

Creative Health Boards

How South Yorkshire is trying to embed creative community assets within the health and care system

Presentation to North Yorkshire...

Prof. Chris Dayson, 21st November 2025

**MOBILISING
COMMUNITY ASSETS**

What is Creative Health?

“Just another buzzword?”

A simple high-level definition

Creative Health is...

...creating the conditions and opportunities for arts, creativity and culture to be embedded in our health services



A simple high-level definition

Creative Health is also typically...

...delivered by small VCSEs...community-based...short-term funded...reliant on freelancers...misunderstood by health professionals...supporting people across the life course...set unrealistic expectations regarding evidence of impact



We are building a coalition to
advocate for creative health!

What is the evidence for creative health?

Good news! Lots of robust academic evidence that creativity is good for health:

- A WHO report in 2019 analysed over 900 studies and concluded that arts engagement can **prevent illness, promote well-being, and support management and treatment of health conditions.**
- Mental health effects include **lowering cortisol** (a cause of stress) and **increased dopamine** (linked to pleasure and motivation).
- Neurological and cognitive effects for conditions such as **dementia** and **Parkinson's Disease.**
- Wellbeing and community effects linked to **increased social connectedness, reduced loneliness,** and **improved social inclusion.**
- Health systems effects include **reduced healthcare costs** from **fewer GP visits** and **hospital admissions.**

A win-win-win for individuals, communities and health systems?



Growing policy and political support...but concerns about...

- Is creative health **reaching everyone** who needs it?
- Playing-in to **individualised narratives** around health inequalities.
- **Underinvestment** in creative community assets.
- **Sustainability** and the longevity of creative activities.
- **Join-up and influence** within health systems.
- Resistance to **systems/systemic change**.

That's where our project comes in!

The Creative Health Boards (CHB) Project

The CHB: a new model for embedding creative health and community assets in health systems across the UK

Project aims:

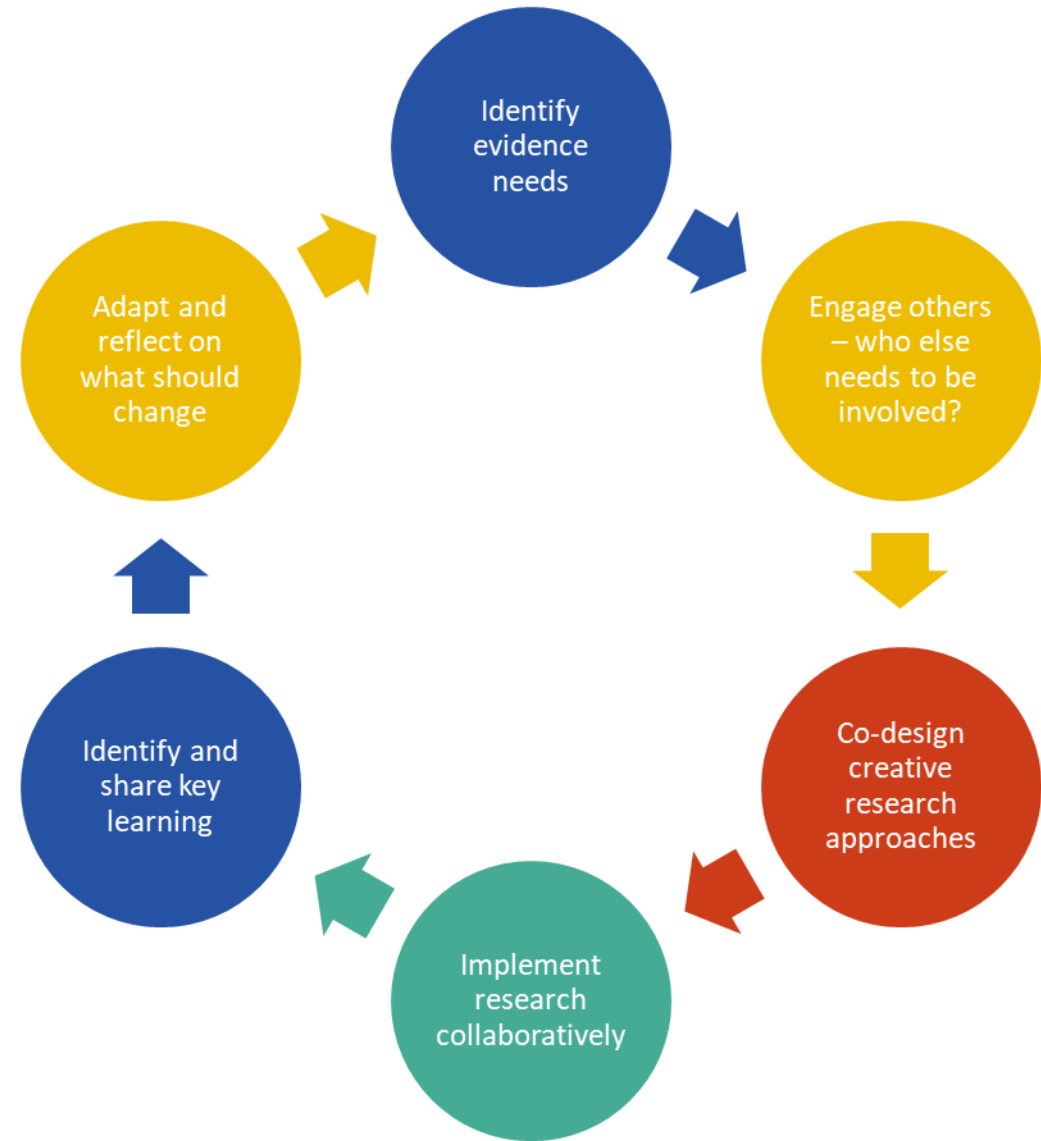
Develop, and support the scale and spread of, a **replicable governance model** that will support the **embedding of art, culture and other creative activities within health and care systems**.

