

Creative Health in Southwark: Two Opportunities

Invitation to Tender 2026-27

Background

1. [Creative Health](#) is defined as creative approaches and activities that have benefits for individuals or communities' health and wellbeing. Approaches such as dance, music, and the visual arts are well evidenced to foster social connection, boost mental and physical health, and play a meaningful role in addressing health inequalities.
2. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating how engagement in creative arts, heritage and cultural activities has measurable impacts on the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, treatment and recovery. The evidence for this, including evidence for return on investment, is outlined in the National Centre for Creative Health [Creative Health Review](#) (2023) and the [APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing report on Creative Health](#) (2017).
3. Recent research commissioned by the GLA, "[Understanding Creative Health in London](#)" report (2024), highlights sustainable funding as one of the biggest challenges for the sector, and a limiting factor in the potential of Creative Health to address health inequalities. The [Community Southwark State of the Sector research](#) (2023), evidences this impact on a local level.

Southwark Council Strategic Context

4. The council's [Southwark 2030 strategy](#) sets out the vision to address health inequalities in the borough and support all our residents to live well as part of a strong community. This includes ensuring all children and young people can access mental health support at the level needed, tackling the systemic issues that lead to health inequalities, and improving the wellbeing of those living with long term health conditions.
5. In 2025, the council also launched its campaign to highlight the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) (FWW) as identified by the Centre for Wellbeing at the New Economics Foundation (2007). These steps to wellbeing include:
 - Connect
 - Be Active
 - Take notice
 - Keep Learning
 - Give
6. We understand Creative Health approaches and activities have a role to play in achieving FWW for Southwark residents.

7. As a result of the [NHS 10-year plan](#), local healthcare providers are being asked to develop neighbourhood health services with the aim of bringing healthcare closer to the communities where people live and support the prevention of ill-health. Southwark is working towards this model, where primary, secondary and social care services will work closely with the voluntary and community sector to provide holistic, preventative care.
8. Southwark has a long track-record of leadership in the development of Creative Health initiatives and opportunities. Via local networks, including the Southwark Culture, Health and Wellbeing Partnership (SCHWeP). In response to feedback from the sector, Southwark Council is working with Partnership Southwark to launch a pilot funding opportunity.
9. The council's aim is to work towards sustainable funding models within a wider local Creative Health ecology. Through funding, networking, training and partnerships, we aim to develop local expertise, support emerging practice, and organisational resilience in areas where there is social return for residents.
10. Since 2021, the Council has directly supported the borough's cultural sector to be more inclusive and equitable through the Culture Together Grants Fund. For 2026-27, approximately 24 projects have been recommended for funding covering a wide range of activities including accessible dance opportunities for young people with CandoCo Dance Company, co-designed events and activities with LGBTQI+ groups at Dulwich Picture Gallery, and music employability programmes with Finding Rhythms.

Southwark Creative Health Contracts

Scope of Contract

11. **Two contracts of up to £18,000** are available for two Southwark-based arts and culture organisations to deliver a **12–18-month Creative Health programme** which will directly benefit Southwark residents and **align with** Southwark's neighbourhood health priorities and services.
12. To be eligible to apply, the lead applicant must be a formally constituted arts and culture organisation or VCSE, such as charity or CIC. We welcome consortia applications, which may also include sole traders and freelance creatives, provided the application is submitted by a lead organisation based in the borough.

13. Organisations will be responsible for delivering a programme of Creative Health activities that can broadly demonstrate improved outcomes against one of the following local health priorities:

- **Support the prevention and management of child and adolescent mental ill health.** This includes those with complex needs such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- **Support the prevention and management of multiple long-term health conditions in adults** (with a focus on cardiometabolic diseases like cardiovascular disease and diabetes)
- **Support the prevention and management of falls and frailty in older people**

14. Projects will have arts and culture at their core, and organisations will consider how their practice and proposed activities best support those with lived experiences. A summary of recent academic literature evidencing the impact of arts and culture on the above health conditions can be found towards the end of this document.

15. The contracted organisations will design and deliver a regular, high quality Creative Health programme which is grounded in evidence informed practice and demonstrates clear alignment with one of the outlined health priorities. This can be the development of an existing creative health and wellbeing project, or an area of work that the organisation is looking to adapt. For example, a dance company that has delivered health and wellbeing programmes for young people and is seeking to apply its practice to activities for older adults.

