

Creativity for Healthier Lives



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I have prescribed many things, dogs, books, roller-skating, rambling, crochet and choirs alongside standard medical treatments.

A holistic approach to health is often a creative one - people need joy to get better as much as they need all the other things that medicine can offer.



Dr Sarah Andersen, Herstmonceux Integrative Health Centre

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this annual report for 2023/24 which focusses on Creativity for Healthier Lives. Creativity is a fundamental aspect of humanity, and it is a pleasure to be able to focus on the essential role creativity has in supporting us all to be fulfilled, connected, healthy and expressive individuals.

One of the core tasks of a Director of Public Health comes from the statutory requirement that they publish an annual report on a theme of their choosing that speaks to a key issue or area of concern and focus. I am pleased to be able to use this year's Annual Director of Public Health Report to highlight the wide range of creative health activities and opportunities already in place across the county.



Darrell Gale
Director of Public Health

This year's Creativity for Healthier Lives report forms part of a series of Annual Director of Public Health reports. These reports have been developed to highlight and increase our impact on health and wellbeing locally by focusing on the wider determinants of health, the factors that create and sustain the health and wellbeing of our population, beyond the provision of universal free NHS healthcare. These include the 2019/20 Health and Housing report that focused on health and housing in East Sussex. The 2021/22 Work, Skills and Health report that considers the relationship between work, skills, and health. Whilst last years, Connecting People and Places report covered social connections and multi-agency work to tackle loneliness.

A lot of arts in health and care work happens at the grass roots level, in community based organisations and programmes that address both the clinical and social determinants of health. With this in mind, it's a great time to look in detail at creative health and the many contributions it makes at improving the health of our communities.

Health improvement projects and programmes that have featured creative health elements are not a new thing in the county. We have been making steady progress to establish East Sussex as a creative health county. We have done this with a wide range of partners, including those from the cultural, heritage, tourism, artistic and health and care sectors. When it comes to using creative health approaches we are slowly moving from 'nice to have' to 'must do!'.

This report builds on the Creativity and Health Evidence Review 2022 ^[Endnote 1]. The East Sussex Creative Health Position Paper - September 2023 ^[Endnote 2] and is complimented by a

range of other local resources on arts, culture and health published on the East Sussex jsna website [Arts and Culture | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://eastsussexjsna.org.uk). This report aims to be a key resource in making East Sussex a creative healthy county and highlights the creative health assets and organisations involved. It also includes contributions from key national and local figures from the creative health sphere.

There is a vast range of creative activities and opportunities across the county including the recent exhibition of the Turner Prize to Eastbourne ^[Endnote 3] and the Towner Eastbourne Gallery's centenary ^[Endnote 4].

This report sets out the benefits and evidence base for using creative health approaches across the life course. Recommendations are included to show how creative health approaches contribute to the local economy, health improvement, enhancing individual and communal opportunities to engage in creative activities that bring joy, connection and personal expression.

Furthermore the recommendations set out how we will work, without contributing additional financial resources, with new and existing partners. This will be through the strengthening of established structures to focus on creative health, connecting local partners, and weaving it into existing public health programmes. We shall also be building collaboration beyond the county using research and external funding opportunities to support our creative health ambitions.

My thanks are extended to everyone across East Sussex who, in ways great and small, are making East Sussex a creatively healthier place to live in.

Darrell Gale

Director of Public Health

Executive summary

Creativity, artistic, heritage and cultural activities have an enormous potential to help improve our experience of life. They can help improve our health, connect with others and most importantly, they give us joy. Joyful experiences are at the heart of a healthy life well lived.

From pre-conception to end of life care, creativity can help to support the needs of our communities. With just two hours of structured creative activity a week ^[Endnote 5] we can all improve our own health and wellbeing and of those around us.

Many organisations contribute to the range of work that uses creativity to help connect, support, and inspire people to live joyfully, making East Sussex a special place to live, work and play in. This includes, East Sussex County Council (ESCC), district and borough councils, the NHS, artistic, cultural and heritage organisations.

The public health department, within ESCC, has actively explored the use of creativity to understand how it can improve health and wellbeing for our communities. Since 2021, a programme has been in place to explore how East Sussex might become a creative health county.

A creative health county actively encourages all of its residents, communities and visitors to be involved in a range of activities that can support self-care, prevent ill health and strengthen connection between people. Creativity can have a real, measurable, positive, and lasting effect on individuals and communities. It should be seen as one of the foundations for good health and wellbeing.

In this report we shine a spot light on the organisations, activities and projects that provide a range of creative opportunities across the county ^[Endnote 6].

We want to ensure that the opportunities to take part, express ourselves and enjoy creativity are available to everyone across East Sussex.

Local creative opportunities include activities such as music, drama, dance, painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, cultural exchanges, celebrations, heritage, and tourism activities. They can also include 'everyday creativity' from home baking, crafts, hobbies, alongside outdoor and natural pursuits like gardening ^[Endnote 7], conservation ^[Endnote 8], and other nature-based ^[Endnote 9] or outdoor activities ^[Endnote 10].

Collaborative work to explore how East Sussex can become a creative health county has informed this report and a series of recommendations which are listed below.

Recommendations: Creativity for Healthier Lives

1. We will work with the wide range of existing partners in East Sussex – including the district and borough councils, the NHS, voluntary, community and creative sectors, and use established collaborative groups such as Culture East Sussex to promote and embed creative health approaches for everyone.
2. We will embrace the new opportunities in tourism promotion provided by 'Experience Sussex' to support economic development that builds on the vast array of creative action within the county.
3. We will continue to develop and refine the Creative Health Support Collaborative and ensure that it evolves to meet the needs of the wide range of stakeholders, organisations and communities that are contributing to East Sussex becoming a creative health county.
4. We will 'connect the creatives' by understanding the current practices and future opportunities for service commissioners across East Sussex to benefit from embedding creative health approaches into existing or new areas of work.
5. We will use the Creative Health Charter Mark as a complimentary addition to the existing Wellbeing at Work East Sussex Programme.
6. We will work with system partners across the South East to understand and secure opportunities for research, collaboration, integrated programme support, delivery, and funding of creative health works across the region.

Section one

An introduction to creative health

Creative health activities are not a 'cure all' but can have a positive, lasting effect across a range of conditions and health support needs.

Creative health has been shown to have beneficial effects to support those experiencing numerous physical and mental health conditions. These include non communicable diseases such as cancer, heart disease and other cardio-vascular conditions. Creative health approaches have shown to have positive impacts to support child development, healthy ageing, end of life care and bereavement. Sometimes creative health approaches support medical interventions and sometimes can be a replacement for such interventions ^[Endnote 11].

What is creative health?

There is no single definition of creative health but there is a consensus that it refers to the use of creative, artistic, cultural or heritage assets to positively improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

If we can embed the arts, creativity, culture, heritage and the natural environment alongside other community and non-clinical approaches to health and social care (such as social prescribing) into the everyday life of individuals, and their communities, we can help everyone to experience good health.

'Good health' is not only concerned with a person's level of physical health, mental health and overall wellbeing. It also describes the extent to which individuals are enabled and encouraged to live healthy, flourishing, and joyful lives.

The World Health Organisation definition of 'wellbeing' ^[Endnote 12] includes quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.



The arts can be seen as the glue that binds all parts of society.

Cllr Keith Glazer ESCC Health & Wellbeing Board.





Imagine this: not just pills and prescriptions, but a vibrant tapestry of music, dance, storytelling, and nature woven into the fabric of our communities. This is the essence of creative health, a powerful tool that goes beyond symptom management, delving into the very essence of human connection, expression, and resilience.



Professor Kevin Fenton CBE, President, Faculty of Public Health

Why is creativity important to health and wellbeing?

There is growing evidence that the arts and creative activity can lead to improved health, wellbeing and social connectivity. Getting involved in creative activities throughout our lives helps reduces loneliness, supports our physical and mental wellbeing, and helps to strengthen the social ties we need to live happily ^[Endnote 13].

Group arts, creativity, culture, heritage, and the natural environment form the components of a creative health programme. Similarly, engagement in a wide range of activities across these five areas has comparable beneficial physical and mental health impacts on individuals.

Turning to the New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing ^[Endnote 14] we can see the underlying health improvement actions proposed ^[Endnote 15] include the following:

Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give



Fig 2. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing Summary ^[Endnote 16]

Central to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, and creative health, is the idea that ‘ people will, to some extent, already be involved in specific activities under the overarching themes of connecting, being active, learning etc. Rather than encouraging a completely novel set of behaviours, the outcomes of a campaign of this kind are, therefore, more concerned with increasing the time people spend in activities known to enhance wellbeing ^[Endnote 17].

If we build on the foundations and health benefits of activities that people already enjoy, we are much more likely to help them to live healthier, happier lives.



The arts are less about curing our conditions and more about curating our lives, giving events meaning and in so doing, transforming ourselves and often those around us. Creative expression is a health behaviour, like nutrition and exercise. It helps us live to our fullest potential throughout the life course.



Christopher Bailey, Arts and Health Lead at the World Health Organisation (WHO)

Creative health as a ‘building block’ for health

All of us need some basic things to grow, learn, develop, and thrive. Evidence tells us that engagement with the arts and creativity can mitigate against some of the negative effects that individuals may experience caused by wider health determinants of health.

Many factors or building blocks, sometimes called the wider or social determinants of health, combine together to affect the health of individuals and communities. Whether people are healthy or not, is determined by their circumstances and environment. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health, whereas the more commonly considered factors such as access and use of health care services often have less of an impact ^[Endnote 18].

The East Sussex Creative Health Position Paper^[Endnote 19] states that access to the opportunities presented by creative health is one of the building blocks^[Endnote 20], and a key element of delivery for services.

This year's report seeks to show just how access to creative, cultural, artistic, heritage, environmental and community activities form part of the foundations for individual and community health and wellbeing.

A range of other local resources on arts, culture and health are published on the East Sussex jsna website [Arts and Culture | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://artsandculture.eastsussexjsna.org.uk). These resources explain how individuals, communities, and the systems in East Sussex, can all benefit from creative health approaches to help support them to live fulfilled, healthier, and joyful lives.

Joyful, fulfilling and happy lives, getting a bit more than the bare necessities

Creativity, artistic, heritage and cultural activities have an enormous potential to help improve our experience of life. They can help improve our health, connect with others and most importantly, they give us joy.

We all deserve joy in our lives. Joyful experiences are at the heart of a healthy life well lived.