Guiding principle:

CHBs should **equitably involve**, and ideally be **led by**, creative and cultural community assets, but with **clear accountability to/from Integrated Care Systems** and other appropriate governance fora.

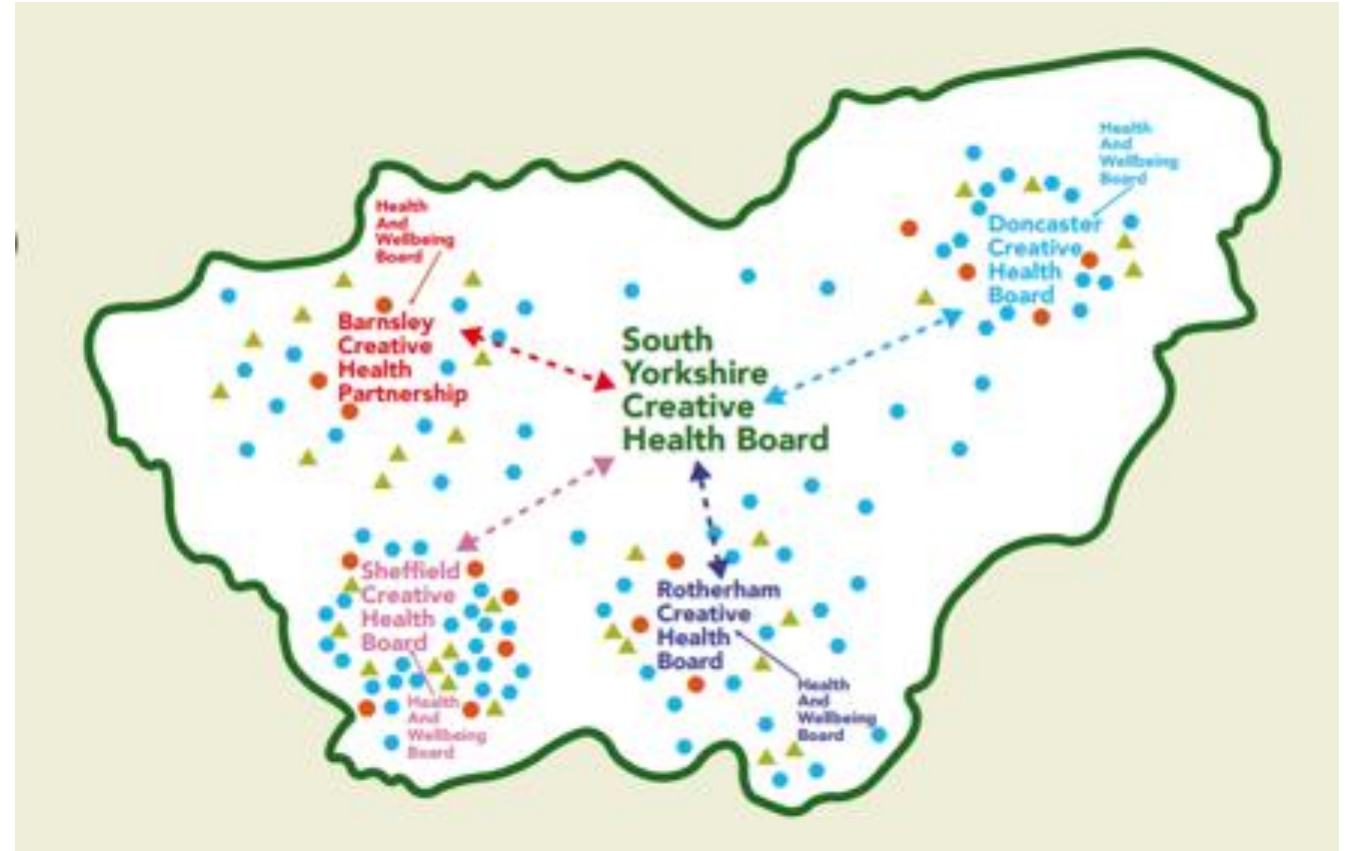
UKRI funding enables SHU investment in partner capacity to support the research

Our approach: co-producing evidence through participatory action research (PAR)



