



Building community partnerships to support people to live well.



CREATIVE MINDS



WHAT IS CREATIVE MINDS?

Creative Minds is an initiative established in 2011 by the South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to enhance the lives of individuals through creative arts, sports, recreation, and leisure-based projects. Initially funded with £200,000, Creative Minds has grown into a charity that collaborates with a network of over 280 community partners and has developed 900 community-based projects across Barnsley, Calderdale, Kirklees, and Wakefield.

The core mission of Creative Minds is to support people in engaging with meaningful activities within their communities, thereby improving their mental and physical health. The initiative operates on the principle that creative engagement can significantly aid recovery and well-being by providing a sense of purpose, achievement, and connection. This approach is particularly beneficial for individuals who may avoid traditional NHS services or seek non-medicalised approaches, offering them alternative methods of support.

Creative Minds acts as a bridge between the NHS and local communities, facilitating partnerships and removing barriers that typically hinder collaboration. By adopting community development principles and asset-based approaches, Creative Minds empowers local communities to participate in decision-making and project development. This inclusive and participatory model ensures that projects are co-produced with individuals and groups in the community, tailored to meet their specific needs and interests.

Projects supported by Creative Minds range from arts and crafts to sports and outdoor activities, all designed to build confidence, competence, and capacity within local communities. Creative Minds also supports the development of these projects through mentorship and guidance, helping them access external and Trust funds. This support extends to individuals, providing them with the initial practical and emotional assistance needed to engage in activities and eventually gain independence.

Creative Minds exemplifies how creative and community-based approaches can complement traditional health services, fostering a supportive environment where individuals can thrive and achieve their potential. By bridging the gap between the NHS and local communities, Creative Minds not only enhances service provision but also strengthens community resilience and well-being.

HOW DOES CREATIVE MINDS SUPPORT PROJECTS?

Projects are supported through an inclusive and community-focused approach. Development and decision-making processes are rooted in Creative Minds' values of equality and inclusion. Collective decision-making groups, comprising of people with lived experience, carers, Trust staff, and community representatives, are established in each of the Trust's localities: Barnsley, Calderdale, Kirklees, and Wakefield. These groups manage local funding shares, identify community needs, and ensure projects target those in greatest need. They use tools like the Young Foundations Community Development tool to build on strengths and address weaknesses.



A notable example was a partnership with [Barnsley Football Club's charity, Barnsley FC Community Trust](#). The club aimed to become more dementia-friendly and create a memory group. [Creative Minds facilitated a collaboration between the club and the Trust's memory team](#), matching the club's funding. The project was a success, leading to additional initiatives like walking football and creative writing. [The creative outputs are displayed at the club's entrance, raising dementia awareness](#). Building on the initial support and collaboration with Creative Minds, Barnsley FC Community Trust has been able to sustain and expand its creative health initiatives, even beyond the direct involvement from Creative Minds.



During [Kirklees Year of Music 2023](#), [Creative Minds partnered with Kirklees Council](#) to fund [16 projects, benefiting 2,300 people](#) across various demographics, including those with disabilities. These projects featured [live performances, training programs, and employment opportunities, ultimately delivering over 1,000 hours of creative activity](#). The Kirklees Accords project, delivered by [YAMSEN](#), [enabled young people with SEND to participate in a large-scale choir, offering them new experiences while fostering confidence and creativity](#). 90% of participants felt more confident trying new things, and 87% felt more creative. This demonstrates how Creative Minds invests in impactful, inclusive, and transformative projects.

WHO BENEFITS FROM PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY CREATIVE MINDS?

Projects are primarily designed to support [people who use South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust services, including those with physical, mental health conditions, as well as individuals with learning disabilities](#). Preventative work is also included and projects are accessible to families, friends, carers and staff.

Community organisations and groups also benefit from the support of Creative Minds. By partnering with Creative Minds, organisations can access mentorship, guidance and funding to develop and deliver projects that meet the needs of their local communities. This collaborative partnership helps to [build competence, confidence and capacity within community groups, enabling them to provide meaningful activities for their members](#).

HOW DO YOU DEMONSTRATE IMPACT AND SUCCESS?

Creative Minds demonstrates its success through [various measurable outcomes](#). By supporting projects that welcome individuals with ongoing health challenges, Creative Minds aims to [reduce loneliness, social isolation, and inactivity](#). Projects help to [build emotional resilience](#), providing participants with healthy boundaries, supportive peers, self-awareness and openness to change. [Ultimately helping people to cope better with life challenges, reducing the need for NHS services](#).