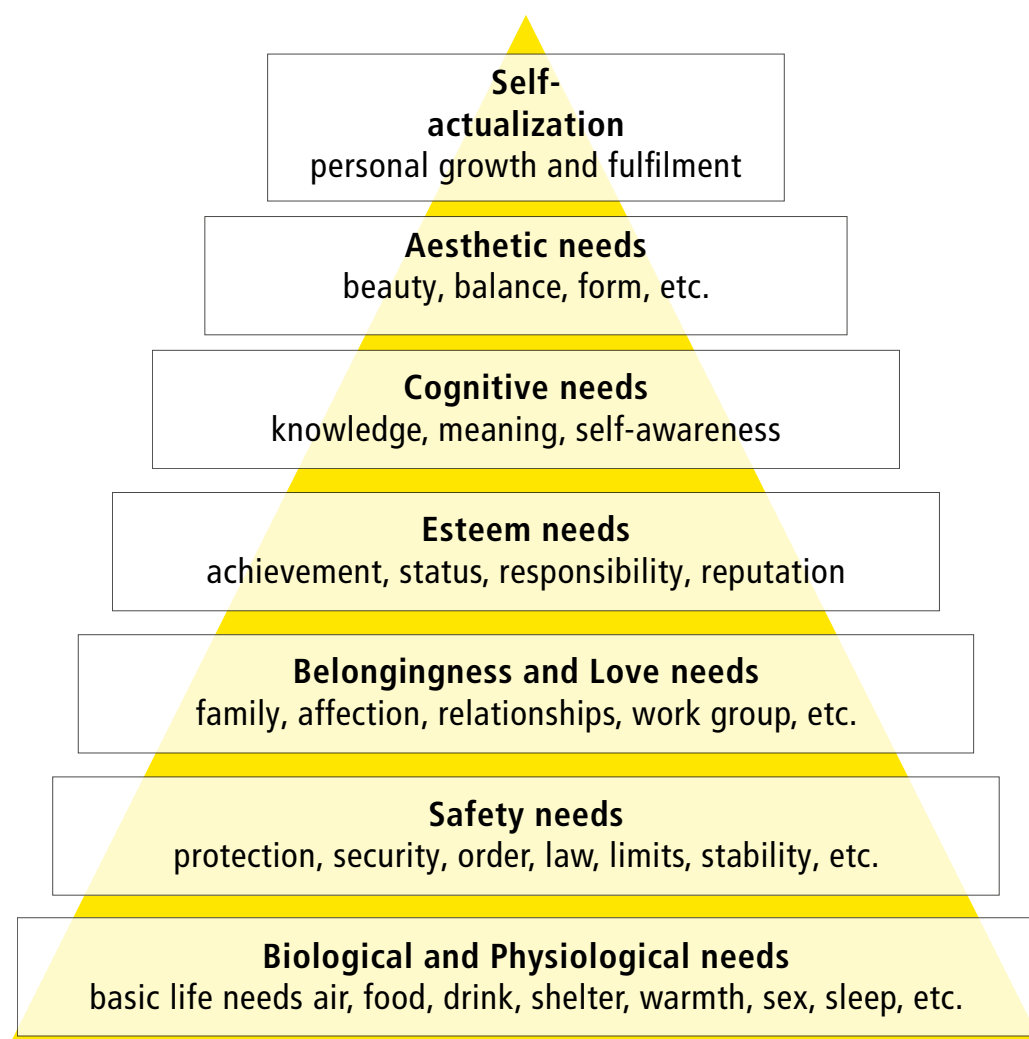
We all deserve the basics such as safety, food, water, shelter, education, employment and people we can share our lives with. We also all deserve the opportunity to grow, explore and experience the world around us.

In the 1950s, Maslow came up with a way to describe these basics, the original model for the 'Hierarchy of Needs'^[Endnote 21]. This was updated in the 1970's to include^[Endnote 22] a larger and more specific range of definitions for the needs of individuals and communities. Ranging from the basic physical need to sustain basic life support (food, water, air, shelter, safety) at its basic level to 'cognitive' or intellectual stimulation, 'aesthetic' or cultural opportunities and experience, and 'self-actualisation' or personal fulfilment needs at its top.

Sometimes we forget that we need a bit more than the basics, and the bare essentials to keep ourselves happy and well. Therefore we should make real efforts to nourish our psychological, emotional, and intellectual needs as much our physical selves.

In a nutshell, 'One must live well to know what living is!'^[Endnote 23].

Fig 1 The 7-level version of the Hierarchy of Needs based on Maslow ^[Endnote 24]



Source: Design Alan Chapman 2001-7-adapted by Ward, David & Lasen, Marta. (2009).

We need to be able to communicate what we are feeling, and have meaningful connections with others, if we want to stay healthy.

One example of a local project is Mr. Hastings and St Leonards. This uses drama and film making to look at the issues around communication, connection, mental health and suicide prevention.

Mr Hastings and St Leonards is a project for local men that has been making important contributions to the local discussion around mens health. The project, run by a group of local men, with assistance from Hastings Voluntary Action ^[Endnote 25] seeks to support men to develop coping strategies, resilience and peer support networks that enables them to live happier and healthier lives.

The Monologues of Men ^[Endnote 26] was developed and delivered by the Mr Hastings and St Leonards project ^[Endnote 27] and looks at communication around men's mental health and wellbeing. The Monologues of Men was a community theatre project that tackled a range of key subjects including childhood experiences, mental and physical health, self imposed limitations, negative expectations and pressures men can face.

The project highlights that men are often uncomfortable with communication, sometimes lacking experience or the chance to talk about their personal issues and challenges. The wider social pressure to 'man up' and not share anxieties, weakness, fears and uncertainty can lead to some men bottling up their feelings.

This can lead to deterioration in relationships, worsening mental health, and sometimes self harming behaviours or suicidal thoughts and feelings. The project provides spaces and connections that can support them to get used to communicating their experience, develop relationships and links with others who can help build personal resilience. Through this they can live happier, more fulfilled, less lonely and isolated lives.

Monologues of Men builds upon the work highlighted in the short film 'Men Don't Talk' ^[Endnote 28]. The film, made by the Mr Hastings and St Leonards project to help tackle male mental health issues and high levels of suicide and self harming behaviours in men, looked at the difficulties faced by men in Hastings and St Leonards. The film highlights the need for open communication, sharing of experiences and feelings. With an insightful depiction of male mental health and wellbeing, it is an important creative output from a grassroots community project.

Another Hastings based project used music and a 'rave style' event to help highlight community mental health issues and challenge stigma during the 2024 Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW). The MHAW Musical Extravaganza ^[Endnote 29] that ran on the 17 May used a wide range of musicians and dance acts to tackle some of the stigma that surrounds mental health.

This festival, a collaboration between ESCC, Hastings Borough Council, Hastings Voluntary Action, Mr. Hastings & St Leonards, Love Hastings and Hastings Commons. It also included the Hastings Punk Choir and a wide range of DJ sets and musicians. Local mental health advocates and 'experts by experience' were also in attendance.

Both of these projects highlight the sort of activities that are already happening in East Sussex and show local people getting involved in organising creative experiences and activities that give their communities a bit more than the bare necessities.

Still from the [Men Don't Talk - Mr Hastings and St Leonards | youtube.com](#) film project.



Hastings Punk Choir at the MHAW Hastings event.



You can find more information about Mr. Hastings and St Leonards in the links below.

- [Mr Hastings & St Leonards, BBC South East News 26/04/24 | youtube.com](#)
- [Men's Room Hastings & St Leonards | Youtube.com](#)
- [#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek2024 | TikTok](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness Week 2024 | hastingsonlinetimes.co.uk](#)

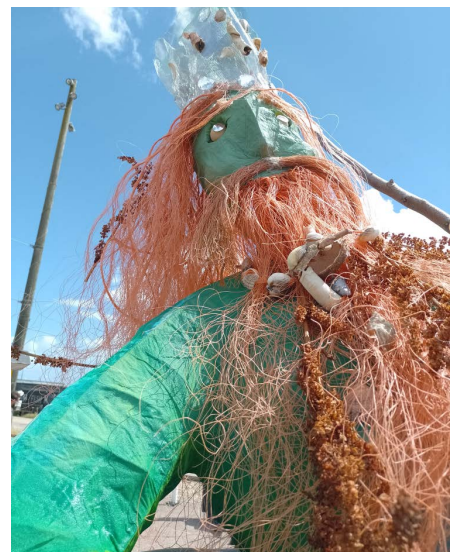
Participants quotes around the impact of creativity on health and wellbeing.

“ Many men, including myself, find it difficult to socialise and make friends; these inhibitions can melt away when working collaboratively and creatively. Art and design projects require genuine and pleasurable cooperation and discussion of ideas, and the results can bring great personal and group satisfaction, pride, friendship and self-respect, particularly when the creative outcomes are displayed publicly.

Most people, and particularly men, are quite shy and hesitant to engage in creative ‘art’ activities, but with the guidance of a responsive and flexible facilitator almost always find themselves much more capable and interested than they expected, in some cases leading to a lifetime of engagement and self-expression through art and craft. ”

Peter Quinnell MA, Royal College of Art supported Mr Hastings and St Leonards make the Mr Hastings and St Leonards Merman.

Mr Hastings and St Leonards Merman



“ For me creativity and human connection are enormously important. Over lockdown I lived by myself in a studio flat on the seafront. The effect of isolation and loneliness can't be understated. I realised so many of us are living in these little concrete boxes completely isolated from what we need as humans in my view. This led me to start the drum circle nearly three years ago. This weekly food sharing, drumming, singing and sometimes dancing circle has completely changed my life.

Recently in an opening share a woman in our group said this, “that this group has changed her life”. She has gone from living alone to having a caring and loving community around her where she can be authentic, creative and expressive.

These types of activities include creativity and connection which I believe is so vital for men's and women's wellbeing. We are not supposed to do it alone. I believe we are not built for it. We thrive together best as communal beings. ”

Dan from Roots to Return and Mr Hastings and St Leonards

“ To allow creation to flow through oneself, is to self-preoccupy the spirit and the mind. Men need value to feel a sense of purpose. When all outward presence is void of stimulus, art and creativity is a great vessel to pour thoughts and feelings. We are conditioned to be distinctive in our self-critical analysis especially in our creations, but the truth of delight is to dive into the vivid and unknown world. Often men find a mirror there or find the way to express in words what they couldn't before. ”

Drew Copus, local muralist

“ Mr Hastings and St Leonards wasn't originally conceived as an initiative with as strong a creative focus as can be seen today. The creative approach has evolved by following local men's energy, passion, and commitment to connect with men from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences across Hastings and St Leonards.

This has enabled local men to share their own powerful stories in creative ways that are meaningful for them, exploring masculinity, breaking down barriers and tackling the stigma around men and mental health.

This encourages other men to recognise they are not alone and allows them to feel able to talk about their own experiences.

Mr Hastings and St Leonards is using creativity to stimulate welcoming opportunities and spaces for men to come together and share what matters for them. By enabling their voices to be heard the men feel valued and validated in their quest to make changes in their lives and for their own communities' wellbeing. ”

Mr Hastings and St Leonards project team

East Sussex, local assets and creative riches

East Sussex has a rich and diverse range of arts, creativity, culture, heritage and tourism activities.

These include concert halls, galleries, libraries, theatres, and museums. We also have some of the most beautiful countryside and coastline. Our assets include a wide range of education, health and social care environments, community settings, and our places of work, and of course our own homes.

There are many local opportunities for creative activity, reflection and connection on our doorstep. As individuals we are often consumers of creativity, however we can also be active participants and creatives in our own right. Its important that we can find the help we need to do this, near to where we live, study, work or play.

In order to make people's lives better, it is necessary to understand the whole system and to be person-centred. That's where arts, culture, museums, libraries, and other community assets can play a key role. When people are isolated and disconnected from their communities, there is an automatic correlation with poor health' [Endnote 30].

Across the county we have an impressive range of opportunities to engage with creative activities. The following list represents a sample of countywide creative assets.