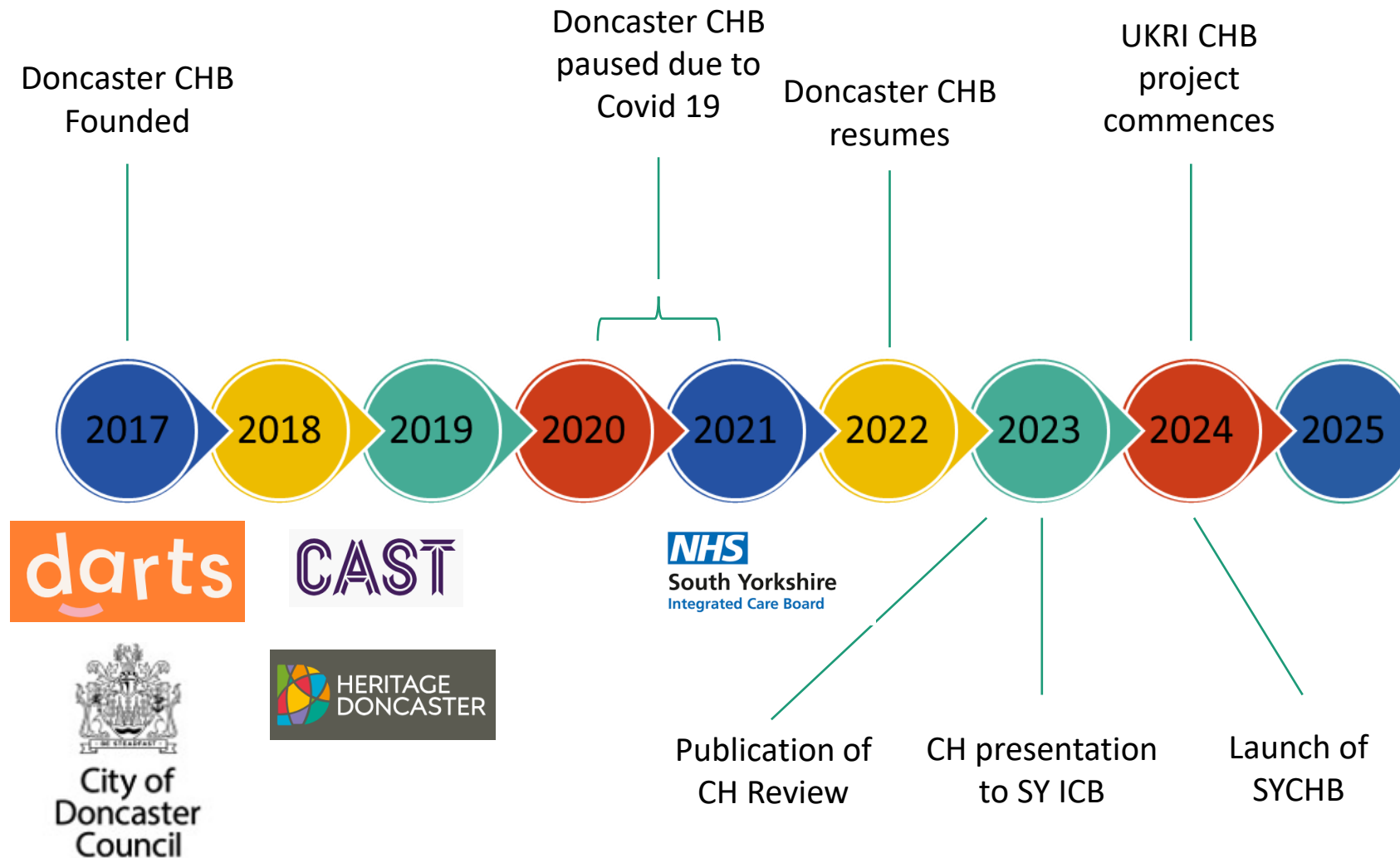
Our starting point

**Doncaster and South
Yorkshire as an
evidence hub and
innovation test bed...**

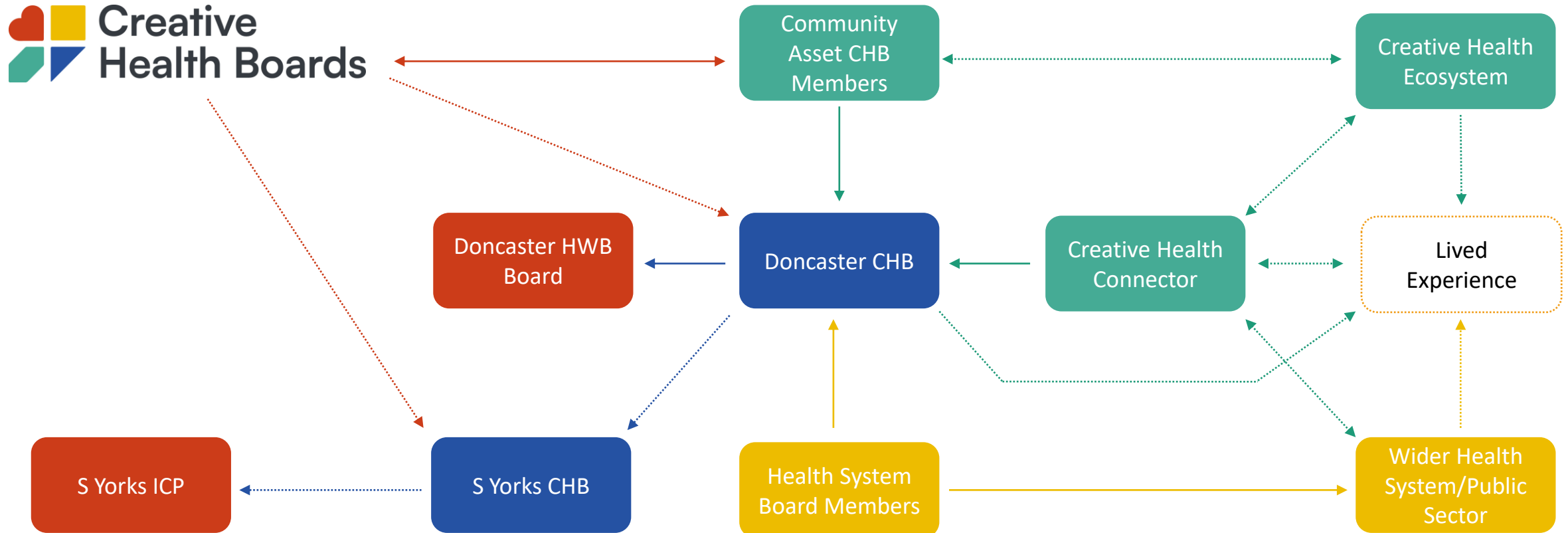


Building on the Doncaster model