16. We welcome applications from organisations already delivering activities with strong evidence of positive outcomes against one of the local health priorities outlined, as well as those delivering innovative activities where the evidence base is currently limited and this support could help build it.

17. Proposed activities must be delivered in an inclusive and accessible way, with appropriate safeguarding practices and approaches for both participants and the delivery team, including participating creatives. Please see the [Creative Health Alliance Framework](#) for guiding principles on inclusion and accessibility.

18. Activities might be delivered in a cultural, heritage, clinical, education, or community settings, provided it is accessible for the intended participatory group/s.

19. We anticipate that contracted organisations will work with NHS partners including social prescribers, to support referral process for these activities, as well as encouraging them to embed them longer-term within neighbourhood settings. We recognise these partnerships can take time, and the council will support with establishing health partnerships in the borough.
20. To evidence the impact of projects on health outcomes and residents' wellbeing, organisations will work closely with Southwark Council's Culture and Public Health teams to monitor and evaluate activities. Additional support will be provided with evaluation processes, including training on the Creative Health Impact Framework. Contracted organisations' responsibilities will include a final evaluation report, alongside ongoing project monitoring. Full details to be confirmed in collaboration with awarded organisations.
21. To disseminate learning and expertise, organisations will be asked to include opportunities for local sector connection and knowledge sharing. This could look like a networking or training event or presenting about the project/s and progress in existing local networks.
22. Contracted organisations will be required to join the [Southwark Culture Health and Wellbeing Partnership](#), which will give them the opportunity to contribute to policy and decision-making related to Creative Health in Southwark, and access to networking and training opportunities.
23. To support the ongoing development of Creative Health projects and funding, organisations will work with Southwark Council to consider the legacy and further development of funded activities in the borough.

Roles and responsibilities

	Awarded Organisation	Southwark Council
Development & Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To design and deliver an evidence-based Creative Health programme over a 12–18-month period. To embed anti-discriminatory practices into the recruitment of creatives and freelancers, and to integrate them into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a council officer as a first point of contact for all communications relating to the project and wider related activities. Provide contract management and oversight of the tender, including finance. To advise on fairer recruitment processes

	<p>the planning and delivery of projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver in a way that is inclusive and accessible, and responsive to participants needs. • To include co-design with those of lived experience in the project design and provide opportunities for reflection with participants throughout. 	<p>and safeguarding policies if needed.</p>
Partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a clear rationale for partnership working and clarity of roles and responsibilities. • To work in partnership with NHS neighbourhood health services, and support with any referral pathways into your activity. • To work with the council to explore how activities might be adapted for other Creative Health initiatives in the borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support and facilitate connections with NHS partners and Southwark Council departments as required. • To raise awareness and knowledge sharing of activities within local health sector networks. • To keep contracted organisations informed of other relevant strategic Creative Health initiatives in the borough.
Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed safeguarding processes through the project timeframe which supports the needs of participants and is culturally sensitive. • Provide additional support for the delivery team, including creatives and freelancers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise where required on areas such as trauma informed practice, cultural competency or safeguarding processes in line with council frameworks.

Monitoring & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing the Council with regular updates on the project and attend any relevant meetings to present updates. • To work with the council to develop an appropriate evaluation framework for your activity and participants. • To supply Southwark Council with ongoing evaluation and reflection materials, and to support a final evaluation report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work in partnership with organisations to plan and implement an evaluation process that fits with the intended activities and meets safeguarding guidelines. • To give advance notice and work in partnership with suppliers on agreed meeting dates and agendas. • To provide training in the Creative Health Impact Framework • To provide templates and structure for evaluation processes. • To visit activities as appropriate.
Sector knowledge sharing & leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include opportunities for knowledge sharing, training, and learning within the local arts and culture sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide access to relevant local networks where information can be shared. • To support with connections local relevant sectors
Marketing & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness of activity through social media and other relevant marketing channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support marketing of any networking and learning opportunities. • To promote the activity through relevant channels and partners as required. • To communicate the impact of the project across associated council departments.