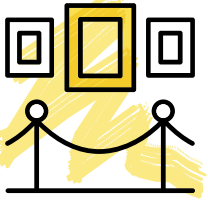
Music venues and concert halls

- [Trading Boundaries | tradingboundaries.com](https://tradingboundaries.com)
- [Glyndebourne opera | glyndebourne.com](https://glyndebourne.com)
- [The White Rock | whiterocktheatre.org.uk](https://whiterocktheatre.org.uk)
- [Blackbox Hastings | blackboxhastings.com](https://blackboxhastings.com)



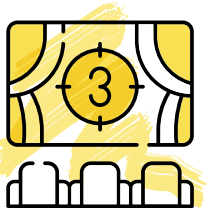
Museums and heritage sites

- [Anne of Cleves House | Sussex Past](https://sussexpast.org.uk)
- [Hastings Museum and Art Gallery | hmag.org.uk](https://hmag.org.uk)
- [Seaford museum | seafordmuseum.co.uk](https://seafordmuseum.co.uk)



Art galleries, cultural centres

- [De La Warr Pavilion | dlwp.com](http://dlwp.com)
- [Hastings Contemporary | hastingscontemporary.org](http://hastingscontemporary.org)
- [Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft | ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk](http://ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk)
- [Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts | attenboroughcentre.com](http://attenboroughcentre.com)
- [the blackShed gallery | theblackshedgallery.org.uk](http://theblackshedgallery.org.uk)
- [Project Art Works | projectartworks.org](http://projectartworks.org)
- [Devonshire Collective | devonshirecollective.co.uk](http://devonshirecollective.co.uk)
- [Towner Eastbourne | townereastbourne.org.uk](http://townereastbourne.org.uk)



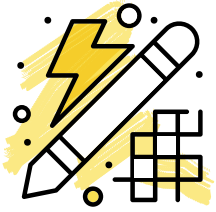
Cinemas

- [Cineworld Eastbourne | cineworld.co.uk](http://cineworld.co.uk)
- [Depot Lewes | lewesdepot.org](http://lewesdepot.org)
- [Duke's at Komedia Picturehouse | picturehouses.com](http://picturehouses.com)
- [Kino Rye | kinodigital.co.uk](http://kinodigital.co.uk)
- [Kino-Teatr | kinodigital.co.uk](http://kinodigital.co.uk)
- [Odeon Cinema Hastings | odeon.co.uk](http://odeon.co.uk)
- [Pavilion Hailsham | hailshampavilion.co.uk](http://hailshampavilion.co.uk)
- [Picturehouse Uckfield | picturehouseuckfield.com](http://picturehouseuckfield.com)
- [Sussex Exchange Cinema | thesussexexchange.co.uk](http://thesussexexchange.co.uk)
- [Towner Eastbourne Cinema | townereastbourne.org.uk](http://townereastbourne.org.uk)
- [Seaford Community Cinema Seaford Community Cinema | escis.org.uk](http://escis.org.uk)



Theatres

- [Devonshire Park Theatre | Eastbourne Theatres](#)
- [Royal Hippodrome Theatre](#)
- [Congress Theatre | Eastbourne Theatres](#)
- [Winter Garden | Eastbourne Theatres](#)
- [Opus Theatre | Hastings](#)
- [Stables Theatre & Art | stablestheatre.co.uk](http://stablestheatre.co.uk)
- [Chequer Mead Theatre | chequermead.co.uk](http://chequermead.co.uk)
- [Printers Playhouse | Eastbourne](#)



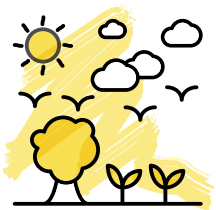
Creative, cultural organisations

- [Hospitable Environment | hospitable-environment.com](https://hospitable-environment.com)
- [Culture Shift | cultureshift.org.uk](https://cultureshift.org.uk)
- [Make \(Good\) Trouble | makegoodtrouble.co.uk](https://makegoodtrouble.co.uk)



Community activities, pastimes and support

- [The Sussex Stitchers | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Links Project East Sussex | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Hastings Library of Things | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Hastings Local History Group | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Dallington Art Club – Rother | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Lewes Singing Circle | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [Lewes Live Literature Group | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [Meridian Lacemakers in Seaford | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [Bexhill Art Society | Sussex Modern](https://SussexModern.org.uk)
- [Projects | Sussex Wildlife Trust](https://SussexWildlifeTrust.org.uk)
- [Home - South Downs National Park Authority](https://SouthDownsNationalParkAuthority.org.uk)



Outdoor, environmental or natural settings

- [Allotments, Lewes and Eastbourne Councils | lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](https://lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)
- [England Coast Path | East Sussex County Council](https://EastSussexCountyCouncil.org.uk)
- [The Coastal Trail - South Downs National Park Authority](https://SouthDownsNationalParkAuthority.org.uk)
- [Great Dixter Charitable Trust](https://GreatDixterCharitableTrust.org.uk)

National forums and agencies about creative health

- [National Centre for Creative Health](https://NationalCentreForCreativeHealth.org.uk)
- [National Centre for Creative Health Round table on Health Inequalities Dec 2022 | youtube.com](https://NationalCentreForCreativeHealth.org.uk/round-table-on-health-inequalities-dec-2022)
- [CHWA Seminar Health Inequalities Panel 2021 | youtube.com](https://CHWA.org.uk/seminar-health-inequalities-panel-2021)

Inequality and creative health opportunities

Many East Sussex residents already enjoy a wide range of arts, creativity, and cultural experiences, from everyday creative activities within their homes, activities held within local organisations to large events hosted by internationally renowned venues. However we have to recognise that some people and communities face barriers in accessing creative health activities. These can include.


- Disposable income, where you or your family or your ancestors come from, the colour of your skin, your accent and attitudes, if you have physical and or intellectual disabilities.
- The way you think, express yourself, communicate with and understand the world, the way you worship or choose not to.
- The way you feel love and who you love, your identity and the way you choose to dress and name yourself.

Across the county, in coastal, urban, and rural communities, there are a wide range of organisations and individuals increasing access to creative health activities to support local people, many examples are highlighted throughout this report.



There is clear evidence that cognitive stimulation, a sense of purpose, engagement in your community and a fulfilling social life are as important as diet, exercise and medical care when it comes to living a long and healthy life. This 'creative health' approach to public health is a vital component to tackling prevention and addressing major health inequalities.



To this end I am delighted that East Sussex County Council is a partner in a newly funded Coastal Communities research consortium supported by United Kingdom Research and Innovation's mobilising community assets to tackle health inequalities research programme. This important research project will bring together the NHS, local authorities, researchers, voluntary and community organisations and residents together to tackle health inequalities including young people's mental health, substance misuse and life-limiting illness. 

[Projects to help communities reduce health inequalities | www.ukri.org](http://www.ukri.org)

Professor Helen Chatterjee, Professor of Human & Ecological Health, UCL and AHRC / UKRI Programme Director for Health Inequalities.

Section two

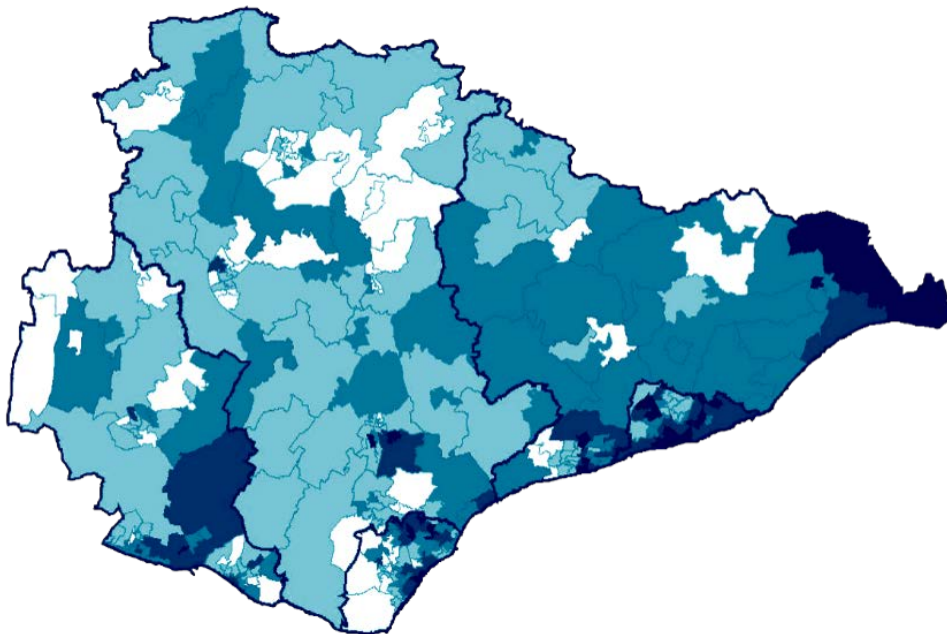
Setting the scene

Our place

East Sussex is a diverse and contrasting county, with a rich cultural heritage. It features the coastal urban boroughs of Eastbourne and Hastings, and mixed coastal and rural districts of Lewes, Rother, and Wealden. Although over three-quarters of residents live in urban areas, the county is predominantly rural with almost two-thirds falling within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the South Downs National Park. This mix of rural and urban brings challenges for people's health and wellbeing, and access to creative cultural, heritage and tourist activities.

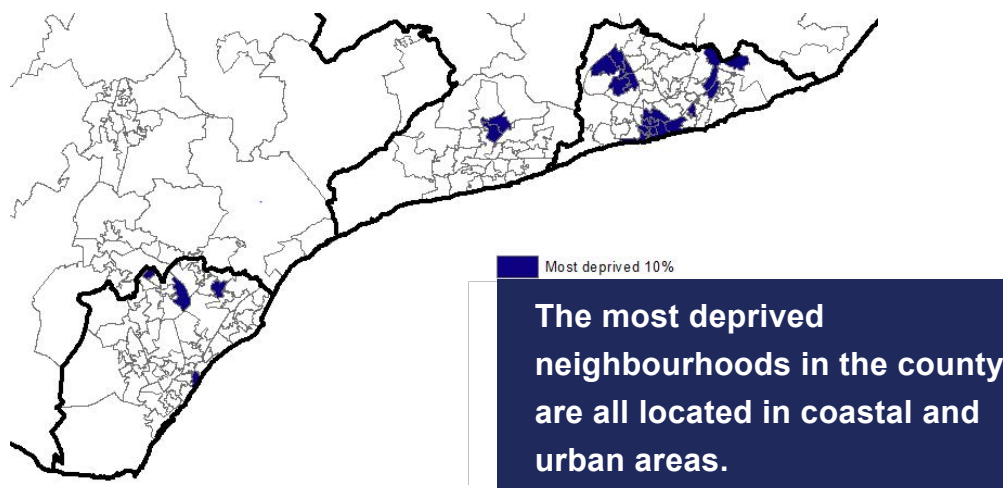
The latest [Index of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\) | gov.uk](#), suggests that relative multiple deprivation has risen in East Sussex in all district and borough councils since 2015, although there is variation across the County.

Map of areas of deprivation in East Sussex, 2019



Source: [JSNA Life Course Summary East Sussex 2023 | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](#)

Deprivation is a significant driver of health inequalities and is notable along the coastal strip, particularly in Hastings which is the most deprived local authority in the Southeast.