Doncaster CHB Timeline



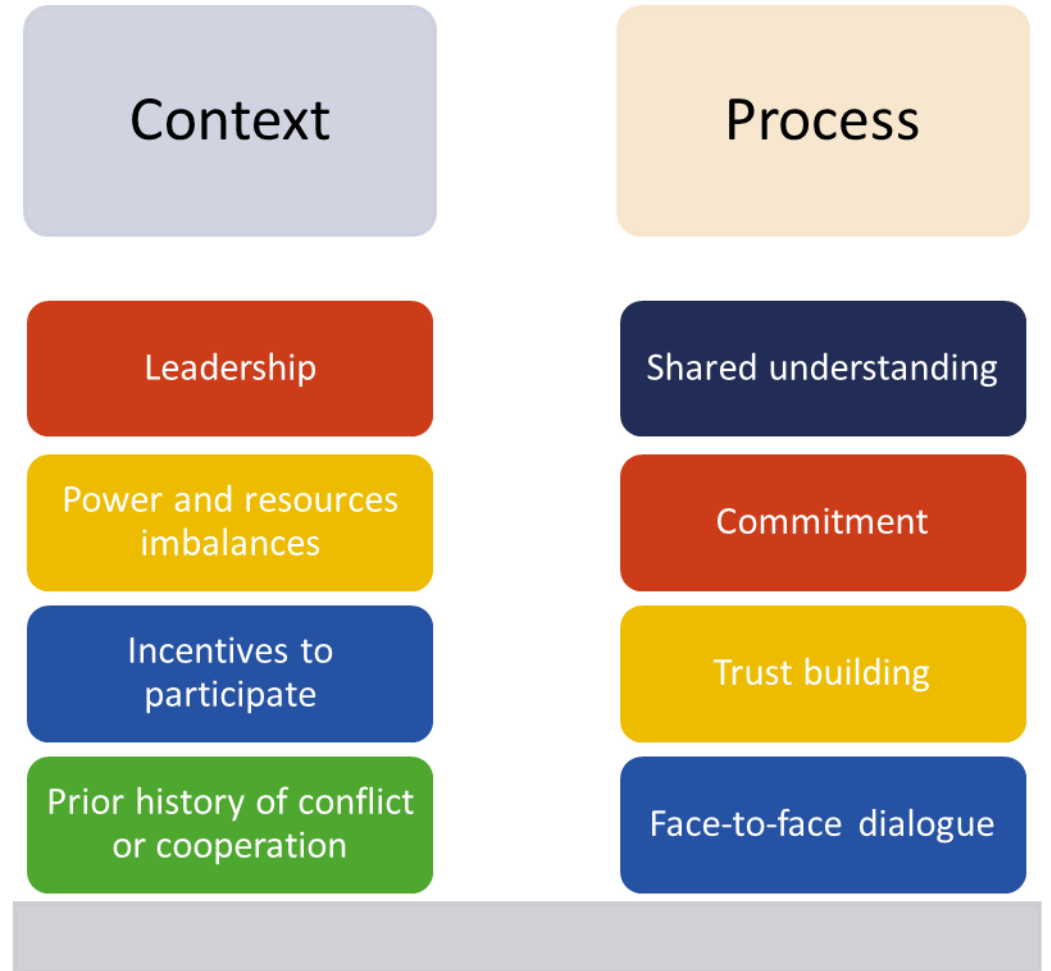
How does the CHB fit with the health system and communities?



What makes an effective Creative Health Board?

What makes for effective cross sector collaboration?

