

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH ARTS AND CREATIVITY

Guide for Child Health Colleagues

The problem

- Children from deprived backgrounds face severe inequities in access to arts and cultural education, limiting creativity, identity, and wellbeing.
- Exclusion from creative opportunities exacerbates school disengagement, with rising absence and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates among vulnerable pupils.
- Public services working in silos results in a lack of inclusive, culturally relevant education and wellbeing pathways that promote critical thinking, mental health, and opportunity.

What you can do as a child health practitioner

- **Partner with schools to co-deliver arts-based health interventions**, such as drama therapy, music workshops, and storytelling in community health or family hubs.
- **Use creativity to build trust and engagement** with the most vulnerable children, specifically neurodivergent or care-experienced young people.
- **Support schools to access local cultural institutions**, including museums, libraries, theatres, and arts providers, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- **Embed cultural participation and creativity into mental health and youth development programmes**, recognising its impact on resilience, identity, and social connection.
- **Promote awareness and advocate for inclusive cultural representation**, to help build aspiration, self-efficacy, and long-term wellbeing in young people.

Evidence-based insights

Due to a lack of funding in state schools, **93%** of children are being excluded from arts and cultural education.

Participation in structured arts activities could increase young people's cognitive abilities by **16-19%**.

Examples of good practice you may wish to explore:

Dance United Yorkshire

Resi/Dance highlights the enduring power of the arts to create meaningful change. Its success underscores the value of 'scaffolding care' – providing consistent, long-term creative engagement – as a pathway to empowerment, social cohesion, and individual transformation.

Dying to Talk

The project aimed to provide a non-medicalised approach, utilising co-produced resources to help build resilience in young people around the topics of death, dying, bereavement and loss, enabling greater confidence in dealing with the topic.

Sunningdale School

A specialist school using play, music, and art as the foundation of its curriculum to support self-expression and learning for children with profound needs.

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP)

YSP makes art accessible and inspires the next generation of artists and art enthusiasts by addressing barriers to participation, fostering playful learning, and integrating family engagement into its core operations.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider taking inspiration from these approaches to reflect on how you can help create positive change.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion with your colleagues about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.