



Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2025-26

Fourth-Year Projects Showcase

Part D:

**North East North Cumbria
Health & Care Partnership**



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Introduction - Child Health and Wellbeing Network

Heather Corlett - Arts & Creativity Executive Lead



Heather has always had a passion for arts since she was a child. She joined the NHS in 1992 and as the Deputy Director for the Child Health and Wellbeing Network has encouraged progress, alongside Chris Drinkwater, of its founding commitment to Arts and Creativity as a cross-cutting theme.

This has included establishing partnerships with colleagues from Northern Ballet, attracting funding into Network arts initiatives, and the development of an Arts and Creativity Advisor role.

Heather was delighted to take on the Executive Lead role for Arts and Creativity when Chris Drinkwater stepped down – but admits that they have been very big shoes to fill!

“We are delighted to share this Creative Health project showcase for the fourth annual Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards.

Our Creative Health projects demonstrate the beneficial impact of arts on the wellbeing of primary-aged children, bringing creative expertise to the classroom, and to especially benefit those in the highest areas of deprivation.

The purpose of these awards is to grow interest and share examples of creative health in primary schools within the North East and North Cumbria, to the ultimate benefit of the children involved.”

The Child Health and Wellbeing Network

Our shared vision and priorities

In the North East and North Cumbria we believe all children and young people should be given the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential, and be advantaged by organisations working together

Network delivery and reach



To join the Network
scan this QR code or
[click here](#)

- Deliver on the NHS England CYP Transformation Programme
- Cross-sector partnership working
- Network of Advisors to support broad system
- Cross-system membership of over 2300 – anyone working with children & young people
- Youth Board and Network groups to promote youth voice
- Events to share good practice to others in our area
- Bringing national and international speakers to North East & North Cumbria
- Weekly Child Health Tuesday email bulletin



What is Creative Health & why is it important?

Creative Health put simply is the connection between art and culture, with health and social care and how being creative can lead to healthier lives and communities. Active engagement with arts and culture, whether through our own creative practice or through our enjoyment of the creative practice of others, is beneficial for the health and wellbeing of us all.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Arts, Health and Wellbeing was formed in 2014, with the aim to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts sector can bring to health and wellbeing, and to make national progress in the implementation of these benefits. In 2023 the [National Centre for Creative Health \(NCCH\)](#) and the APPG conducted a review of the potential benefits of creative health in order to make recommendations to the Government.

Creating the conditions for creative health to flourish requires a joined-up, whole system approach incorporating health systems, local authorities, schools, and the cultural and VCSE sectors.



<https://ncch.org.uk/creative-health-review>

Key messages from the review

“Creative health is fundamental to a healthy and prosperous society, and its benefits should be available and accessible to all.

Creative health should form an integral part of a 21st-century health and social care system – one that is holistic, person-centred, and which focuses on reducing inequalities and supporting people to live well for longer.”

Our Arts & Creativity Advisor

Martin Wilson MBE

Martin Wilson MBE is Executive Director at TIN Arts in Durham and is the Arts & Creativity Advisor for the Child Health and Wellbeing Network.

Martin has worked in arts and culture in North East England for over 25 years. TIN Arts delivers activities across the North East and their vision is to create a world in which everybody has access to the arts. They hope to achieve this by removing barriers and increasing access to high-quality dance and performing arts.

Martin started working with the Child Health and Wellbeing Network in 2019 as part of the South Tees Arts Project (STAR). He has served as Arts & Creativity Advisor to the Network for the last four years.



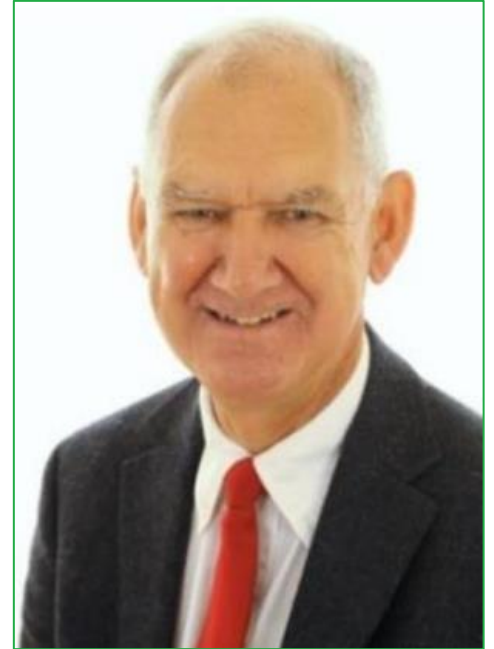
Our judging panel

Professor Chris Drinkwater CBE

Professor Chris Drinkwater CBE, FRCGP, FFPH(Hon), FRSA was an inner-city GP in Newcastle for 23 years and he is now an emeritus Professor of Primary Care Development at Northumbria University.

