

Showcase event celebrates innovative research projects to improve health outcomes

Gloucester's new Arts, Health and Wellbeing Centre has held a special event to celebrate the impact of the first round of Small Grants in Research and Evaluation, awarded in 2024 to local voluntary, community, social enterprise (VCSE), NHS and social care partners.

Held at University of Gloucestershire's City Campus, the Arts, Health and Wellbeing Centre (AHWC) Showcase brought together project leads, researchers, academics and practitioners from across the county to share learning and discuss the outcomes of 14 creative and research-led initiatives.

The afternoon featured a series of short presentations focusing on seven projects that explored new ways of improving health and wellbeing through creativity, research and partnership working. These were:

- Embedding an evaluation culture within Primary Care Networks
- Community outreach to improve access to perinatal mental health support for ethnic minority women
- Barriers to accessing talking therapies for disabled people
- Creating Transitions: barriers to attendance in Arts on Prescription programmes
- Psychological therapy group for stroke survivors
- Stroud District Community Hubs: prevention and intervention for better health
- SCALE: Skin Changes at the End of Life

Each of the projects demonstrated how creative, evidence-based approaches are helping to address key health and wellbeing challenges across Gloucestershire. While some learning was very specific to each project, there was also a focus on the wider applications of research findings. For example, a project focusing on improving access to perinatal mental health support for women from ethnic minority backgrounds made recommendations about wider issues related to cultural sensitivity that impact all community health services. Similarly, barriers identified as excluding disabled people accessing talking therapies are also likely to be present in other contexts and settings.

The Arts, Health and Wellbeing Centre is a flagship partnership between University of Gloucestershire and One Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (ICS), showcasing the best of the county's health and social care education. Bringing together practitioners, academics, artists and students, the Centre is driving innovative research, developing creative interventions to improve health outcomes, and providing outstanding education and training for Gloucestershire's current and future workforce.

Dr Katerina Kantartzis, University of Gloucestershire Lead for the Arts, Health and Wellbeing Centre, said: "While the Arts, Health and Wellbeing Centre has only been physically open for a few months, there has been a significant amount of activity taking place behind the scenes since 2022. This event has been a fantastic opportunity to see the impact of some of that work, particularly in terms of how small grants can generate big impact across our communities.

By combining research, creativity and collaboration, these projects are already helping us understand new ways of supporting wellbeing in Gloucestershire".

Emma Savage, Associate Director of Research and Evaluation at NHS Gloucestershire ICB, said: "It's inspiring to see how these projects are already making a tangible difference to people's lives across Gloucestershire. The Showcase highlights the power of partnership and creativity in addressing complex health and wellbeing challenges. By supporting innovation at a local level, we're helping to build stronger, more connected communities and ensuring that research directly informs better care and outcomes for our residents."