

Case Study

Developing a Creative Health Strategy for St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub



St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub in Havering was opened by NHS North East London Health and Care Partnership in November 2024. It is a new, purpose-designed building with a vision to integrate services across the social, health and voluntary sectors, to encourage, develop and maintain physical, mental and social health, wellbeing and independence.

Recognising the role the arts play in developing and maintaining health and wellbeing, St George's Partnership Board commissioned the development of a creative health strategy as an integral part of the health and wellbeing model.

Development of the strategy was funded by Arts Council England, supported by London Arts and Health and led by Dr Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt. A key objective for St George's Creative Health Strategy was to help bind the integrated services model, promoting a cohesive environment, a shared sense of identity, belonging and purpose and an impetus to collaborative working.

The strategy provides a framework for integrating creative and cultural activities into St George's through environmental, therapeutic and preventative approaches, with the goal of enhancing service delivery, improving health outcomes and ultimately

reducing care costs. Placing creativity and human connection at the heart of the service vision, this operates across three strands – Environmental Enrichment, Clinical Pathways and Healthy Living, Working and Ageing. The strategy sets the direction for a Creative Health Programme at St George's that is rooted in evidence, aligned with health and cultural strategies and co-produced with local stakeholders, staff and volunteers. This place-based approach forms a model of creative health integration that promotes recovery, reduces loneliness, encourages healthy behaviours and expands access to cultural opportunities.

The Creative Health Strategy was developed through meaningful consultation with stakeholders across the health and cultural sectors, including NHS leaders, local authority and cultural representatives, artists and national experts. It was also rooted in the lived experiences of those using and working in the hub. All those involved in developing the strategy supported the creative health approaches proposed and acknowledged the benefits to participants.

To bring the strategy to life and to mark Social Prescribing Day on 19 March 2025, London Arts and Health partnered with local cultural organisations to host a creative health taster day. Activities ranged from participatory arts and crafts in the atrium to live harp music in clinical areas and drama monologues in the grounds. Designed to be inclusive, low-risk and medically appropriate, these activities offered a glimpse of ways in which the arts could be integrated into healthcare spaces. Participants reported feelings of calmness, joy, inspiration and connection, with many expressing interest in future activities such as singing, music, craft sessions and gardening.



"We're proud to support St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub with our funding. The benefits and measurable impact of Creative Health initiatives have long been recognised, and schemes like this mark a vital shift in how health organisations embed creativity and cultural engagement into their core strategies from the outset. This is an important step for Havering in its journey to becoming a Creative Health borough, and we can't wait to see the difference it makes to the community it will serve."

Hollie Smith-Charles, Director of Creative Health and Change Programmes, Arts Council England



St George's Creative Health Strategy dovetails with Arts Council England's Creative Health and Wellbeing plan for:

- Working effectively with the NHS, with a particular focus on treatment, recovery and prevention
- Maximising creative health impact through partnerships, embedded in a place-based approach
- Supporting NHS co-investment in creative and cultural activity
- Achieving increased investment opportunities for the sector in local settings

The strategy also proposes governance and delivery structures for the programme, overseen by St George's Partnership Board, led by a Creative Health Manager employed by the NHS and guided by a committee of NHS leaders, local partners and community members. Supported to raise external funding by the Friends of St George's, Arts Council England, North East London Integrated Care System and other local partners, the programme is expected to develop iteratively, beginning in June 2025.

St George's Creative Health strategy will serve as an exemplar of a clinical model embracing the full potential of creative health to promote not only the enhancement of health, wellbeing and equity but also integrated care.

"The new St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub is North East London ICB's flagship model, with a vision to promote, develop and maintain health and wellbeing through integrated services. Arts activities have been shown to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities and reduce demand on health services. By implementing this Creative Health Strategy, St George's will ensure the arts form an essential part of care and support, bringing tangible benefits to residents, staff and volunteers and becoming an exemplar for adoption across North East London and nationally."

Paul Gilluley, Chief Medical Officer, NHS North East London



Useful links

<https://londonartsandhealth.org.uk/portfolio-item/st-georges-health-and-wellbeing-hub>

www.rebeccagordon-nesbitt.org

www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/health-and-wellbeing/creative-health-wellbeing



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