He led the establishment of HealthWORKS Newcastle as a City Challenge project in the early 1990s. He chaired Ways to Wellness, a charitable foundation established to deliver social prescribing at scale through a social impact bond in Newcastle upon Tyne, and led on Well Newcastle Gateshead, a Well North pathfinder with a focus on arts and health for all. He was also a Director of the West End Schools Trust (8 inner city primary schools in Newcastle upon Tyne).

Along the way he has been, variously, President and Public Health lead for the NHS Alliance, Deputy Chair and Chair of the Philanthropy Committee for Northumberland, Tyne & Wear Community Foundation, and the Sir Roy Griffiths/Age Concern/RCGP Prince of Wales, Educational Fellow for Older People. Chris is also our previous Arts and Creativity Lead on the Child Health and Wellbeing Network, and when he stood down from the role, the Network established the Chris Drinkwater Awards to acknowledge his generous contribution to the Network and his passion for Creative Health, especially with primary school-aged children.



Our judging panel

Clare Smith and Anthony Gonzalez

Clare Smith is the Learning and Engagement Manager at North East Museums, where she leads programmes that connect communities with cultural heritage. She leads on Learning programmes across the organisation and manages the Communities team, along with Volunteering for North East Museums.

Clare ensures that the children, young people, and communities served by the museums have access to enriching and transformative experiences through advocating for access to creative and cultural learning opportunities throughout our lives.



Anthony Gonzalez has over 20 years experience in the voluntary and community sector and has experience in community development and building partnerships.

Anthony has supported a number of projects that have involved building skills and confidence and raising aspirations in areas of high deprivation. At North East Museums, Anthony supports in developing volunteering and work experience projects.



NORTH EAST
MUSEUMS

Our judging panel

Kate Swaddle

Kate Swaddle is the Executive Headteacher of two schools in Gateshead. Prior to this appointment, she was Deputy Headteacher and SENCO at a school in North Tyneside, with a high percentage of SEND, Education Health Care Plans, and Pupil Premium. Having trained in an NHS profession, before moving into teaching - she is aware of the benefits that multi-disciplinary team working brings, across all sectors.

She was seconded as Education Advisor to the Child Health and Wellbeing Network throughout 2021-2022, supporting the Network to deliver on several projects including epilepsy – a strand of the NHS England Children and Young People’s Transformation Programme. She also worked in collaboration with the National Institute of Health and Care Research on the ‘Research into School’ project.

In addition to this, Kate has supported the delivery of the early rollout Early Career Teaching programme, for University College London, acting as a facilitator for the North East Teaching School Partnership. Having attained the NASENCO and NPQH awards, she is well placed to help children and young people to overcome their barriers to learning.



Our judging panel

Wendy Kelly

Wendy Kelly is the lead for children and young people's emotional wellbeing for South Tees Public Health. As well as having a system-wide remit she has responsibility for a front-line service delivering early help within educational settings to improve the resilience of children and young people.

Wendy has had a varied and interesting career in local government ranging from community development to policy and performance prior to a period of 20 years in children's services and 8 in public health. During this time, she has led many transformational programmes supporting education and health outcomes.

She is passionate that all children and young people have the very best support, education, and opportunities to enable them to enjoy their lives and be happy. She is a governor of a primary, secondary, and special school.

Wendy has collaborated on many projects and initiatives with the Child Health and Wellbeing Network and is Chair of the Network's System Engagement Group.



The Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2026 - WINNER



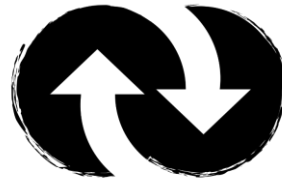
Changing Relations and their 'Sometimes it Hurts' project

Delivered at **Copeland Road Primary School** in Bishop Auckland

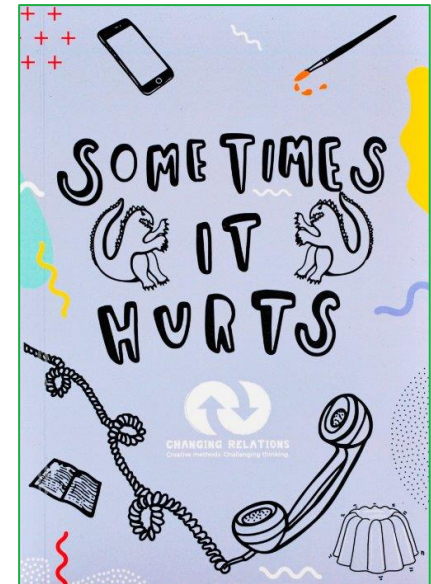
What the judges said....

'Sometimes it Hurts' has developed an exemplary approach to how schools and teachers can address the complex issue of domestic abuse and neglect through sensitive use of creative arts activities.

'Sometimes it Hurts' uses fictionalised stories and creative activities to enable teachers and children to engage in sensitive, age-appropriate conversations about domestic abuse and neglect leading to increased emotional literacy, regulation and expression and improved access to support.



CHANGING RELATIONS
Creative methods. Challenging thinking.



Project summary

Sometimes it Hurts (SiH) is a creative health project initiated, developed and led by Changing Relations using arts-based resources to address social and emotional learning for primary school children about domestic abuse and neglect. **20% of all children will experience domestic abuse**; supporting them to access the help they need is critical to mitigating the long-term impact of these adverse childhood experiences.

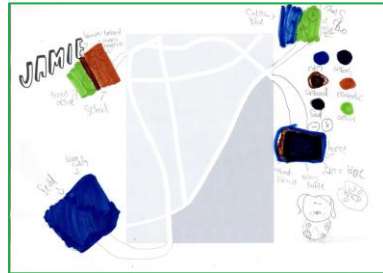
Sometimes it Hurts is based on a series of fictional stories which were **co-created with young people** based on their own experiences and observations. These are used as creative stimuli to encourage engagement with different experiences of domestic abuse in an age-appropriate way using creative activities including drawing, collage & performance. **Training for teachers/educators** develops their knowledge, skills and confidence to facilitate their delivery of the programme and effective support for children.

Sometimes it Hurts resources can be used by teachers/educators both in a classroom setting, in small groups or one-to-one to **meet specific needs** and is designed to be delivered by teachers.

Creative health benefits of the project

- Children being better able to recognise when behaviour they experience is problematic
- Improvements in children's emotional literacy and ability to express themselves
- Children learning constructive ways to make themselves feel better in difficult situations
- Children having better emotional regulation
- Children being better able to identify safe adults who they can approach to discuss the way they feel/things they are experiencing
- Creating environments where it feels safe to raise experiences with an adult
- Teachers/educators feeling confident in their ability to support children who come to them appropriately.

As one teacher summarised: "This project is giving children a voice, and that alone is changing lives."



Addressing health inequalities

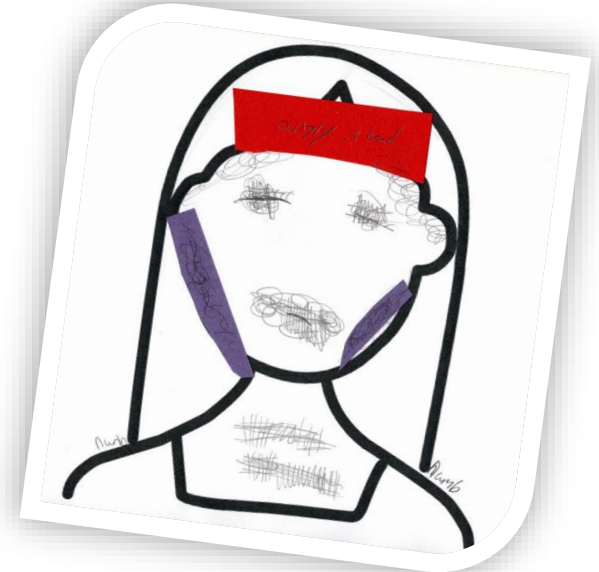
SiH addresses inequalities by supporting children affected by abuse and neglect - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - that disproportionately impact those in disadvantaged communities. Children in the most deprived areas are three times more likely to experience abuse and neglect (NSPCC), leading to poorer health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes.

