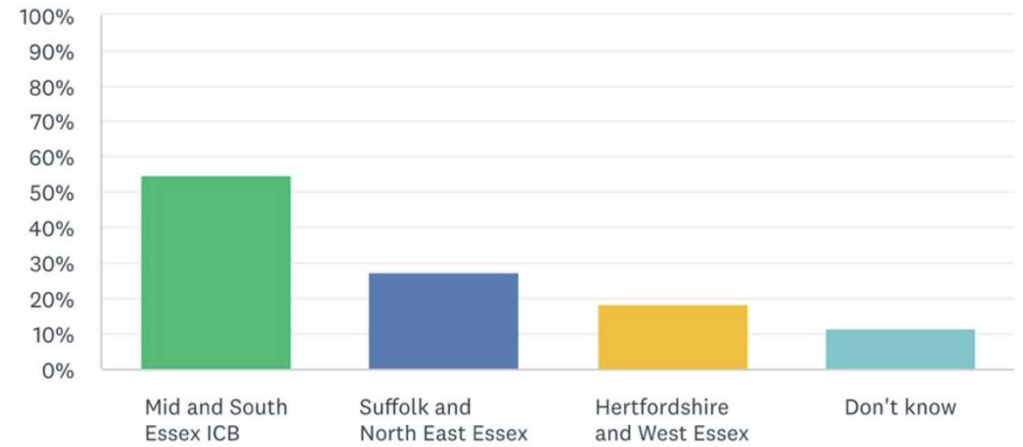
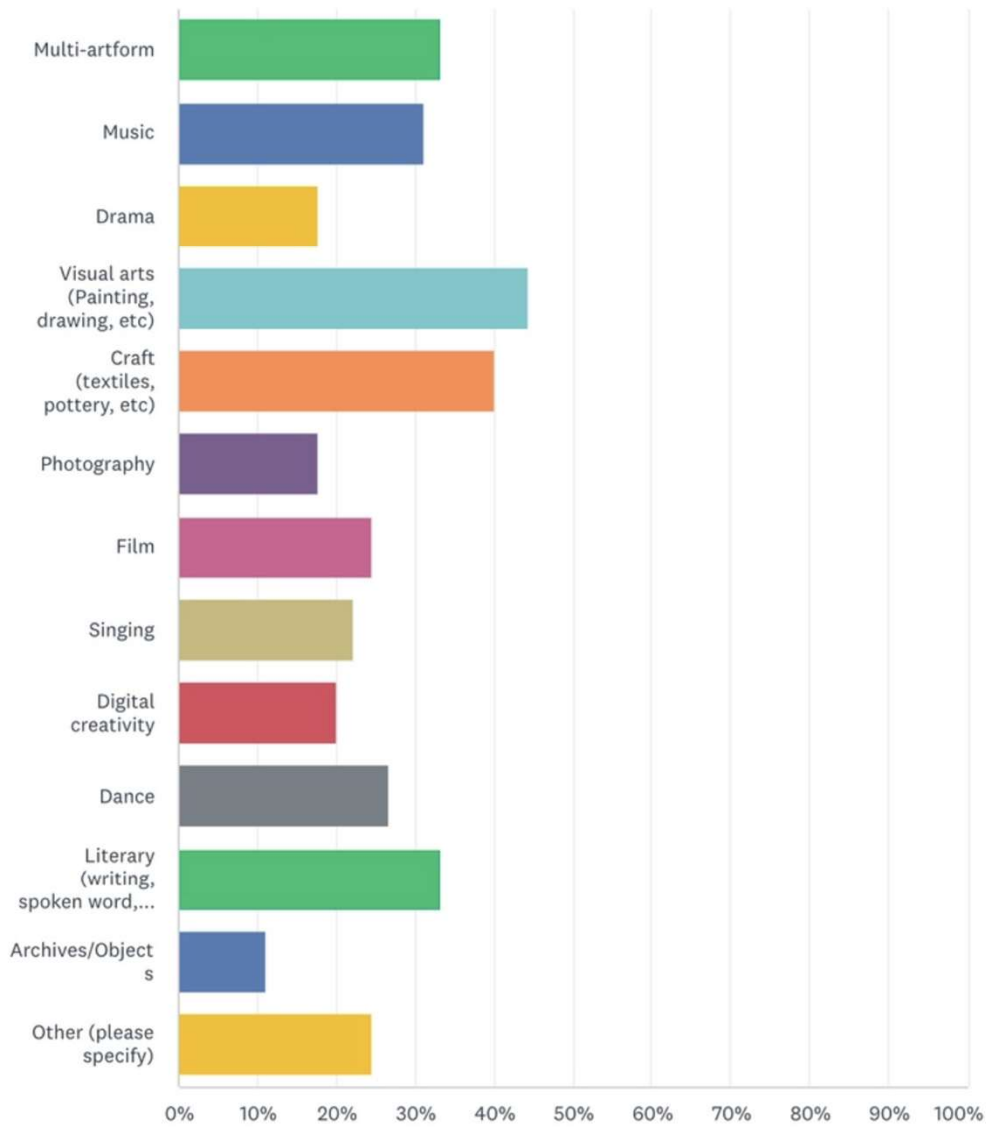


