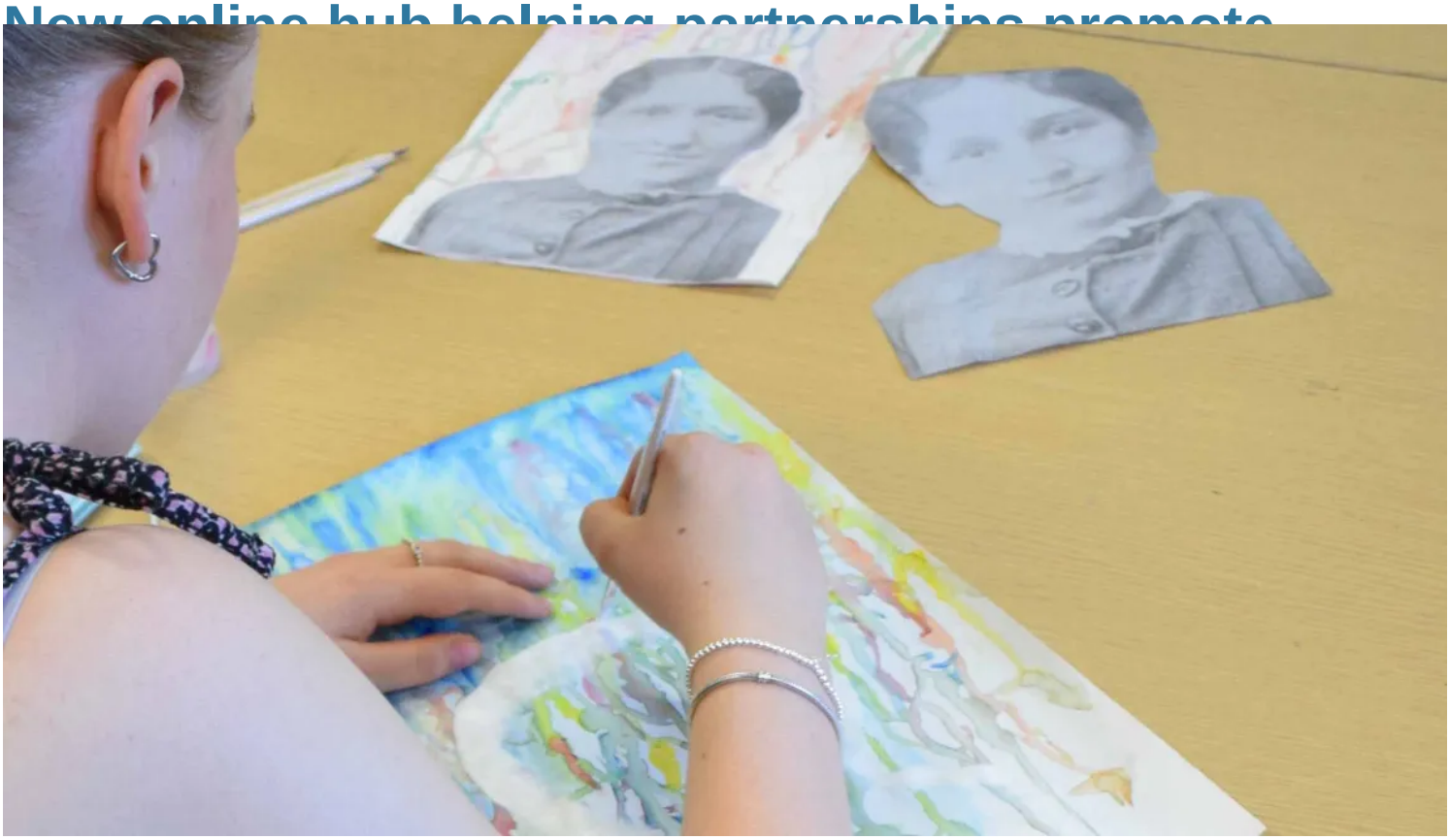
New online hub helping partnerships promote



Participants use historical archives to research and develop creative responses to the lives of patients from former psychiatric hospitals.

Heritage can make a significant, positive contribution to how we feel about our lives. One of our funded projects is sharing a decade of its learnings with organisations across the UK.

Change Minds, run by The Restoration Trust in partnership with Norfolk Record Office, uses heritage as a form of cultural therapy for people living with or recovering from mental health problems.