Source: [Indices of deprivation 2019 | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://indicesofdeprivation2019.eastsussexjsna.org.uk)

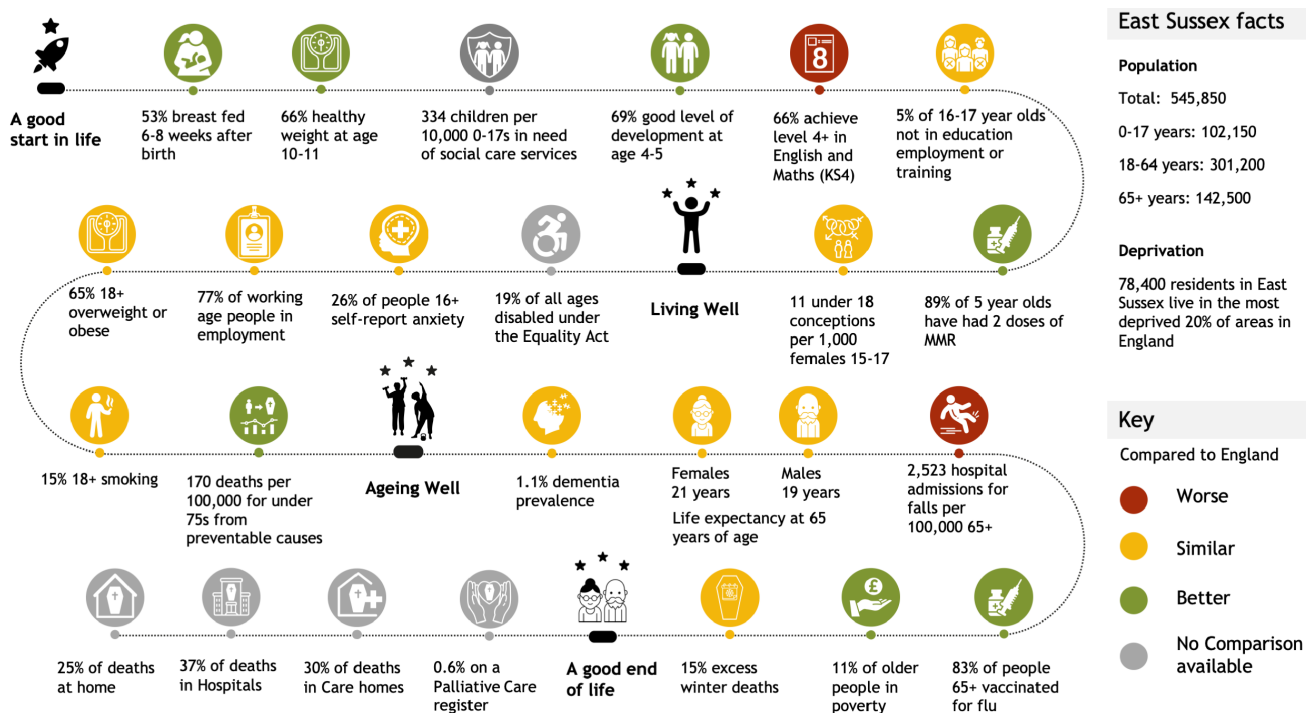
Our residents

Compared to England, East Sussex has:

- a much older age profile with an increasingly ageing population,
- a less ethnically diverse population,
- a higher proportion of people with a long-term limiting illness or disability (20% vs 18%).

Whilst there are many indicators that can be measured, figure 3 sets out a few key facts to paint a picture of the East Sussex population.

Fig 3 The East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Life Course Summary ^[Endnote 31]



The East Sussex population is projected to grow by nearly 66,000 people by 2037, from 550,700 in 2022 to 616,300. Over a quarter (26%) of our residents are aged 65 years or over, a much older age profile compared to England (18% aged 65 years and over). This is projected to increase to a third of our population by 2037, which presents unique challenges to supporting the health and wellbeing of East Sussex residents.

This underlines the importance of initiatives to support self-care, resilience, prevention of ill health and promotion of activities, for all ages, that foster creative activity and connection with others to tackle isolation. Creative opportunities and interpersonal and community connection are key elements required to be a creatively healthy county.

You can find more local data and information:

- [East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://eastsussexjsna.org.uk)
- [East Sussex In Figures | eastsussexinfigures.org.uk](https://eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)
- [East Sussex Life Course Summary | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://eastsussexjsna.org.uk)
- [NHS England Towards integrated care, the Sussex and East Surrey journey | youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Our Plan for our Population | youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [Healthwatch East Sussex | youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

East Sussex – A rich artistic heritage and a bright cultural future

East Sussex is a county with a diverse creative and cultural legacy. This is showcased through its many historic landmarks, buildings, landscapes, creative centres, organisations and historic individuals. From prehistoric Britons, through to the Romans, including the Beachy Head lady, a well to do Black Roman woman whose buried remains were found in Eastbourne. This continued with the Normans, to Anne of Cleves to Winnie the Pooh. With our Medieval castles to the Turner prize and beyond, East Sussex has so much to offer in terms of culture, art, heritage, history, and landscape.

Outside of physical cultural infrastructure, East Sussex continues to play a role in developing and nurturing creativity through hubs and networks such as Hastings Creatives or the Rye Creative Centre. Many of the institutions mentioned in this section have strong links to the community in which they are situated, working to increase access to, and enjoyment of, the creative world as well as enhancing the wellbeing of participants.

History

- [Pevensey Castle | english-heritage.org.uk](https://english-heritage.org.uk)
- [Lewes Castle | sussexpast.co.uk](https://sussexpast.co.uk)
- [Wealden Hall House | sussexpast.co.uk](https://sussexpast.co.uk)
- [Bodiam Castle | nationaltrust.org.uk](https://nationaltrust.org.uk)
- [Herstmonceux Castle](#)
- [Long Man of Wilmington](#)
- [Litlington White Horse](#)

Events

- [Jack in the Green Lewes](#)
- [Bonfire Night Bonfire Night](#)

Authors

- [The Bloomsbury Group Bloomsbury Group](#)
- [Thomas Paine A.A. Milne author of Winnie the Pooh and the illustrations by Rev E H Shepard Pooh Corner Hartfield Homepage - Pooh Corner Hartfield](#)

Nature

- [Ashdown Forest South Downs Beachy Head Beachy Head - Visit Eastbourne](#)
- [The mystery of Beachy Head Lady – Museum Crush](#)

Gallery and artists

- Hastings Pier, Stirling Prize [RIBA Stirling Prize](#)
- [Turner Prize 2023](#) [Turner Prize 2023 | Towner Eastbourne](#)
- [Jesse Darling Wins Turner Prize 2023 – Press Release | Tate IMAGE TBC](#)
- Towner: [Eastbourne Alive](#)
- [De La Warr Pavilion](#)
- [Hastings Contemporary](#)
- Eric Ravilious
- Edward Burra

Museums

- [Ditchling Museum of Art and Craft](#)
- [Farleys House and Gallery](#)

Music

- [Glyndebourne Opera](#)
- [Lewes Folk Club](#)
- [Music: Hastings Punk Choir](#)
- [Love Supreme Festival – 5-7th July 2024](#)
- [Festival: Rye International Jazz & Blues Festival](#)
- [ryecreativecentre.co.uk/](#)

DITCHLING
MUSEUM
OF ART+
CRAFT

ASHDOWN FOREST

FARLEY'S HOUSE

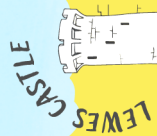


Wealden

GLYNDBOURNE



Lewes



WEALDEN HALL HOUSE



WASSAILING



LOVE SUPREME FESTIVAL



LEWES BONFIRE SOCIETY



LEWES FOLK CLUB



LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON



LITLINGTON WHITE HORSE



EDWARD BURRA



SOUTH DOWNS



ERIC RAVILIOUS



Eastbourne

TOWER EASTBOURNE



BEACHY HEAD



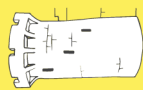
DE LA MARR PAVILION



REVENSEY CASTLE



HERSTMONCEUX CASTLE



REV E H SHEPARD

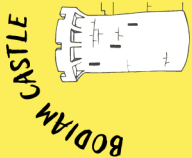


A.A. MILNE

THOMAS PAINE



Rother



BODIAM CASTLE

JACK IN THE GREEN



HASTINGS CREATIVE



Hastings



ART IN THE PARK

HASTINGS CONTEMPORARY



HASTINGS PUNK CHOIR!



EAST SUSSEX, A JOURNEY THOUGH
OUR RICH ARTISTIC HERITAGE

Culture East Sussex

Culture East Sussex (CES) is a network of public bodies, cultural organisations, and individuals that is hosted by ESCC. It works across four main areas, all of which are essential for the creative and cultural programmes across the county. CES has four key responsibilities:

- To be a collective voice for culture across East Sussex.
- To support and develop the skills of all people working in the cultural sector in East Sussex.
- To promote the diversity of the sector and ensure equality of access to culture in East Sussex.
- To encourage collaboration and mutual support within the cultural sector and works with its partners across a range of themes of mutual interest.

The priorities of CES are linked to the [East Sussex Cultural Strategy 2013 to 2025 | eastsussex.gov.uk](https://eastsussex.gov.uk/eastsussex/cultural-strategy) which has three key priorities:

- Priority 1** Create an environment where great cultural experiences are available to everyone to enhance their quality of life.
- Priority 2** Create an environment which enables the cultural and creative economy to expand and enhances the ability to attract and retain other businesses.
- Priority 3** Develop and promote well packaged cultural tourism offers which celebrate the identity of East Sussex, raises its profile and attracts more visitors and businesses to the County.

The role of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector

The voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector continues to make an essential contribution to the cultural life and vitality of East Sussex. The sector facilitates and leads a wide range of creative projects giving communities much needed support and activities, that contribute to health.



Compass Arts

Based in Eastbourne, Compass Arts is an intergenerational, co-creative, artist led organisation for anyone vulnerable to social isolation, lived trauma, mental illness and hidden disabilities



Mental health services are constricted by the time they can spend with clients. Escalating demand means that staff can only focus on the bare minimum of alleviating suffering.



Through the provision of spaces that are dedicated to developing art practices, patients can experience the potential of art and its enhancement and contribution to a quality of life. Art supports healing by reaching the plasticity of the brain. It is beneficial for everyone.



Fenya Sharkey, Artistic Director, Compass Community Arts.

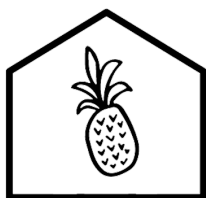
Death Cafe

Lewes Death Cafe

A Death Cafe is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counselling session.

At a Death Cafe people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death. Our objective is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'.

deathcafe.com



**HOSPITABLE
ENVIRONMENT**

Hospitable Environment

Is a socially engaged arts & wellbeing organisation based in Newhaven, East Sussex. We bring people together using creativity and food to explore what it takes to build safe, connected and sustainable communities.

hospitable-environment.com



Hastings Voluntary Action

Hastings Voluntary Action - a charity that helps other charities, community groups and social enterprises to start, survive and thrive in Hastings, East Sussex. Projects also include the following:

- Social Prescribing for older people pilot
- The Hastings & Rother Food Network
- Links Project
- Shorelink Writers
- hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk



Sussex Community Development Association

Sussex Community Development Association works across East Sussex, supporting community based projects aimed at tackling loneliness and social isolation, improving health and wellbeing and increasing economic stability.

- [Our Stories](https://sussexcommunity.org.uk)
- sussexcommunity.org.uk



Rother Voluntary Action

Support and champion Rother's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to make positive change, challenge issues and develop new ideas to strengthen communities.

- [Rother Food Partnership | rva.uk.com](https://rva.uk.com)
- [Rye Community Garden | rva.uk.com](https://rva.uk.com)
- [Age-Friendly Rother | rva.uk.com](https://rva.uk.com)
- [Ukraine Crisis | rva.uk.com](https://rva.uk.com)



3VA

3VA is a voluntary action organisation for the three districts of Wealden, Eastbourne and Lewes in East Sussex. 3VA enables and supports community groups, voluntary organisations and individuals across East Sussex to improve the quality of life and equality of opportunity for everyone. They represent and advocate for the voluntary and community sector with local government and other statutory authorities.

3va.org.uk



For me, a truly creative approach to health would seek to remove more of the psychological and physical barriers to engaging with the natural world and invest in the natural and human assets that exist there. We have many innovative volunteer-led community projects across the county that create meaningful opportunities for individuals to connect with nature and each other. Being free to play, create and learn in wild places brings health and wellbeing benefits and early intervention across the spectrum of public health concerns.

It promotes physical and mindful activity, raises confidence, reduces anxiety and isolation, encourages mindfulness, self-care and create opportunities to find peace, joy, ourselves, and with each other, all of which makes us more resilient to life's challenges. //

Kim Richards, CEO, Rother Voluntary Action

For more information visit:

- [East Sussex Community Information System | escis.org.uk](https://escis.org.uk)
- [The Tribe Project | East Sussex County Council](#)

Creative Health at a Glance

Adapted from National Centre for Creative Health [Creative health at a glance | ncch.org.uk](https://ncch.org.uk)

Cancer



Breast cancer survivors experience improvement in **anxiety, depression, fatigue**, and **participation in society** thanks to improv theatre/ comedy.