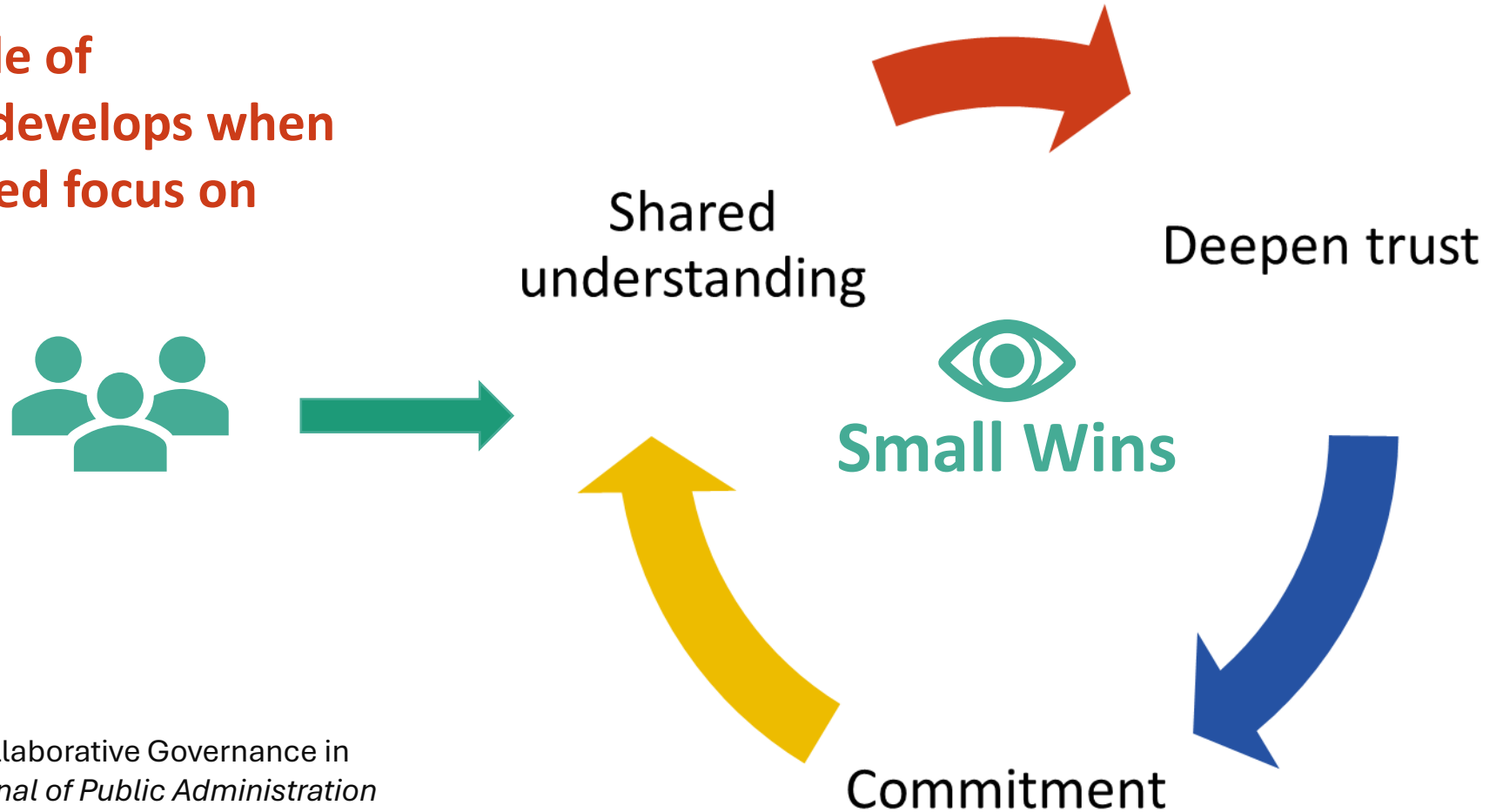
More good news! Lots of robust academic evidence about 'what works'...



Ansell C, and Gash A. Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 2007; 18: 543–571.

What makes for effective cross sector collaboration?

A virtuous cycle of collaboration develops when there is a shared focus on 'small wins'...

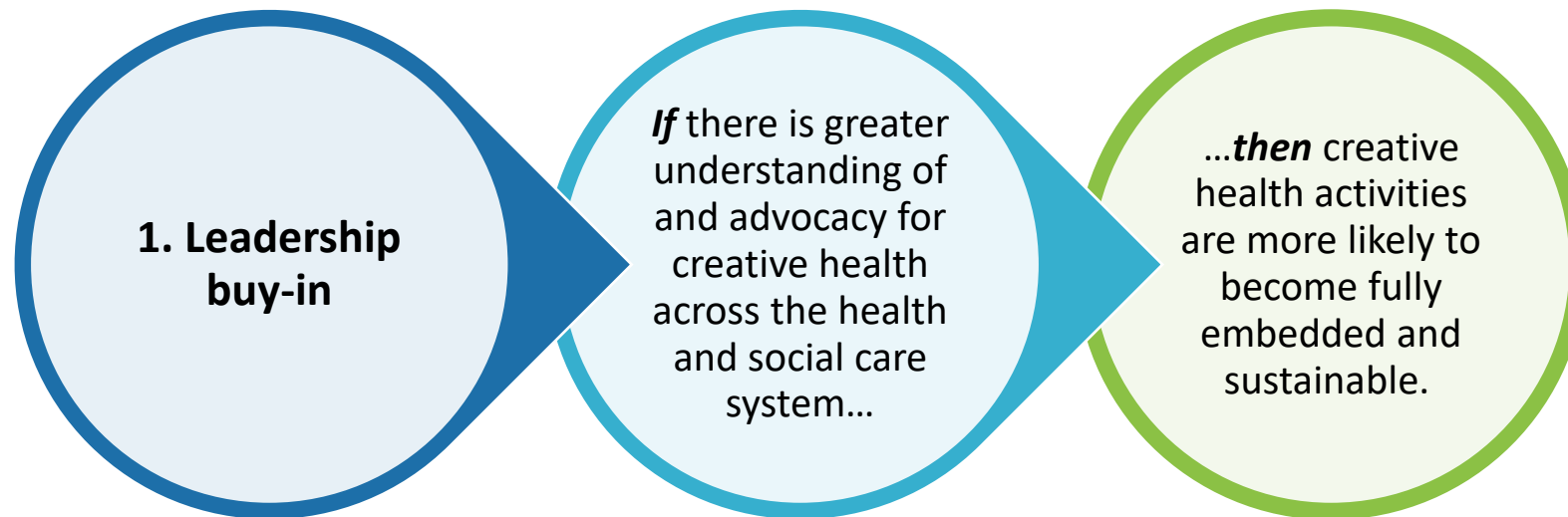


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What have we learned about collaboration for creative health?

We identified eight factors that can drive effective collaboration for creative health: a clear sense of why and how you should collaborate

Why...