Geographical Distribution
- where are creative
health initiatives
concentrated within Essex

Map of Creative Health Activity in Essex



Art Forms





Opportunities in Creative Health in Essex

*“In Essex there is incredible creativity,
and people giving voice to who they are
and where they come from, and shaping
their community through arts practice”
(Focus group participant)*





Challenges and Barriers in Creative Health in Essex

- Funding and sustainability
- Geographic and demographic diversity
- Engagement and perception
- Capacity and skills
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Strategic and structural issues
- Market challenges

“[Cultural interventions] offer something really unique, but the potential of it hasn’t been realised.” (Focus group participant)





Support Needs, Skills & Training, and Future Scaling and Sustainability

- Diversity, access and inclusion
- Skills development and training to improve quality delivery and evaluation
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Long-term sustainability
- Visibility and outreach
- Scaling Creative Health initiatives





Central St Martins - Tendring



CoDa Dance for neurology @ caveandsky



Sharon Rawlinson, The Art Box



Connor Turansky, Metal Residency



Key recommendations

- Build on regional and local strength and excellence to establish 'Creative Health Action Zones'
- Establish formal **high-level partnerships between Essex County Council, Essex Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Care Boards, regional NHS and Public Health bodies and the cultural sector**
- Address current training and development needs by focusing on joint commissioning and evaluation opportunities, training, and skills development that brings health and culture professionals together





Next steps . . . following on from the report

Essex County Council has commissioned Creative Lives to:

- Set up an Essex-wide Creative Health Strategic Network
- Convene 4 x network meetings to progress the recommendations
- Organise bespoke training sessions for Creative Health practitioners to support CPD
- Conduct focused place-based research in Tendring and Castle Point to explore how creativity can help address health inequalities



In 2024 Culture Essex commissioned Creative Lives to map current creative health activity across the county. The report explores the current barriers and solutions to delivering creative interventions to support health outcomes in Essex. You can [read the report here](#).

In response to these recommendations Culture Essex is working to establish an **Essex wide Creative Health Network**, which aims to support and strengthen the role of creativity in improving health and wellbeing across Essex.

The Creative Health Network aims to:

- Build a strategic, sustainable network to promote creative health practices across Essex.
- Facilitate collaboration between practitioners, commissioners, cultural and health partners.
- Identify and address gaps in creative health provision, particularly in priority areas.
- Support skills development and wellbeing of creative health practitioners.
- Share best practice and increase visibility of creative health activity and impact in Essex.
- Advocate for the role of creativity in tackling health inequalities and improving outcomes.
- Respond to and implement key recommendations from the Culture Essex Mapping Creative Health in Essex report.

Dr Natasha Richards-Crisp, the Creative Health Network Project Lead, will be facilitating regular network meetings and identifying training and skills development opportunities for practitioners.

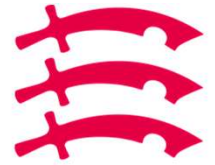
If you would like to learn more please contact us at culture@essex.gov.uk.



[Read the report](#)



**Creative
Lives**



Essex County Council

jess@creative-lives.org

Thank you!