There are **387 fewer cases** of breast cancer per year thanks to the preventative nature of movement and dance.



Music interventions can **reduce anxiety** in cancer patients by an average of 7.73 units on the Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory scale.

Cardiovascular Disease



Studies note a **40% reduction in GP appointments** from patients using a social prescribing service which focuses on CVD risk and mental health.



Longitudinal data shows ‘those with low social and cultural participation have an increased **risk of coronary heart disease**’.



£157 million is saved annually, thanks to how movement and dance reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

People who dance also have a **46% lower risk of cardiovascular death**.



Drama performance and / or singing interventions have been shown to have a positive effect on the **development of new neural pathways** following a stroke.

Severe Mental Illness (SMI)



The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend that arts therapies are considered for everyone who has **psychosis or schizophrenia**.



Combining art psychotherapy with pharmacotherapy for **Major Depressive Disorder** is significantly more effective in alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety, improving interpersonal relationships, and increasing self-esteem.

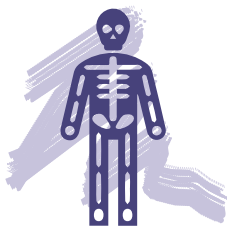


Creative co-production work with people with SMI can significantly increase **uptake of annual health checks** from 10% to 60%.

Musculoskeletal Disorders



Community gardening **modifies risk factors** for musculoskeletal conditions through increases in physical activity, fruit and vegetable intake, and reductions in stress.



80% of studies in a review of dance interventions for chronic pain note reduced **chronic secondary musculoskeletal pain**.



Music therapy / music-based interventions for those with fibromyalgia **alleviate pain, relieve depression, improve quality of life and self-esteem**, and provide **coping strategies**.

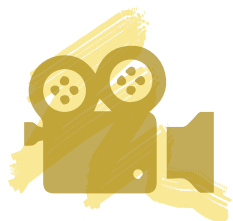
Mental Ill-Health



Music therapy has been indicated to '**reduce depression, anxiety, withdrawal and improve attention problems** for children who had been exposed to maltreatment and poverty'.



'Longitudinal cohort data have shown that cultural engagement is associated with a **reduced risk of developing depression** in adults aged 50+.



Creative and community mental health provisions have been promoted as a great way of **reducing waiting lists** for clinical mental health services.

This has been achieved via NHS transformation programmes and social prescribing.

Chronic Respiratory Disease



Singing support for COPD and asthma has led to a **23% decline in A&E** admissions and a **21% decline in GP** appointments, six months after referral.



Expressive writing for adults with moderate asthma **improves lung function by 14%**, due to reductions in physiological stress.



Music therapy lessens paediatric patients' asthma symptoms, and improves **medication compliance, pulmonary function, and quality of life**.

Dance-based exercise for COPD improves 'postural **stability and balance** scores, **pulmonary function**, and peripheral **muscle strength**'.

Maternity



Black women are 5x more likely to die in pregnancy/ childbirth than white women. 39% of these deaths are due to **avoidable heart disease or blood clots**.

Arts activities and cultural safe spaces can support the **health literacy of disenfranchised groups**, which could help them to spot warning signs and access care.



The 'Research Justice framework' aids research with Black pregnant and birthing people, and Black birth-workers, demonstrating best practice in **equitable co-design**.



Singing interventions have demonstrated a statistically significant faster improvement in symptoms for mothers suffering with **moderate-severe postnatal depression**.

High Blood Pressure



Dance therapy **reduces the systolic / diastolic pressure** of people with high blood pressure.



Viewing figurative art in a museum setting has been indicated to **decrease systolic blood pressure**.



British Heart Foundation encourage blood pressure checks in unconventional spaces, to aid **hypertension case finding**. Community/ arts centres are great locations for this.

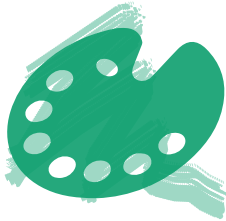
Dementia



£149 million is saved annually, thanks to how movement and dance reduce the risk of developing dementia.



The **verbal fluency** of dementia patients is improved via music therapy. **Anxiety, depression, and apathy** are also significantly reduced.



Investors can expect up to **£6.62 Social Return on Investment** for every £1 invested in visual arts interventions for dementia.

Frailty and Falls Prevention



‘Fall-related fractures cost the health and social care system £4.4 billion per year.’ By mixing dance with physiotherapy, **falls are reduced by 58%**.



Longitudinal cohort data shows that ‘cultural engagement is associated with a **reduced risk of becoming frail** and a **slower progression of frailty** over time’.



‘Music listening has been associated with a **decreased risk of falls** in older hospital patients’.

For more information about the benefits of ‘Creative Health’ visit ncch.org.uk

Section three

East Sussex creative health, across the life course

From preconception to the end of our lives, our needs change. When we move from childhood into adulthood there are different opportunities for creative health to help individuals and communities explore, experience, reflect upon, and actively participate in the world.

Pablo Picasso once said “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up”. It is startling just how resonant this quip seems when we look at how many of us do not think of ourselves as having creative abilities, interests, or outlets. A recent report from a member of the Eastbourne Alive team shows the power of remembering how we played and can play again.

The member of the team recalled how a woman, who was visiting the Eve De Haan artwork ‘Its nicer to be nice’, sat on the swing which was a central element of the artwork and began weeping openly. When asked why she was crying she explained that she had not sat on a swing since she was a very small child and was simply moved by the joyful experience and the interaction with the artwork. She explained that she hadn’t realised that, as an adult, it was ok to play and think creatively. Her interaction with the De Haan artwork had in a powerful and poignant way helped her rediscover a simple forgotten pleasure, a playful and creative experience after many years that had moved her to joyful tears.

The Eve De Haan artwork was made available as part of Turner Wraparound events ^[Endnote 32].

A small selection of case study summaries set out in the following sections give an indication of the range of projects and organisations using creative health approaches within East Sussex. Each summary has a link to a larger more detailed summary with contact details for the organisations leading on the projects involved.

Starting well

So much of human development relies on the arts, culture, heritage, and the environment to support experimentation, education, play and growth.

Babies, children and young people need to access opportunities that support cognitive and social development, reasoning, critical thinking, self-expression, self-regulation, connection and a range of experiences across different artistic, cultural and heritage domains and the natural world ^[Endnote 33]. This access to varied, vibrant encounters and connections is important to support healthy development, growth, independence, and maturity. It is in short 'how we learn to be human'.

It is essential that we give every child and young person the opportunity to develop and grow with a wide range of opportunities and experiences. There is a range of creative activities for children and young people including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The Catalyst

Delivered by Make Good Trouble

The Catalyst is a programme for young people to join an exciting creative collective where they explore, create and debate. The programme of workshops has now concluded. Each workshop gave young people the opportunity to work with artists, photographers, film makers, and sound designers, and sign up for a mentor who offered career and wellbeing support and advice. Participants were able to meet new friends in a relaxed environment. The programme was free and open to anyone aged 12 to 24 living in East Sussex.

The programme utilised the Most Significant Change and other narrative approaches and the end of project evaluation will be published in Autumn 2024.

- [The Catalyst: A creators' collective | Make Good Trouble](#)



I just wanted to get in contact to say what a fantastic time Oliver had at the workshops last week! He was beaming with pride when he showed me the results and said he would absolutely love to do it again should the workshop be repeated.



He also said how well organised it was and how safe and also empowered he felt. As a parent of a wonderful young carer who sometimes can be quite serious and can sometimes forget to put himself first, it was so lovely to see how much he enjoyed this workshop and how much he enjoyed a different medium to express himself.

Thank you so very much for organising such a fantastic event. Please pass onto everyone involved my thanks and to say what a real difference this event made to Oliver.



Wendy Davis parent of Oliver who attended The Catalyst project.

The Devonshire Collective

Devonshire Collective is a cultural and community organisation for all ages operating across several ex-retail sites in the Devonshire West ward of Eastbourne.

As part of Eastbourne ALIVE it commissioned five public artworks from local artists from under represented backgrounds. In parallel, the Devonshire Youth Collective was set up in 2023, bringing together around ten young people from marginalised backgrounds to engage with these artists to develop their own creativity, and engage with the wider community.

- [Devonshire Collective | devonshirecollective.co.uk](https://devonshirecollective.co.uk)

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Delivered by more than 100 East Sussex

The HAF is a Department for Education funded programme that provides free healthy meals and enriching holiday activities to eligible young people. Activities include arts, music, drama, and other creative sessions across the county. During 2023, more than 36,000 sessions were attended by children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

One example of HAF delivery is The All Aboard Bus: This is an art and foreign language-based activity provider that takes young people (aged 5-11 years) on 'journeys' to different places, cultures, languages, and food. Sessions include a range of arts activities as well as daily opportunities for young people to prepare meals and try new foods.

- [Welcome to Holiday food and fun | East Sussex County Council](#)

Forging the Links

This was a project devised and delivered by Roma children and young people with funding from ESCC Public Health and the support of East Sussex Community Voices, and Jake Bowers a Traveller community media personality, artist and craftsman.

Focusing on concepts of home, community and family the young people created a complex artwork depicting a sculpted bench designed by Roma children and young people themselves and forged with reclaimed steel and discarded beech wood. The design incorporates three core Roma tropes the horse, a gypsy Vanner / Cob type horse, a cart / wagon wheel and an open hand, a sign of friendship. A figure, resembling Tin Man from Wizard of Oz is Terry, a likeness of a real Roma community elder and grandfather to some of the young people who designed it.

The head is 3D scanned printed plastic and is an eerily accurate portrait of the real Terry, who watched the unveiling of the artwork from a hospital bedside courtesy of his daughter and Grand kids. He was overjoyed at the result as were the children themselves. With a bracketing focus of health, wellbeing, skills and creativity the project will be toured to East Sussex schools and libraries later in the year using it as a stimulus to dispel prejudice, tackle stereotypes and share ideas about home, community, and heritage.

Social Prescribing for Children and Young People

Delivered by Imago and Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA)

NHS Sussex and ESCC are currently funding and supporting Imago and SCDA to deliver two pilot social prescribing projects. These projects provide early intervention support to young people with mild to moderate mental health and wellbeing needs by giving them access to a social prescriber. The pilot has two strands:

- Children in four primary schools in the High Weald area, as a pilot project for the Primary Care Network area.
- Ukrainian children and young people who are fleeing war and conflict in Ukraine.
- [Children and young people's social prescribing | socialprescribingacademy.org.uk](#)
- [Imago Community](#)
- [Webinar for launch of the CYP Social Prescribing Tender Opportunity in East Sussex | youtube.com](#)
- [SCDA • Making A Difference In Our Community | sussexcommunity.org.uk](#)

Theatre in Schools

Delivered by various Theatre in Education providers

Since 2021, ESCC has developed and supported the delivery of Theatre in Education packages for state funded secondary schools in East Sussex (including special schools). Key issues addressed include county lines, harmful sexual behaviours and drug, alcohol and tobacco education.

- [Embracing Arts, East Sussex | 1Space](#)
- [Head2Head Sensory Theatre | East Sussex 1Space](#)
- [HAF Easter Musical Theatre Workshops | eequ.org](#)

Living well

The focus on living well seeks to build upon the creative activities we enjoyed in the past, perhaps continue to enjoy, and expand them to support health benefits and health seeking behaviours, and we hope, joyful experiences.

We have an opportunity to ensure that we bring creativity into the workplace and throughout our adult lives. If we become parents or carers there is another key opportunity to ensure that the creativity, we value for ourselves, is maintained with those creative elements we treasure, and is 'handed down' or inherited by the next generation.