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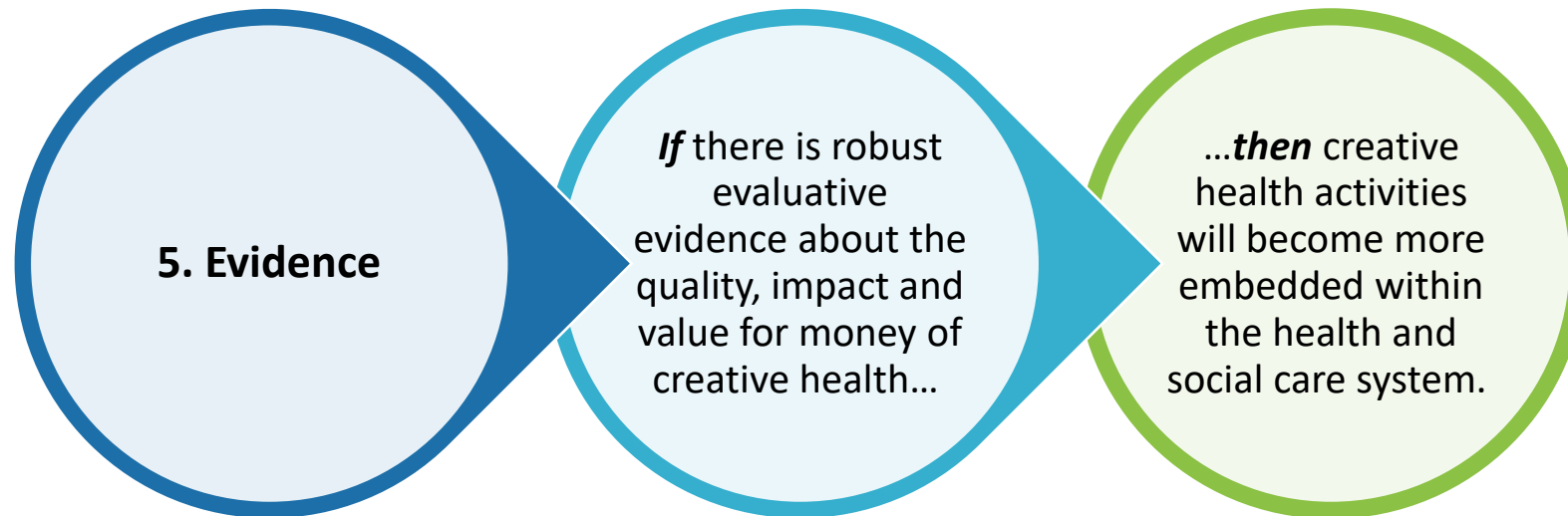
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Scaling and spreading our learning across South Yorkshire

This week: launch of the South Yorkshire Creative Health Enabling Plan 2025-28



<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/south-yorkshire-creative-health>

“The plan offers a bold and practical roadmap for how creativity and culture supports health and wellbeing, including an illustrated story of Mina, who benefits from Creative Health from birth into old age”

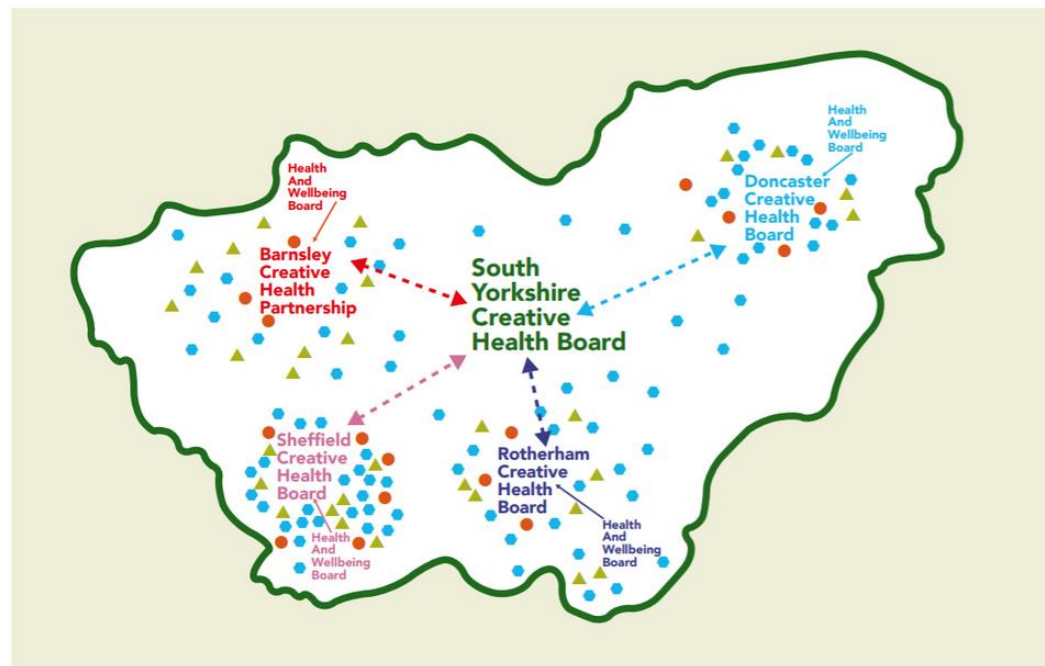
Rachel Massey, CHWA, SY CH Co-ordinator

<https://creativehealthboards.org.uk/south-yorkshire-creative-health-enabling-plan/>