Experiencing ACEs leads to disadvantage such as increased risks of poor physical health, mental illness, cognitive and emotional disfunction, behavioural issues (including addiction) and lower educational attainment. Early intervention relating to ACEs can significantly mitigate their long-term impact on a child's life.

SiH provides an early intervention framework to mitigate these risks through:

- Helping children recognise when behaviour is problematic
- Developing children's emotional literacy and ability to express themselves
- Helping children learn constructive ways to make themselves feel better
- Helping children identify safe adults who they can approach to discuss the way they feel/things they are experiencing
- Creating environments where it feels safe to raise experiences with an adult
- Providing training for teachers such that they feel confident in their ability to support children who come to them appropriately.

Sometimes it Hurts is being formed into an educator toolkit with an associated training which will enable schools to deliver the programme themselves at minimal cost. The toolkit provides access to the stories, detailed lesson plans, creative activities and teacher support. The training ensures that teachers have the base knowledge needed to deliver the lessons themselves and have confidence in responding to any issues raised appropriately.



Feedback about Sometimes it Hurts

"The development of their language is just phenomenal...in the first lesson we had...happy, sad, angry and now we've got powerless, confused, numb, overwhelmed. And these are just some of the things I've written down. And for them to have that knowledge of those feelings is absolutely amazing." - **teacher**

"This training has given me a toolkit I never had before. I now feel ready to respond with empathy and confidence." - **teacher**



"Children are carrying less emotional weight into the classroom. They're more focused, more engaged, and more willing to learn." - **teacher**

"We saw a noticeable difference in the way children engaged with emotional discussions. The resources helped them articulate feelings they had struggled to express before." - **school safeguarding lead**

"Children who had never shared their experiences before began to open up in a way that was safe and supported." - **teacher**

The Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2026 – RUNNER-UP



Cap-a-Pie and their drama-based workshops with Chillingham Road Primary School

What the judges said....

A great project that shows the value of a well-established relationship between an arts group (Cap-a-Pie) and a school. This has enabled them to develop a portfolio of age-group related projects around a creative approach to climate change and science that engages parents, teachers and children.

Cap-a-Pie worked with **Chillingham Road Primary School** across multiple year groups using drama-based workshops, including storytelling and drama to explore diverse topics including climate change, as well as after-school and whole-staff CPD sessions to develop creativity, engagement and learning.



Project summary

Cap-a-Pie worked with Chillingham Road Primary across multiple year groups and whole-staff CPD sessions using drama-based workshops. Students participated in storytelling, theatre and movement activities that combined **physical, creative and emotional learning** to explore diverse topics including climate change and human relationship to animals through the story of a missing pig.

Year 3 students said "when you're just learning without anything, it's not going to stick, when you're doing other fun stuff it helps stick in your head," and Year 1 students reflected that "when he said Fizziwig the pig had gone missing he [the facilitator] had a sad and shocked look on his face. I felt sad because he looked so sad."

Students engaged with climate change, environmental and science topics, with one Year 5 student saying **"at first I thought we might not have any ideas then we had lots."**

Teachers implemented theatre techniques across curriculum areas, including English, science and RSE. The Year 1 teacher reflected that "the hot seating is definitely something I've taken away" and Cap-a-Pie "gave me loads of ideas where I could incorporate things."

The Year 3 teacher reported continued use of "lots of drama, discussion and recall and retrieving the info you gave" six months later. Whole-staff CPD sessions created **shared understanding and confidence**: "everyone had a real smile on their face" and teachers experienced techniques themselves.

Students and staff demonstrated increased engagement, creativity, communication and social-emotional learning, while the approach provided **an inclusive model suitable for diverse, multilingual classrooms**. The project is sustainable through ongoing CPD, reference materials and continued partnership work with Cap-a-Pie to support drama-based learning.



"When you're just learning without anything, it's not going to stick, when you're doing other fun stuff it helps stick in your head"



"I really liked the questions because you were tempted to put your hand up"

"At first I thought we might not have any ideas then we had lots."



Chillingham Road Primary School serves a highly diverse multilingual community, with 21 languages spoken with many students English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. The school serves many families living in poverty with 41% of students eligible for Free School Meals, significantly higher than the national average.