Wellbeing at Work Programme

The Wellbeing at Work Programme aims to provide support to East Sussex employers with improving employee health and wellbeing in their workplace. The programme:

- Offers workplace health resources, training, events and a signposting service to those working in East Sussex.
- Operates a free Accreditation Scheme for East Sussex employers, providing a framework to improve employee health and wellbeing, whilst rewarding organisations who are actively working to do so.

It is funded and delivered by Public Health at ESCC.

Existing creative support opportunities offered by the programme have been added to with a new Creative Health Charter Mark, aimed at promoting two hours of creative activity before, during or after work.

- [Website | East Sussex Wellbeing At Work](#)

The Creative Health Charter Mark

Aimed at encouraging workplaces across the county to include creative health in their workplace health offer and support the take up of two hours of creative activity within or outside the working week.

The Charter Mark is underpinned by evidence which suggests that 2 hours of arts engagement per week (termed the ‘arts dose’) is associated with good mental wellbeing amongst adults. ^[Endnote 34]

- [Wellbeing at Work Factsheets | cipd.org](https://www.cipd.org/uk/research-and-insight/articles/wellbeing-at-work-factsheets)
- [Creativity and wellbeing, What Works Wellbeing | whatworkswellbeing.org](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/)
- [Wellbeing In The Arts | wellbeinginthearts.org.uk](https://www.wellbeinginthearts.org.uk/)

Prototype Pottery Project

Macmillan, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, Public Health ESCC and Eastbourne Pottery Studio

The “Prototype Pottery Project” uses creativity, peer support and the arts, specifically pottery and ceramics, to improve the lives people being treated for cancer.

The project is the idea of Issy O'Donnell, a Cancer Support Project Worker at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. Issy worked with Public Health at ESCC, to set up the project as part of the trust's goal to provide new ways to support people with cancer, their families and their carers. Public Health at ESCC have collaborated on the design of the Prototype Pottery Project and will be evaluating it to see how this “creative health” offer can support people with cancer.

In the project, people with cancer undertake a short, specialised course at the studio in crafting ceramics, with peer support in a relaxed and gently creative atmosphere alongside other people who are being treated for cancer. The Prototype Pottery Project will be an additional support offer alongside existing counselling and complimentary therapies available through the Trust and Macmillan.

Any patient with cancer who would like to take part in the project should speak to the team providing their cancer care, who can arrange for a referral.

Eastbourne Pottery Studio have a strong track record of supporting people with a range of health conditions and wellbeing challenges to explore, through the medium of pottery, their creative side and produce something beautiful and tangible from their experience.

The Prototype Pottery Project will run from June 2024 with ongoing evaluation to help develop a mainstream support offer.

//

Issy O'Donnel said: The Prototype Pottery Project offers us a promising avenue for supporting the mental and physical health of cancer patients. We hope to boost their emotional resilience and enhance their overall quality of life for all cancer patients, including those with terminal disease. Through participating in the pottery sessions, patients may experience not just mental and emotional benefits but also tangible physical benefits, including pain management and reduced fatigue levels which are common concerns for individuals undergoing treatment.

//

//

Claire Shoosmith from Eastbourne Pottery Studio said: We are a professional ceramics studio in the heart of Eastbourne with fantastic equipment and expert technical support and are dedicated to providing opportunities for all members of the community to explore their creativity, share our facilities and experiment with clay.

//

[Prototype pottery project to provide new support to people with cancer – East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust \(esht.nhs.uk\)](https://esht.nhs.uk)

//

A diagnosis of cancer changes a person's world and knocks it off its axis, as they are plunged into treatment, recovery and all the physical effects and anxieties that accompany it. People affected by cancer tell us that they often lose a sense of control. We have found that the creative arts are a way back for people to regain some new control within their lives and find outlets for the emotional upheavals of cancer.



I have been pleased to work with patients who have used poetry, theatre, painting, sculpture and even someone who created music from the electrical signals of the plants originally used to make chemotherapy. These all have been evidence to me of the benefits of creative arts in health.

//

Professor Richard Simcock, Consultant Clinical Oncologist, Chief Medical Officer, Macmillan Cancer Support

Arts on Prescription

Arts on Prescription (AOP) has been running creative programmes for people who have issues impacting on their mental health and experience challenges accessing groups in the wider community since 2018.

Their programmes support people to maintain mental health and reduce loneliness and isolation by programs proven to build confidence, learn new skills, access training, education, volunteering and employment.

In 2022 AOP took on a disused building in a park and set up a peer-led wellbeing hub. People who have been through their programme are invited to join the steering group and to be actively involved in the running of the space.

Supported by a volunteer team with lived experience, most of whom are people who have been through the AOP programme who wish to give back and further develop their skills through their volunteer training opportunities.

This has become a busy hive of activity connecting people who would not usually engage with the community via a range of workshops and community engagement events.

These events have enabled AOP to fund raise £3000 over the past year to support them to develop the hub into an accessible wellbeing space for the community to access.

Evidence that the AOP programme works is provided by the feedback given by AOP attendees, the number of retained volunteers, and feedback by those who have gone onto further education and employment running their own creative workshops in other locations across Hastings.

- [Arts on prescription | artsonprescription.org](https://artsonprescription.org)



Michelle is a manifesting carrier of Becker muscular dystrophy and joined AOP in 2019, during COVID-19 when many people impacted by isolation were referred to our online Art 4 Wellbeing sessions.



Continuing with the AOP programme for creative support and mentoring she later became a peer-volunteer in 2022 at Art in the Park our peer-led creative wellbeing hub in Alexandra Park, Hastings.



AOP were delighted when she agreed to enrol onto an art degree.

Ageing well

From retirement and into older age it is important that we maintain our social connections, our physical health and mental wellbeing. We need to ensure that we support ourselves, and those around us to age healthily, remain physically and mentally active, connected and engaged with the world around us. Creativity offers us shared languages, and opportunities to make lasting contacts with others. As we age we must recognise the need for connection and community and the possibilities that engagement with creative activities can bring.

Our Songs, Our Stories

Our Songs our Stories is a creative health project which is founded on the body of evidence of the impact of music-based activity for people living with Dementia and those who care for them to;

- improve physical and mental health
- improve connections and relationships
- combat loneliness and isolation

This project is commissioned by Public Health within ESCC with the key aim to explore models of this practice which can meet growing need in our community, achieving quality and sustainability through partnerships, skills and resource development.

The Our Songs Our Stories project is a highly valued addition to the Culture Shift portfolio as it complements their work within the realm of creative health.

Our Songs Our Stories aims to bring together partners working in this field to share learning, develop practice and create resources to explore how music-based activity can;

- improve health and wellbeing in older people
- tackle loneliness and social isolation through improved connections and relationships
- contribute to the existing body of knowledge, experience and evidence of the positive impact of singing, music making and storytelling on wellbeing.

Our Songs Our Stories has involved carers who are present in the sessions has provided a more beneficial experience for both participants and facilitators.

Our Songs Our Stories benefits from having skilled professional artists and musicians, with experience of social care settings and working with elderly people. This allows them to respond to participants as individuals and can manage group work and dynamics finding common ground and what people are interested in collectively.

Sessions of music and artistic activity focus on “being in the moment” and having new

experiences rather than just focusing on previous memories, which has proved very helpful in engaging participants.

Building on existing networks and activity, including with carers and disabled people, Culture Shift worked with community partner organisations to co-design new resources with the [Community 21](#) design team at the University of Brighton.

Alongside this they worked with Public Health ESCC to understand the potential of the project to evaluate the impact of delivery of activity, focusing on the sustainability of the offer and positive impacts. Currently delivery is focused in areas of need in Newhaven, Bexhill and Hastings, with wider work planned if future funding applications to major grant donors allow.

Overall, we are seeking to support the needs of the creative and social care workforce of East Sussex to continue to develop this area of work in response to growing need for project supporting elderly, isolated individuals and communities, and particular conditions such as Dementia using music, art and movement to positively impact on participants and provide a sustainable offer for care settings to adopt and learn from.

Culture Shift are looking forward to sharing learning and supporting ongoing development throughout the community of East Sussex.

- [Culture Shift CIO | cultureshift.org.uk](https://cultureshift.org.uk)

Grow Your Own Health

Herstmonceux Integrative Care Centre, ESCC and Sussex LMC

The Grow Your Own Health project was started by Dr Sarah Andersen, a Sussex GP, and Julia Behrens, a medical herbalist and published author. This project used the simple act of giving away small packets of seeds as a method for people across Sussex to grow and share with others around them.

Sarah and Julia have been friends for years and on a dog walk in winter 2021 lockdown they decided to share their love of gardening, and growing, with others who might not have grown food or medicinal plants before.

Sarah, the kind of GP who has been known to prescribe a dog walk or sea swimming, was hearing sad stories in clinic; many people were lonely, desperately missing friends, family, colleagues or their usual activities. Others were coming to terms with loss, and were wondering what the future held for them.

Julia has a lifelong passion for plants, and a deep understanding of how they can affect a person's wellbeing.

The seeds shared by the project include varieties that could all be grown together, shared with friends, family, and neighbours, and then eaten in a cake or a salad.

With support from ESCC and the Local Medical Committee of GPs and West Sussex County Council the project gave out 2500 leaflets, each containing three small packets of seeds across nearly 50 GP practices.

- [Grow Your Own | hmxihc.co.uk](https://hmxihc.co.uk)
- [Introduction to Grow Your Own Health | You Tube](#)

Life Transitions – HAIRE Project

ESCC and Rother Voluntary Action

Healthy Ageing through Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) ran until March 2023 and used community and creative projects to promote healthy ageing activities.

Since then, the Life Transitions project has been established to carry on the work with a renewed focus on connection and local opportunities for creativity.

- [Life Transitions | East Sussex County Council](#)
- [Transitions Service - Innovate UK Business Connect | ktn-uk.org](#)
- [East Sussex Conference: Innovations in Healthy Ageing | exeter.ac.uk](#)

Wellbeing Support at the De La Warr Pavilion

A multi-stranded wellbeing support programme designed to encourage and assist access to creative arts practice and experiences for people with a range of complexities and challenges. De La Warr is a Dementia Friendly venue and has specifically works with the Bexhill Dementia Action Alliance to develop its support offer.

- [Wellbeing The De La Warr Pavilion | dlwp.com](https://dlwp.com)

Compass Arts

An intergenerational, artist-led organisation providing arts opportunities for those vulnerable to social isolation, lived trauma, mental illness, and hidden disabilities.

Specific contributions include work with the Eastbourne ALIVE programme of Turner wraparound events and the Big Conversation in the Beacon Shopping Centre.

- [Compass Arts | compasscommunityarts.co.uk](https://compasscommunityarts.co.uk)



One of the founding principles of De La Warr Pavilion when it opened in 1935 was to promote health in mind, body and soul. We continue with that ethos today, providing creative and cultural experiences to help boost the health and wellbeing of our local community.



Our packed programme includes free fortnightly making sessions, creative holiday clubs for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals, art and craft workshops for people living with dementia and their carers, and creative groups for young people experiencing social, emotional or mental health challenges and from asylum seeker, refugee and migrant backgrounds.

We host shows by local dance and drama groups and work with organisations including Create Music and Bexhill Festival of Music to give young people hugely valuable professional performance experience. This is in addition to our year round programme of uplifting and inspiring gigs, performances, comedy shows, talks and free exhibitions.



Stewart Drew, Director & CEO, De La Warr Pavilion

blackShed Gallery

Is a well respected gallery in the heart of Rural Sussex with a reputation as a distinctive, diverse contemporary art space with a focus on artist lead projects and exhibitions. The gallery has a strong and established relationship with a number of highly regarded partners, such as Hastings Museum, Hasting Contemporary, De La Warr Pavilion, Project Artworks and the Towner Gallery, and more recently the Talent Accelerator, which helps drive our work towards supporting community projects, and young people as they look for experience within the cultural sector.