Current infrastructure

Key

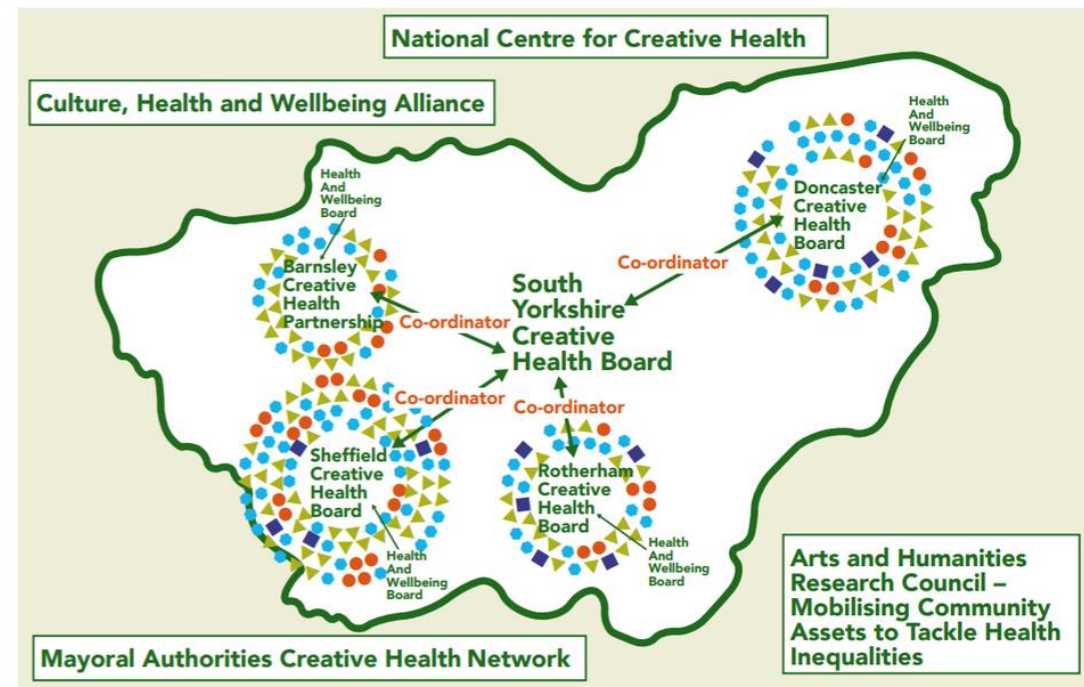
- Medium/large sized Creative Health providers
- ▲ Small/grassroots Creative Health providers
- Freelance Creative Health practitioners



Future infrastructure

Key

- Medium/large sized Creative Health providers
- ▲ Small/grassroots Creative Health providers
- Freelance Creative Health practitioners
- Neighbourhood Health Forums



**South Yorkshire
Creative Health
Enabling Plan
September
2025–2028**

Strategic ambitions for 2025–2028

1. System alignment and strategy integration
2. Prevention and early intervention
3. Workforce and co-production
4. Sustainable funding and commissioning models
5. Evidence, data and research



ICS Bold Ambitions	How Creative Health can contribute
Development in early years so that every child in South Yorkshire is school ready	Exemplar programmes like Tuneful Chatter in Doncaster or the Children’s Capital of Culture in Rotherham improve physical and mental health amongst children and young people, including confidence and communication skills.
Act differently together to strengthen & accelerate our focus on prevention and early identification	Creative Health offers low-cost, evidence-based, preventive interventions across the life course, (e.g. darts’ Dance On falls-prevention programme in Doncaster) with large cost-benefit ratios for the NHS (for more on cost-benefits see Frontier Economics, 2024). Creative Health has expertise in connecting with underserved communities; preventative approaches; health inequalities; and neighbourhood approaches.
Work together to increase economic participation and support a fair, inclusive and sustainable economy	Micro-local creative health interventions like Creative Recovery in Barnsley or RivelinCo in Sheffield upskill participants and are tailored for the specific requirements of those with greatest need.
Collaborate to value and support our entire workforce across health, care, VCSE, carers – paid and unpaid	Workforce development programmes (such as the Creative Health Training programme led by Barnsley Creative Health Partnership & BMBC Public Health, or the SWYFT Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Introduction to Creative Health) improve Creative Health skills and support health and social care practitioners.