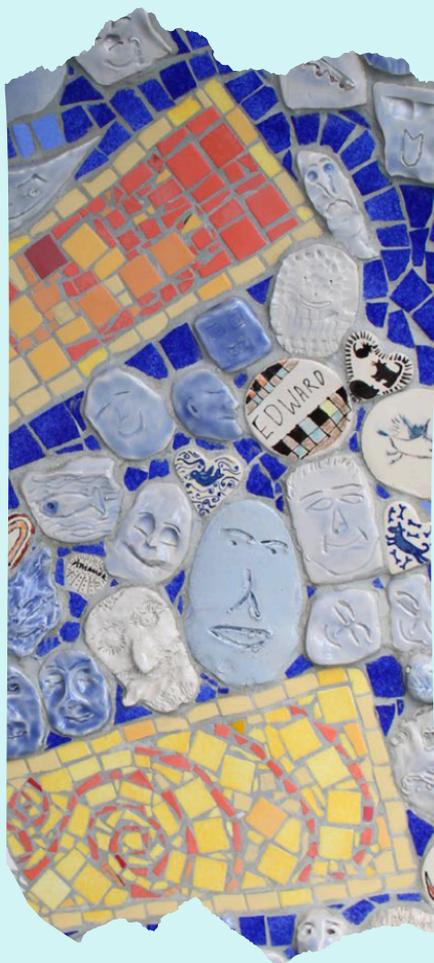
To evaluate the impact of projects supported by Creative Minds, a [new approach involving a peer-led network of community reporters](#) has been embraced. Community reporters are tasked with [collecting stories of creative engagement from participants, offering valuable insights into why and how creative activities are important for mental health recovery and well-being](#). This storytelling movement, started by [People's Voice Media](#) in 2007, uses digital tools to support people in sharing their own experiences.

A shortened version of the Warwick & Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale has also been used along side the narrative data. Results from this show an average of 40% improvement in scores.

Community reporting has [published summaries](#) of peer-led and collaborative evaluations, highlighting how project groups establish [healthy boundaries, increase participants' confidence, and help them build and maintain healthy relationships](#).

"Although not quantifiable, the testimonials we receive in our end of project reports are often very moving and powerful!"

CREATIVE MINDS SUPPORTED PROJECTS



TESTIMONIALS

WAKEFIELD

Testimonials from a performing arts group for learning disabled young people.

"It's an amazing group which has improved my confidence and self-esteem. It brings so much joy and happiness getting involved in all the activities and getting to make new friends."

- Participant

"Amazing project. This boosts my child's confidence and something he looks forward to every week."

-Parent.

Testimonials from a seated exercise session in sheltered housing.

Participant (age 72) said that the sessions made her feel rejuvenated, even younger. She was relatively new to the area and the friends she had made by attending helped her to feel supported and subsequently deal with stresses in her life as a carer for her husband.

Participant (age 81) said that she feels that the exercises target her whole body, it helps her to cope when she is having a bad day.

BARNSLEY

Testimonial from a LGBTQIA+ choir.

"It feels like hope for a better future because I have now managed to get out and be part of something new. Something I thought seemed impossible because of self-depleting anxiety thoughts. I have something to look forward to now and I'm putting myself in social situations because of it. It may seem like just a singing group but to a lot of people it could be a lifeline. Something that is slowly rising them out of a pit of depression."

- Participant

"Everyone was so welcoming and friendly. It took me a few times before I went inside, when I made it to the venue, but my anxiety levels dropped once I entered, being welcomed so warmly by everyone. My confidence has improved and it's better than anti-depressants. It came at a time when I felt like I'd exhausted every possibility but I'm really pleased I took the opportunity to join and refresh my spirits."

-Participant

Testimonial from a Community choir.

Calderdale & Kirklees

"I like the activities - it makes me feel like I belong somewhere."

"Horse therapy changed my life. Now I am more determined to get myself back on track. It was great and I want to work with horses now."

Happy Days - Residents activities.

St Augustines, 'fun, friendship and fashion project'.

"Today I say with all my heart that I am not alone here. My family in the UK is all of you. Fashion project is now reserved in the most special place in my heart."

Case study step up and wobble project with Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees.

*“B had a fall in January 2022 outside and broke his neck of femur on his left leg. Without the sessions he attended, there is no doubt that he would not have been able to take part in those activities and he is sure he would still be struggling to go up and down stairs and possibly ended up falling again.
B is now back to how he was before the break. He is going out every day, sometimes with his friend.”*

MHA social activities project.

“At the point of referral, Person A was struggling to get out because her sight was failing, her husband of over 50 years had passed away in April, she was lonely, isolated and understandably down in the dumps. Person A was referred to the MHA Social Club at Longcauseway in Dewsbury.

“Fast forward three months and at 85, she is an inspiration. She is STILL attending the MHA weekly gathering in Dewsbury and has made lots of friends. She said she only missed two weeks when she was poorly. She enjoys all the activities and the ‘delicious’ food she was telling me (referrer from Community Plus) about the buffet of sausage rolls and little sandwiches they have just had. She is booked on the day trip to Bingley Garden Centre and the MHA Christmas Party. She told me that last week they made hats, and some weeks they do bowling and exercise in chairs.”

“Its changed my life” she said.

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