Workshops used drama to support kinaesthetic learning such as freeze frames, statues and movement, **enabling students with different needs to participate fully.** Whole-staff CPD sessions allowed teachers to embed techniques in daily practice, supporting equal participation and long-term inclusion. By offering multiple entry points to content and valuing student expression, the project **enabled learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds** to access learning effectively.



The Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2026 – COMMENDED



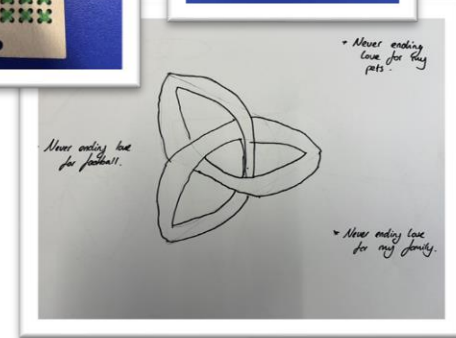
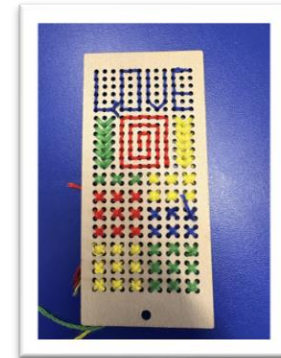
Corbridge Middle School and their girls' self-esteem group,
in partnership with **Beamish Museum**

What the judges said....

A fascinating project with Beamish Museum that uses a theme around Celtic Knots and sewing skills to help a group of girls to have conversations about relationships, self-esteem and resilience.

This project focused on developing a group of girls' self-esteem, working in partnership with Beamish Museum initially to officially open the group. The project has allowed these students to **have a voice, a place to relax and express themselves openly**. As this project did not have any pre-determined outcomes there was no pressure or expectation for the students to achieve, thus allowing them to thrive both individually and collectively.

The project has seen highs and lows as the students have discussed both happy and sad times not only in school but outside of school. The project has allowed the students to **learn new skills and develop their own emotional resilience** via fostering connections and recognising the influence of thoughts. This project is only the start of a new self-esteem initiative for the school and students.



The Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2026 – COMMENDED



Villa Real School and their 'This Is My Place' project

What the judges said....

A great example of how to use the existing school budget to develop a creative health approach to Children's Mental Health Week around the theme of place and belonging.

At Villa Real School, our 'This Is My Place' creative health project helped pupils explore **belonging, connection and feeling valued** in line with the Children's Mental Health Week theme. Through adapted visual art activities, pupils identified the people, places and objects that make them feel safe and included, supporting emotional literacy, communication and positive mental health.

Using sensory materials, symbol-supported communication and accessible tasks, all pupils were able to **experience and express where they feel they belong**, reducing barriers linked to language, confidence and emotional expression.

Pupils enjoyed the project because it allowed them to share what matters to them in a creative, personal way, and many found it meaningful to **recognise the special people and places** that help them feel calm and happy.

Pupils demonstrated stronger emotional understanding, and reduced anxiety during creative tasks

Teachers gained better insight into pupils' needs to improve personalised support



Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Grants 2026-28 – a new 2-year grant fund

The Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools awards will be changing this year to a grant to fund more longer-term projects.

Grants of up to £6,000 will be available and we are looking to fund two-year projects that will start in September 2026.

Criteria for applications are: creative health projects based in the North East and North Cumbria, that build resilience in primary school children before they transition to secondary school.

Projects will ideally be partnerships between primary schools, arts and cultural organisations or creative practitioners. Applications can be submitted by either partner.

Projects will be reviewed after one year focussing on the difference and the impact that has been made.

Applications will open on 1 April 2026. Closing date is 8 June 2026.

Further information including how to apply is available on the North East Museums website: <https://www.northeastmuseums.org.uk/learn/chris-drinkwater-creative-health-in-primary-schools-awards>

If you would like to discuss further please email

Anthony.Gonzalez@northeastmuseums.org.uk





**Child Health
and Wellbeing
Network**



More information:

<https://www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk/chwn/arts-and-creativity>

<https://www.northeastmuseums.org.uk/learn/chris-drinkwater-creative-health-in-primary-schools-awards>

Contact:

Anthony.Gonzalez@northeastmuseums.org.uk