At its core, the blackShed aims to develop and support the regional artist based community, bringing high quality artwork, through direct inclusion, to a rural audience where social-economic inequalities preclude and prejudice participation in the visual arts. The environment surrounding the blackShed is set in a beautiful location giving artists the opportunity to explore their practice within the immediate environment, taking art beyond the gallery, often creating informal opportunities with the public and local visitors.

- theblackshedgallery.org.uk

Dying well

Death can occur at all stages of life and central to this is the support for end-of-life care, a 'good death' and care for the bereaved. Death is a central aspect of human existence, and we could all be doing more to understand the experiences of both those who have died or are nearing death alongside those that will be bereaved by their death.

Child Bereavement UK

Child Bereavement UK helps families to rebuild their lives when a child grieves or when a child dies with confidential bereavement support for individuals, couples, children, young people, and families.

They routinely utilise creative techniques to explore and support the experiences of the bereaved.

- [BBC Radio 4 - Four Thought, Facing Death Creatively](#)
- [British Association for Music Therapy: Facing Death Creatively | bamt.org](#)
- [Creative connections made at a conference | stchristophers.org.uk](#)
- [Sussex to host the inaugural Death Festival | University of Sussex](#)

Dragonflies Bereavement Project

Dragonflies provides creative therapeutic activities and group discussions delivered by trained staff and volunteers and a range of support options.

- [Dragonflies Bereavement Project | East Sussex 1Space](#)

Willow Tree Children's Support

Willow Tree Children's Support provide group and individual support in school settings for children and young people impacted by family illness and bereavement.

- [Willow Tree Children's Support, Hastings | willowtreechildrenssupport.com](#)

Death Café Lewes

The Lewes Death café gives attendees an opportunity to discuss issues related to death and dying in a directed group discussion. Death Cafés are run on a not-for-profit basis, and provide an accessible, respectful, and confidential space with no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product, or course of action. Frequently referencing artistic and cultural

practices from different cultural traditions the Death Cafes provide a safe space to discuss death and enjoy a nice cup of tea and some great cake.

- [Lewes Death Cafe | deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com)
- [Encouraging death communication in a death-avoidant society | biomedcentral.com](http://biomedcentral.com)
- [Can the 'death café' concept be adapted for use in healthcare professional learning and development? | BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care](http://BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care)
- [Death cafés as a strategy to foster compassionate communities: Contributions for death and grief literacy | nih.gov](http://nih.gov)
- [The Global Spread of Death Café: A Cultural Intervention Relevant to Policy? | Cambridge Core](http://Cambridge Core)
- [Death doulas: helping people at the end of their life | open.ac.uk](http://open.ac.uk)
- [Death doula Alua Arthur on letting grief transform the creative process of your life | The Creative Independent](http://The Creative Independent)
- [Creative Engagement in Public Health Interventions | Rosetta Life](http://Rosetta Life)

Section four

Key creative health programmes

With the Turner Prize's arrival in East Sussex in 2023 and the Towner Gallery's centenary, a programme of work was developed to promote, sustain, and share the creative opportunities presented to Eastbourne.

Eastbourne ALIVE



The Turner Prize 2023 and Eastbourne ALIVE

2023 was a year when East Sussex took on a global profile with the hosting of the Turner Prize 2023 by the Towner Gallery which was also celebrating its centenary year. With support for the bidding process and ongoing collaboration with the Towner Eastbourne and wider delivery partnership, Public Health within ESCC worked hard to ensure that the [Eastbourne ALIVE](#) wraparound events, focussed on community and public art works that surrounded the main Turner Prize festival were delivered with creative health concepts at their heart. Arts Council England provided £480,000 to the hosting partnership with both Eastbourne council and the county council adding resources directly and in kind to enable the partnership to quickly and efficiently assemble a fantastic cultural showcase.

Two particular elements of the wrap around project were The Big Conversation, focussing on mental health and wellbeing and TRANSIT focusing on equality, diversity and representation of marginalised communities including “the global majority” and “LGBTQI plus” communities that are mentioned below.

Key to this work was the support and expertise the public health team gave to three core research projects and evaluations that were commissioned to assess the impact and key insights that delivery of the festival might have.

Ruth Melville Research

The first evaluation, commissioned by the Towner Gallery and delivered by Ruth Melville associates, supported with input from the public health team, looked at the core economic impact and demonstrated the impressive economic benefits of having a landmark arts and cultural event and surrounding festival. Key insights from the research include:

- £16.1 million overall value added to Eastbourne economy
- Over 385 events, exhibitions, performances, and workshops took place between June 2023 and April 2024

- An estimated nearly 200,000 visitors came to Eastbourne as a result of the Turner Prize and Eastbourne ALIVE
- More than 20 high profile public arts commissions from international names from Helen Cammock to Michael Rakowitz were placed across the town on the seafront, outside Towner Eastbourne, on Eastbourne Pier and in community spaces and cafes - and explore the notion of a modern-day monument. These works were viewed by over 12.5 million people, either in person or online
- A total of over 20,000 hours of art engagement opportunities were made available for young people and the wider community
- Over 300 artists locally, nationally and internationally took part, with further creatives involved in making the work, supported by nearly 100 volunteers
- Over 100 work and volunteering placements were provided for young people in Sussex
- 130+ Eastbourne businesses took part in Eastbourne ALIVE, including dressing their shops and buildings in a colourful brand during the Turner Prize
- 260,000 plus audience members and 500 participants took part in events
- Surveyed audience members called Eastbourne ALIVE “creative, colourful and surprising”

Shared Intelligence and Common Vision

The second research programme, commissioned by Public Health Within ESCC and delivered by Shared Intelligence (SI) and Common Vision (CV) looked at two core research questions ‘What are the impacts on wellbeing for young people?’ and ‘How and why does it work?’. Looking at the health and wellbeing benefits for children and young people who participated in both of the Eastbourne Alive project areas the report showed a clear benefit from creative activity for both the local economy and for the health and wellbeing of those people who participated in it.

The SI and CV report states that the Eastbourne ALIVE programme was found to have “positively impacted young people’s wellbeing in a range of ways. This included direct positive effects on participants’ mood, self-confidence, and sense of belonging in the community.”

SI and CV looked at the impact of the Eastbourne Alive programme’s children and young people facing work and found that even when the main focus of a project wasn’t health or wellbeing, there were still measurable benefits for both. The research looks at Eastbourne ALIVE’s ‘mass intervention’ for young people via local schools and the ‘targeted community, interventions’ for young people delivered by local cultural and creative partners. Key findings included:

Mass intervention via schools. This reached demographic groups who are less likely to engage in the arts, in particular lower income and non-White groups, along with individuals

with less good physical and mental health, showed the quality of the Year 9 arts experience was high with 76% of Year 9 gallery visitors, said they had a good time and some schools reporting this as high as 97%. In addition, 43% said they were motivated to do more creative things in the future. For many Year 9s, their enjoyment came from this being the first or only time they had visited an art gallery, and many also valued the time to socialise with friends.

Targeted community interventions. These tended to reach young people who were older 15-24 years old, more likely to already engage in creative activities, and who were also more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to young people in the area generally. 94% of these participants noted the high quality of the community intervention arts experience, with 94% overall noting high quality experiences from the gallery visits with 92% saying they had a good time, and 92% saying they were motivated to do more creative things in the future.

Contribution to wellbeing

Overall on the day of their visit to the Turner Prize, almost half the Year 9s reported improved mood and Community Intervention participants said that taking part in Eastbourne ALIVE was an outlet for their emotions and benefited their self-perception in ways they found empowering.

The Big Conversation

The third research and evaluation project featured the participants of Compass Arts. Compass Arts is a Eastbourne based arts collective for people with serious mental illness, trauma and complex additional needs. This group of people were a key feature of the Eastbourne ALIVE wraparound events and specifically the Big Conversation a pop-up art gallery and community facing mental health conversation opportunity assembled in the Beacon Shopping Centre. With an impressive and stimulating range of creative projects and art works, delivered by the artist members of the collective, Compass Arts have been providing artistic mentoring, creative facilities and practical personal support for some of the most vulnerable people in Eastbourne.

Dr Caroline Osella was commissioned to deliver a narrative based evaluation utilising the Most Significant Change approach of the Compass Arts works and its impact on the artists and community it has fostered. Key findings included that for the participants Compass is experienced as quite different from any other space, the Big Conversation accelerated people's journeys and personal creative development and helped Compass consolidate networks both within the organisation and outside it (bonding and bridging work) and is having lasting follow-on impact. The Big Conversation opened up extraordinary opportunities, including an invitation for participants to participate in online research meetings and to travel to Scotland to display their work and the creative works of the artists. It also highlighted an upswing in referrals and demands on its resources, the capacity and space limitations faced by a small but energetic charity supporting very complex people.



In line with our 10 year strategy, Let's Create, we believe that access to culture and creative activities contribute to happier and healthier lives. We are supportive of the commitment and ambition in East Sussex around Creative Health and to see partners working together to have a positive impact on the lives of local people.



We recently funded Eastbourne Alive! via a Place Partnership Fund thanks to National Lottery players, which, led by Towner Eastbourne, saw it celebrating the Turner Prize 2024 with local partners working together to engage with local people and creative health activities.



Hazel Edwards, South East Area Director, Arts Council.

Making it Happen



[Making it Happen](#) (MiH) takes an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach to building the confidence and capability of people to come together in their neighbourhoods to make change for themselves and create positive health outcomes. It seeks to support people to make connections, initiate projects and activities, feel more connected to their local place, and bring local community assets into use.

It is delivered with the support of a wide range of partners to ensure that it can work with local organisations across East Sussex and works with the core voluntary sector alliance members to ensure local reach.

- [Action in Rural Sussex](#) is delivering Making it Happen in the following areas in Wealden District: Uckfield North, Polegate, Crowborough East, Hailsham East.
- [Hastings Voluntary Action](#) is delivering Making it Happen in the following areas of Hastings Borough: Greater Hollington, Castle Ward.
- [Rother Voluntary Action](#) is delivering Making it Happen in the following areas in Rother District: Central & Sackville, Eastern Rother, St Michaels, Sidley.
- [Sussex Community Development Association](#) is delivering Making it Happen in the following areas in Lewes District: Newhaven Valley, Newhaven Meeching, Peacehaven West, Peacehaven North.
- [3VA](#) is delivering Making it Happen in the following areas of Eastbourne Borough: Shinewater, Willingdon Trees, Hampden Park East.

MiH supported activities are built from the community-up rather than trying to create activities for a particular cohort or need. The focus is instead about what gives someone purpose, enjoyment and belonging. Creative, cultural, artistic heritage and natural environment-based approaches and settings are used throughout the wide range of projects MiH supports.

The [stage two report | making it happen.org.uk](https://makingithappen.org.uk) has found that without question MiH is deploying ABCD effectively to support people to make connections, initiate projects and activities, feel more connected to their local place, and bring local community assets into use. The report identified that one of MiH's greatest aspects is its ability to recognise individuals and communities for their strengths and create change by building on these. The findings show no shortage of ideas and passions from people for change they'd like to see in their communities.

From the ideas that have been nurtured, explored, and developed to come to fruition, it is evident that East Sussex is abundant with creativity, and individuals and community have taken forward their own ideas. Almost a quarter of the grants awarded to community projects were for arts related projects, with activities ranging from crochet to choirs, as well as the development of new arts spaces, to applying arts and creativity to placemaking to community research. Just a few of the brilliant groups and projects across the county are showcased in the TV Series [Phenomenal Happenings | making it happen.org.uk](https://makingithappen.org.uk).

The programme, recognised nationally as good practice, includes many projects across the life course.

