

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Creative Health Briefing Paper

Creativity for Healthy Lives – How creative health supports a prevention agenda

Creative Health is defined as activities and approaches that benefit our health and wellbeing. Activities include visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, cooking and creative activities in nature. Approaches involve creative and innovative approaches to health and care services, co-production, education and workforce development. Creative Health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions, heritage sites and healthcare settings. It contributes to the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, treatment and recovery across the life course.

Creative Health and Prevention. Creative Health supports people to live well for longer. It can reduce the burden on health and social care systems and should be fundamental to the government's vision of a more preventative and community-focused approach to health.

Primary Prevention – keeping people healthy for longer

- Engaging in creative activity reduces the risk factors for common diseases. For example, playing a musical instrument [reduces the risk of cognitive decline and dementia](#), [gardening can lower blood pressure](#), reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. [Engagement with arts and culture positively impacts mental health](#) and reduces the risk of anxiety and depression. Singing groups have been shown to [reduce post-natal depression by 40% over 10 weeks](#), with lasting benefits for mothers and infants.
- Creative Health is used effectively in health promotion to improve health literacy, reduce stigma and promote healthy behaviours, particularly in [populations affected by inequalities](#).
- In places and communities, Creative Health improves the conditions in which people live, mitigating the impact of the wider determinants of health. It can increase [social capital](#), connection and sense of belonging and promote greater civic awareness, [linked to improved health and wellbeing](#). In areas experiencing high levels of deprivation it helps to [reduce health inequalities](#).

Secondary Prevention – early identification and intervention

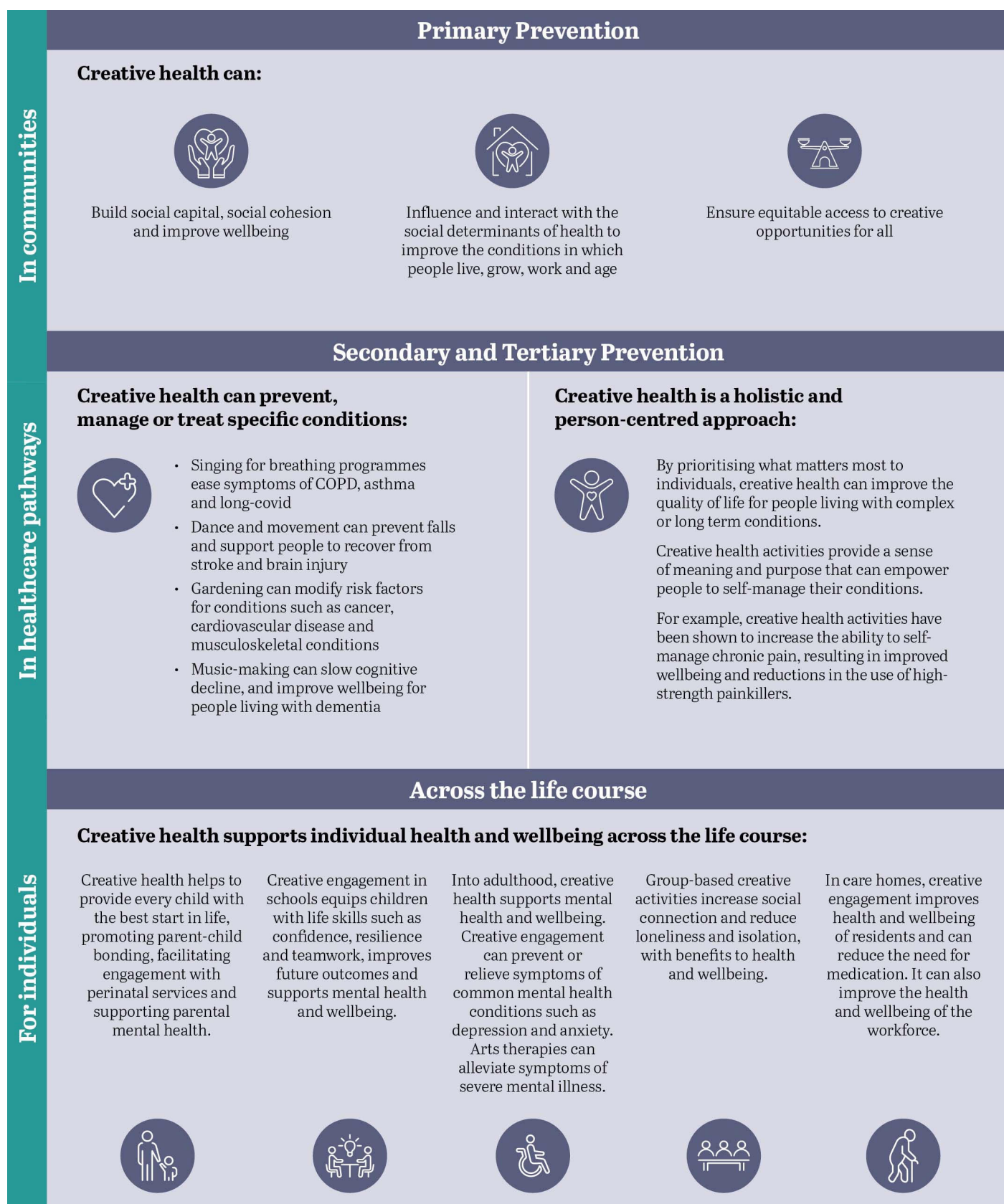
- Creative Health approaches are used effectively with underserved communities to raise awareness of screening and surveillance services, to build trust between communities and healthcare providers, and to co-produce appropriate services, [for example, breast cancer screening](#), increasing uptake.

Tertiary Prevention – supporting people to live well

- Creative activities can improve mental and physical health outcomes and quality of life for people living with long-term conditions, for example [Singing for Lung Health](#) programmes can reduce GP visits and hospital admissions for people with COPD.
- Creative engagement increases [social connection and reduces loneliness and isolation](#)
- Creative Health initiatives can support people with long-term conditions on a pathway [back to work](#).

Our Ask

- The benefits of Creative Health should be recognised in the 10-year health plan
- Interventions that have proven to be effective should be routinely incorporated into care pathways. For example, creative services to prevent post-natal depression as part of maternity care.
- Creativity and culture should be integral to a cross-departmental, Health In All Policies approach
- Creative Health should be embedded into Integrated Care Systems to enable equitable access. This will reduce pressure on systems and support them to improve population health, reduce inequalities and support broader economic and social development.



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