Budget and Timeline

24. The two contract opportunities are each worth up to **£18,000**. In the second stage of the application, organisations will be asked to provide a detailed breakdown of their proposed project budget.

The council reserves the right to make changes to the proposed timeline and amend or vary any part of the procurement process.

Milestone	Date
EOI Opens	11 May
EOI Closes	1 June
Shortlisted applications invited to Tender	15 June
Invitation to Tender closes	13 July
Notification of tender outcome	30 July

Eligibility

- An arts and culture organisation, or VCSE registered in Southwark.
- Constituted, for example a charity, community interest company or limited company.
- An organisation which delivers participatory arts as part of its core mission.
- Have the appropriate governance, safeguarding and financial management processes in place to deliver the proposed project.
- A strong track record in delivering arts and wellbeing projects, and an understanding of the guiding principles of Creative Health programmes.

Selection Process

Following eligibility checks, the selection process will have three stages:

Stage 1	Expressions of Interest
Stage 2	Quality
Stage 3	Price

Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest (EOI)

Interested organisations will be invited to submit a short EOI to demonstrate how they meet the basic criteria for the opportunity. The EOI form will contain the following questions:

1. Name of the lead applicant for this project
2. Lead applicant registered postal address
3. Lead applicant email address
4. What experience do they have of delivering creative or cultural activities that improve health and wellbeing in Southwark? (up to 300 words)
5. Please share a basic summary of the project you are proposing to deliver. Please tell us what it is, who it is for, and what outcomes you anticipate will be achieved. (up to 500 words)

EOIs will be reviewed by the council officers to establish eligibility and questions 4 and 5 scored from 1 to 5 according to the scale below. The council has the right to reject any proposals that score below a 3.

Notification will be given to selected organisations if their EOI has been successful and they will be invited to submit a full application.

Stage 2 – Quality

This stage of the application will be scored against the following criteria

Criteria	Further Details	Percentage
Response to the brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of project plans; does the intended activity match the identified health priority? - Is the proposed activity accessible? What frameworks have been used to improve access and inclusion? - Does the proposed activity align with Creative Health principles and demonstrate understanding? 	15%
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What evidence or learning has been used to support this approach? - How realistic are plans within the project timeframe? - How will activities be monitored and evaluated? 	15%
Strength of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anticipated numbers impacted - How will they measure impact and change? 	15%
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the organisation will work with local partners or stakeholders to reach participants experiencing identified health priorities. - An awareness of how they might work with NHS partners if not already established 	15%

	- Approaches the organisation will take to share learning and best practice through the local cultural sector	
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Stage 3 – Price

Criteria	Further Details	Percentage
Quality of proposed budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The budget allocated to the project is realistic and reflective of the proposed activity - The budget details the costs that the contract will cover that are relative to the project delivery 	20%
Breakdown of budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs are proportional - Pay for staff and creatives is fair and transparent, allowing adequate time for planning and delivery 	20%

The full application will include the following questions:

(Organisations will be notified of any changes when asked to submit a full application)

1. Name of Lead applicant
2. Lead applicant email address
3. Key health priority identified
4. Please give a detailed breakdown of the proposed project. Include a timeline of activity, intended participant group, location of proposed activities and any wider sector engagement. (up to 1000 words)
5. Please outline any partners, including the creative team, you will be working with. What are their roles and responsibilities? (up to 600 words)
6. What steps have you taken to include those with lived experience in your project plans? (up to 600 words)
7. How will your proposed creative activity positively impact the identified health priority? What evidence have you used to support your approach? (up to 1000 words)
8. How many people will benefit from your proposed activity and how have you arrived at this number?
9. What approaches will you be taking to safeguard participants? (600 words)
10. Please provide a detailed breakdown of your project budget

The applications will be reviewed by the council's project team and selected external stakeholders. Applications will again be scored from 1 to 5 according to the scale below: the council has the right to reject any proposals that score below a 3.