Newhaven Wood Creatives

Formed originally as a woodcarving club we have grown to enhance all creative aspects of working with wood. The Wood Creatives meets at the Hillcrest Centre, where we rent a large workshop behind the main building for adults to learn, practice and hopefully improve our woodcarving, woodturning and the other general wood related skills.

- [Wood Creatives – Hillcrest](#)

Take Action Man

Take Action Man offers local men the opportunity to get outside in the town's wonderful natural spaces, get active, learn new skills and spend time together talking, supporting and helping one another.

- [Take Action Man — Project Rewild](#)

Compass Arts

An intergenerational, artist-led organisation providing arts opportunities for those vulnerable to social isolation, lived trauma, mental illness, and hidden disabilities.

- [Compasscommunityarts.co.uk](https://compasscommunityarts.co.uk)

Bexhill Men's Shed

Men's Sheds (or Sheds) are similar to garden shed, a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending. The difference is that garden sheds and their activities are often solitary in nature while Men's Sheds are the opposite. They're about social connections and friendship building, sharing skills and knowledge, and of course a lot of laughter.

- [Bexhill Men's Shed | bexhillmensshed.org.uk](https://bexhillmensshed.org.uk)

Section five

Local area transformation through creative health

The [East Sussex Creative Health Position Paper](#) was published in 2023. It was developed to set out the key features and opportunities for using creativity across East Sussex to promote the connective, cognitive, physical activity and engagement benefits that creative health can bring. At its heart is the idea that creativity can have a real, measurable, positive, and lasting effect on individuals and communities.

The 'Local Area Transformation through Creative Health' (LATCH) concept aims to support population level health improvement using creative health approaches. Ultimately creative health can play a vital role in improving the physical and mental health outcomes of residents and reducing health inequalities. This concept will drive increased activity, resilience, connection and participation in creatively healthier activities and health promoting behaviours such as the Five Ways to Wellbeing. It also uses the COM-B model of behaviour. The COM-B model ^[Endnote 35] is a behaviour change framework that proposes three necessary components for any behaviour (B) to occur. Through assessing capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M), leaders, policymakers, and behavioural scientists can understand why a specific behaviour occurs and how to create targeted interventions that lead to effective change.

Key resources that support local area transformation through creative health are available on the East Sussex JSNA website at [Arts and culture | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](#).

Section six

Collecting and measuring the impact of creative health

The arts, including music, dance, theatre, visual arts and writing, are increasingly recognised as having the potential to support health and wellbeing. However, for the arts and creative health to be more included within health and social care services, there needs to be an increasing robust evidence base of their effectiveness, impacts and costs. We must be able to demonstrate their impact on people's lives and for the health and care system through good monitoring and evaluation.

Locally we are making strides towards this aspiration through our LATCH approach and our Creative Health Support Collaborative. The Collaborative supports knowledge exchange and shares different methods and models of creative placemaking and builds community research readiness. There are several resources and toolkits available to support individuals, community groups, VCSE and statutory agencies to monitor and measure the impact of their creative health activities.



The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance is a national membership organisation representing everyone who believes that creativity and cultural engagement can transform our health and wellbeing. The website contains many toolkits, guidance and factsheets that will help all those involved in creative health initiatives to develop cultural and creative programmes in relation to health and wellbeing.

[Toolkits, guidance and factsheets | culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk](https://culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)

The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance also provides information on how to evaluate creative health programmes including from using reflective practice, creative methodologies, to pre-existing evaluation frameworks. Those involved in creative projects may want to get involved in formal research studies and funding applications and will need to partner with universities.

For those that are more interested in self-evaluating their work, guidance and frameworks are available and it is strongly recommended those working in creative health read the [Creative Health Quality Framework](#) to support their approach to evaluation.

[Creative Health Quality Framework | culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk](https://culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)

the social biobehavioural research group

The Social Biobehavioural Research Group at University College London, also set out to provide a comprehensive mapping of what evaluation frameworks and toolkits exist to support those wishing to evaluate their arts and health projects. This culminated in their report [Arts and Health Evaluation: Navigating the Landscape](#) and blog [Guest blog: How do I navigate the landscape of arts and health evaluation? | culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk](#).

Creative Health Toolkit

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

The [toolkit](#) considers the enablers and barriers and is structured to illustrate how systems can deliver against the forthcoming NHS England Maturity Matrix for Social Prescribing, with reference to 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.

The toolkit includes short illustrative examples, drawn from the four health and care systems but also from other places around England.

The centre would like the toolkit to be iterative and welcome suggestions for examples which might be of interest to other systems. Examples of creative health work can be submitted via [Creative Health Toolkit | Submit Illustrative Example](#)

[Watch a bite-sized video introduction to the Toolkit](#)

Section seven

Funding and researching creative health

This section provides sources of information about funding opportunities.



The Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance website provides links to organisations compiling sources of funding.

[Funding | culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk](https://culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)



Arts Council England are the national development agency for creativity and culture. They are looking for organisations, artists, events and others to apply for their funding and help achieve their strategy, Let's Create.

[Homepage | arts council.org.uk](https://arts council.org.uk)



Creative Lives champions community and volunteer-led creative activity, and works to improve opportunities for everyone to be creative. The website lists funding opportunities.

[Funding opportunities | creative-lives.org](https://creative-lives.org)



The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) fund world-class, independent research in subjects from philosophy and the creative industries, to art conservation and product design

[Arts and Humanities Research Council | ukri.org/](https://ukri.org/)

Local support and guidance on accessing funding

Access information and support from [East Sussex County Council's External Funding Team](#). This includes a free newsletter on [Funding News](#) every month, listing many sources of funding, and funding successes.

East Sussex 4 Community

[East Sussex 4 Community](#) an online funding search tool for East Sussex and [Funding Guides and books](#) to help you find and apply for funding.

3VA, Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) and Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) can help groups to improve the effectiveness of their fundraising, with a particular focus on grassroots groups that are less able to help themselves.

[Funding | Hastings Voluntary Action](#)

[Help For Groups | 3va.org.uk](#)

[Funding support | rva.uk.com](#)



This report has highlighted the positive role creativity and culture has for our health and wellbeing. We should also celebrate the UK's creative and cultural industries as a global success story, generating over £100bn for the country's economy.



These industries also sit at the heart of a wider creative economy which employs millions of people and generates value across supply chains. The visitor economy in East Sussex is significant with millions of people visiting our creative and culture offerings. Research indicates that Cultural Tourism is one of the main reasons why visitors choose East Sussex, with museums and art galleries attracting the largest visitor numbers.

The cultural tourism offer sustains footfall to hospitality, retail, and vineyards, this generates year-round visitor appeal and helps to attract and retain businesses, supporting recruitment and retention. We know a strong local economy also supports the health and wellbeing of our residents.



Councillor Penny di Cara, Lead Member for Economy

Section eight

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

It is clear that creative health activities are effective in promoting lasting and sustainable health improvement across our lifetimes. With the wealth of creative assets, opportunities and expertise across East Sussex, it is vital that we build upon these assets and that anchor institutions collaborate with the VCSE and all partners involved, to maximise the impact that creative health can have in East Sussex.

Following on from the initial consultation events that began in 2021 and the publication of the East Sussex Creative Health Position Paper in 2023. Public Health within ESCC have been working to develop and capture recommendations, activities and priorities suggested by creative, health and social care practitioners across the statutory and VCSE sectors. Many of these are already using creative health approaches in their work. These conversations have informed both the Position Paper and other resources published on the JSNA.

The recommendations are mostly focussed on enabling the sharing of creative health approaches, tools, techniques and opportunities across East Sussex.

System level partners include the ESCC service areas for adults, children and community services, the local district and borough councils, NHS Sussex, Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, East Sussex Healthcare Trust, Culture East Sussex partners, voluntary and community sector organisations including HVA, 3VA, RVA and the wider VCSE alliance.

Recommendations: Creativity for Healthier Lives

We will work with the wide range of existing partners in East Sussex, including the District and Borough Councils, NHS and voluntary and community and creative sector to establish a system level creative health operational group reporting to the Public Health Board and Culture East Sussex Board. This will help to focus collaboration and leadership across the county to aid promotion and embedding of creative health approaches for everyone.

1. We will work with the wide range of existing partners in East Sussex, including the district and borough councils, the NHS, and voluntary sector, community and

creative sectors, and use established collaborative groups such as Culture East Sussex to promote and embed creative health approaches for everyone.

2. We will embrace the new opportunities in tourism promotion provided by 'Experience Sussex' to support economic development that builds on the vast array of creative action within the county.
3. We will 'Connect the Creatives' by understanding the current practices and future opportunities for service commissioners across East Sussex to benefit from embedding creative health approaches into existing or new areas of work.
4. We will use the Creative Health Charter Mark as a complimentary addition to the existing workplace health offer for East Sussex (Wellbeing at Work).
5. Work with system partners across the Southeast to understand and secure opportunities for research, collaboration, integrated programme support, delivery, and funding of creative health works across the region.

Section nine

Update on the Director of Public Health Report 2022/23

Recommendations

For the report please visit [Connecting people and places 2022/23](#)

For previous reports focusing on housing, employment and the recovery from the pandemic please visit: [Annual public health reports| eastsussexjsna.org.uk](#)

Below is a summary of key elements of progress against last year's report. You will see that there are a wide range of achievements against the ambitions set out in last year's report and much work already underway. Crucially you will see how the focus of this year's report can add to the works set out in the previous years and how we have sought in this year's report to contribute to and support existing works and issues identified in the report on Connection People and Places.

Recommendations

1. Establish a System Stewardship Group to build and maintain the required collaborative leadership across the system.
2. Create a 'connection test' to apply a loneliness perspective to the policy making process.
3. Develop an action plan for developing social infrastructure rooted in the principles of ABCD (asset-based community development) and harnessing the potential of community ownership and community businesses.
4. 'Connect the connectors' by creating learning communities that learn and test ideas together and model and incentivise ongoing learning.
5. Mobilise and equip a movement of connectors stretching across all public facing roles, businesses and communities.

Latest updates from 2023

1. A series of workshops have been held with partners to identify how system leaders and interested parties could be best supported to drive future actions across the system through this stewardship approach. East Sussex County Council has then worked in partnership with the East Sussex Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Alliance to develop proposals and appoint a host organisation within the VCSE sector to support the development of this collaborative stewardship group and approach.
2. A two-year grant agreement has been in put place with the host organisation, Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA), who will be involving many other partners in this work. East Sussex Community Voice will be providing evaluation, data and monitoring capacity, and other VCSE organisations such as 3VA, Age UK East Sussex, Care for the Carers and Possibility People will help reach target communities and support identification of other East Sussex organisations to be involved as the programme develops.
3. The programme facilitator and reference group are working to establish a broad coalition of partners to join the collaborative stewardship group, define what success looks like and agree the vision for the programme. The collaborative group will then be developing ways of working together, reaching and engaging those with lived experience of loneliness, providing learning opportunities, raising awareness of loneliness, and agreeing how to make further progress on other recommendations of the 2022/23 report, which include:
 - create a 'connection test' to apply a loneliness perspective to the policy making process.
 - develop an action plan for developing social infrastructure rooted in the principles of ABCD (asset-based community development) and harnessing the potential of community ownership and community businesses.
 - 'connect the connectors' by creating learning communities that learn, test ideas together to model and incentivise ongoing learning.
 - mobilise and equip a movement of connectors stretching across all public facing roles, businesses and communities.

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The Schools Art Competition

Following a competition among schools to design the front and back covers of this report, two were chosen out of the incredible entries. A full gallery is published on the JSNA website at [Arts and culture | eastsussexjsna.org.uk](https://eastsussexjsna.org.uk).

Thanks are extended to everyone in Childrens services and the schools the children attend and of course the children themselves.

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