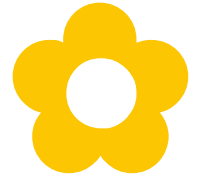




Evaluation of our arts and creativity journey in the North East and North Cumbria



Since its inception, the Network has prioritised arts and creativity as a cross-cutting theme and embarked upon an arts and creativity journey.

Their impactful project delivery and co-investment from strategic partners were the catalyst for creating the Arts and Creativity Advisor role in 2022.

The Network has developed a position and profile in the NENC geography as a driver, initiator, convenor of creative health with and for children and young people.

An evaluation report of its creative health journey was commissioned in 2025 to benchmark the work against the Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance's Creative Health Quality Framework.

This report comes at a critical point, at which appetite and demand for creative health activities have been demonstrated, and momentum has been built, and ground gained.

Positive outcomes and recommendations have been highlighted following the report and are shared.



With ongoing commitment to arts and creativity as a cross-cutting goal of the Network, there is an opportunity to further grow and scale up this impactful work.

'The Network has shown impressive leadership in prioritising arts and creativity as a cross-cutting goal since its inception. The consistency of focus, together with the drive and commitment of key individuals, has clearly enabled the development of the innovative delivery model that is the STAR project – which can be deployed into places/wards of most need, and replicated across other art forms.'



Photo: Ian Paine



Findings from the evaluation

The approach

- A commitment to working with children and young people as a target audience, through creative health, sets it apart from other initiatives nationally
- Brought together colleagues from across health, culture, education and the wider community around a shared vision to improve health outcomes through creative activity
- Created a range of new opportunities for creative collaborators to work with children and young people, and their families
- Activity has been consistently person-centred
- Strategically targeting interventions into areas of most need

The resources

- An Arts and Creativity Advisor with strong connections to cultural practitioners adding significant value, both strategically and practically
- Online Huddles enabled participants to effectively share their learning and experiences
- The Child Health Tuesday newsletter amplified and shared practice-based learning

Recommendations arising from the report

Governance, funding and reach

- Secure a mandate from the ICB to explore continuation of creative health with a focus on children and young people as a valued priority
- Continue exploring co-investment from strategic partners with funding resources, including Arts Council England and the local Combined Authorities
- Look to other regions' successes with creative health funding for inspiration
- Focus on strategic relationship building, working with Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) to maximise schools engagement

Overarching strategy

Develop a strategy for scale up that responds to need – and is informed by children and young people's voices, as well as those of key partners.

The strategy should:

- Consider how the Health and Culture sectors develop understanding of how their counterparts work - particularly around the freelance economy
- Develop and test consortium based approaches that can deliver on a sub-regional basis, at scale and across artforms
- Drive forward and embed the Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary School Awards
- Develop and promote the use of a Network tool to evidence creative health impact which clearly defines the rationale and draws upon [The Creative Health Quality Framework](#)
- Consider a funded workforce development plan to meet future demand for creative health activity

It is a testament to the work of the Network that colleagues from the NENC ICB are making the case, nationally, for investing in embedding creative health approaches at a systems level.

The overarching conclusion is that impressive outcomes have been achieved in a relatively short space of time, and despite operating in an environment of constrained resources. The foundations are now firmly in place on which to build, and the Network has demonstrated its potential to deliver significant difference, change, and impact for children and young people and their families through creative health activities.

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