Scoring Criteria

Score	Criteria
0 – No response / not applicable	Question not answered, or response is irrelevant or incomprehensible.
1 - Poor	Barely addresses the question or misses key aspects. Very weak or no alignment with the tender priorities. No meaningful evidence or examples. Very unclear, poorly written, or disorganised. Major weaknesses that make the proposal unconvincing.
2 - Weak	Addresses the question only superficially or incompletely. Weak alignment with tender priorities. Minimal evidence or examples provided. Lacks clarity, organisation, or persuasiveness. Significant weaknesses that reduce feasibility or impact.
3 – Satisfactory	Addresses the question but with limited detail or depth. Partial alignment with tender priorities. Provides some evidence or examples, but vague or underdeveloped. May lack clarity, organisation, or persuasiveness. Moderate weaknesses present.
4 – Very good	Addresses all major aspects of the question clearly. Good alignment with tender priorities. Provides relevant examples or evidence, though may lack some depth. Well-organised and persuasive overall. Minor weaknesses that do not undermine the proposal.
5 - Excellent	Fully addresses all parts of the question with depth and clarity. Strong alignment with tender priorities and goals. Provides specific, well-supported examples or evidence. Highly compelling, innovative, and demonstrates strong potential for impact. Minimal to no weaknesses.

How to apply

An EOI form will be accessible via the council's Engagement Hub. This will open on May 11.

Submissions can be submitted via alternative formats, including audio, video, or large text. Alternative applications will need to be submitted via email rather than the Engagement Hub. Please get in contact if you have access needs and need additional support.

Please contact Lily Dettmer, Senior Project Officer (Culture and Events) if you have any questions or queries about this opportunity.

lily.dettmer@southwark.gov.uk

The information below may help you further with you application

Tackling Health Inequalities

1. Southwark is a densely populated and diverse inner-London borough. Despite the many improvements in general health and wellbeing in Southwark within the last decade, health inequalities continue to be a challenge, and one that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis. There are a number of communities and populations that consistently experience poorer health outcomes, including but not limited to those living in particular areas in central and northern Southwark, Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, including those with a Latin American heritage, people with learning disabilities, carers, rough sleepers and asylum seekers and refugees. More information about health inequalities in Southwark can be found here [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#).
2. Providers are encouraged to consider how they can contribute to reducing health inequalities in Southwark through any commissioned work and should ensure that monitoring and reporting of key performance indicators will capture inequalities in service delivery or uptake.
3. Southwark Council is committed to addressing all forms of inequality in the borough. We have developed a series of anti-racist pledges as part of the broader Southwark Stands Together programme of work to tackle racism within the borough. It is required that all suppliers work in alignment with the pledges of Southwark Stands Together, ensuring the project upholds these anti-racist values. Please ensure all staff/sub-contractors involved in the tender are familiar with Southwark Stands Together.

Evidence of Creative Health Interventions

Population	Interventions	Outcomes	Evidence strength and types
Children with complex needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Art therapy• Music therapy• Dyadic music lessons• Dance• Drama/theatre• Digital storytelling	Improved emotional regulation, communication of needs, social skills, and attachment.	Strong for psychosocial outcomes, including RCTs, systematic reviews, and qualitative studies. Limited evidence for long-term functional outcomes.

		Reduction in depression and anxiety.	
Adults with diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital storytelling • Dance-based exercise • Music-assisted relaxation • Meditation/yoga 	Improved self-efficacy, aerobic fitness, and glycaemic control (HbA1c). Reduction in stress and body fat.	Strong for behavioural change and psychosocial benefits, with small but significant improvements in glycemic control. Includes RCTs, systematic reviews, and qualitative studies.
Adults with CKD (chronic kidney disease)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music therapy • Visual arts • Creative writing 	Reduced anxiety and pain/itch levels. Improved sleep and health-related quality of life.	Strong for symptoms and quality of life outcomes including systematic reviews, RCTs, and feasibility studies.
Adults with CVD (cardiovascular disease)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance • Yoga/meditation • Music therapy • Digital storytelling 	Reduced blood pressure and stress. Improved aerobic capacity and emotional wellbeing.	Moderate: indirect high-quality evidence for reductions in cardiovascular risk factors including RCTs and systematic reviews. Heterogenous populations, not exclusive to CVD.
Older adults with/ at risk of falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dance • Yoga/meditation • Music-based movement 	Improvements in balance, gait, strength, and cognition as well as social connection and self-esteem.	Moderate: indirect high-quality evidence for functional improvements. Heterogenous populations. not explicitly at risk of falls.