Next steps:
scaling and spreading our
learning across the UK

Invitation to join our UK wide CHB learning network

Where? Online

When? Tues 13th
January 2pm-
4pm

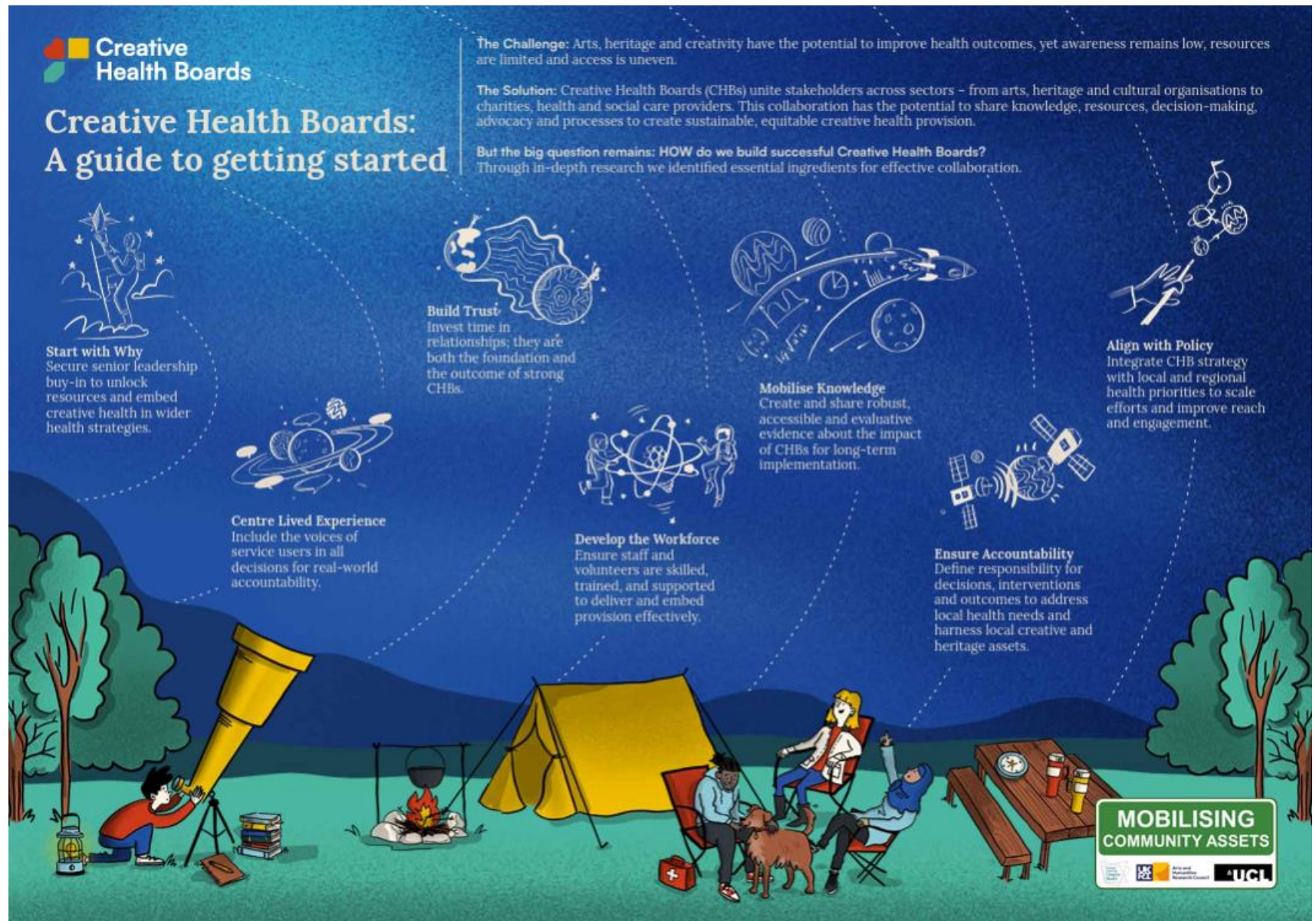
Why? To learn from
people doing
similar work
across the UK



Scan the QR code to register

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

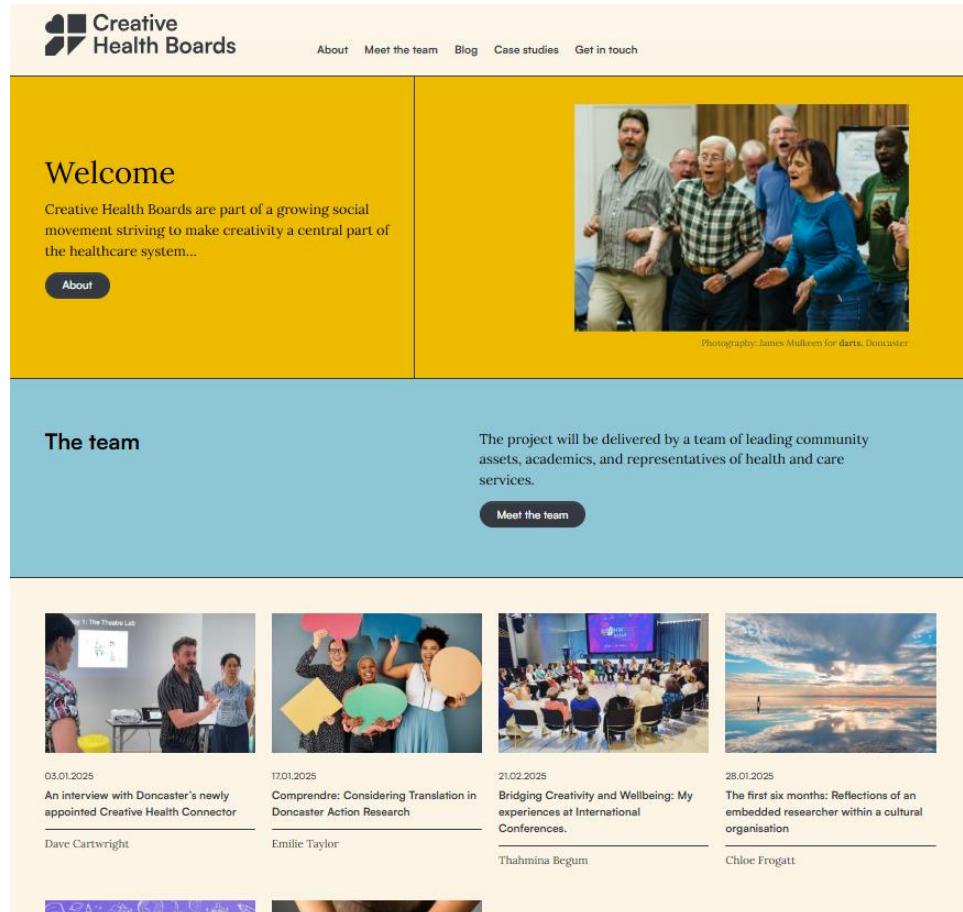
A first look at our interactive guide to getting started!



Final point...
Community Health
Boards can be a key part
of your journey...but
they should not be your
destination



Keep up to date via the project website and LinkedIn



**Access our evidence and learning
via the CHB hub...**

creativehealthboards.org.uk

- Blogs
- Case studies
- Research reports and outputs

Thank you for listening!

Contact us: chb@shu.ac.uk