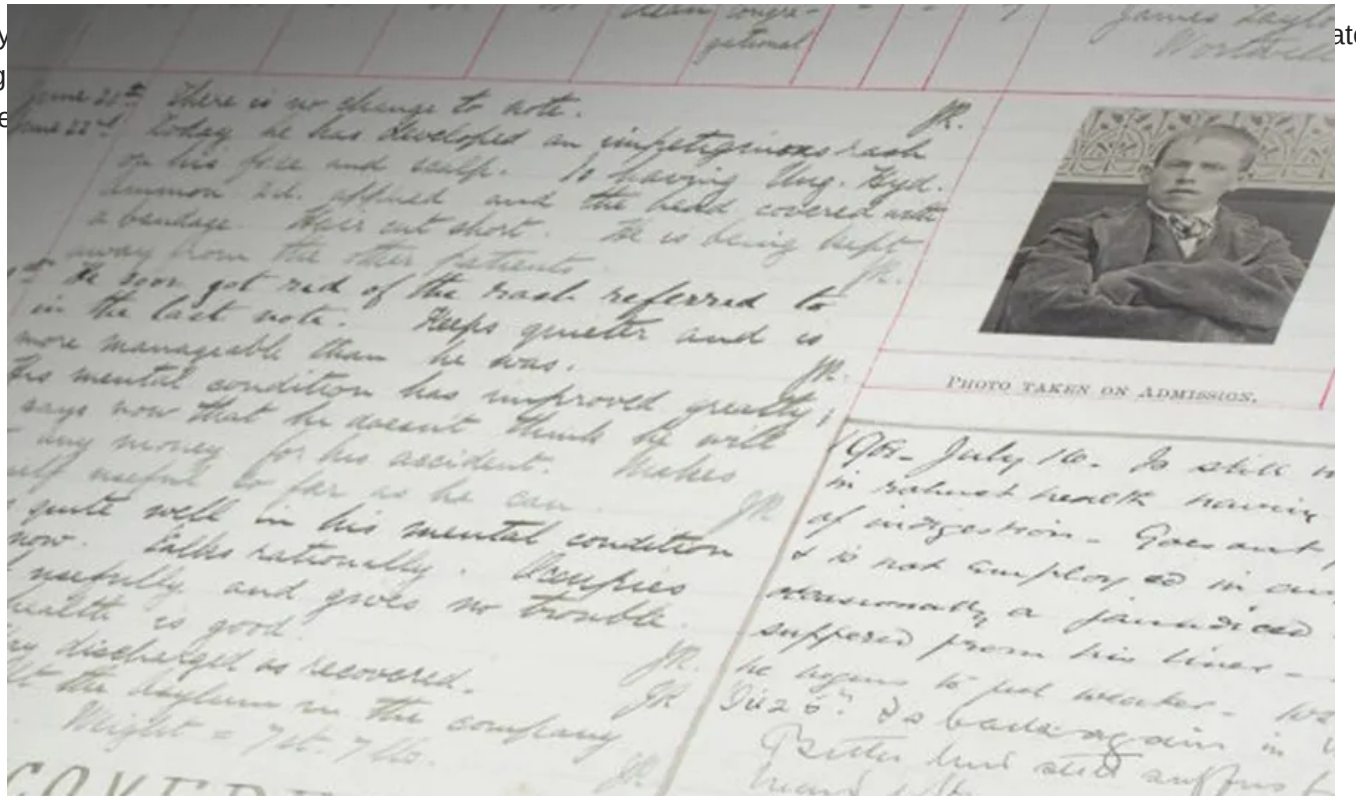
Over 10 years, we've awarded more than £410,000 to grow the project from a local initiative into what is now a UK-wide hub sharing its knowledge and approach with other archive services.

How Change Minds works

Project participants use historical archives to research the lives of patients from former psychiatric hospitals, developing creative responses to their stories and gaining a deeper understanding of their own experiences along the way.

Participants often develop an emotional connection to their case study, which is carefully selected to reflect recovery and hope, helping them view their own mental health more positively.

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The project helped to bring participants together and form friendships.

One project explored the work and patients of Dr Hills, medical superintendent of Norfolk County Asylum in the 1880s, who understood that mental health wasn't helped by hospitals alone. He provided opportunities for patients to volunteer on farms and visit funfairs. Participants created an anthology casebook and film sharing their emotional responses to the archival materials and Dr Hills' work.

Measuring impact on wellbeing

Evaluation has been central to Change Minds from the start, and the feedback has been positive. Participants valued learning about the history of mental health, meeting others and exploring creativity. Many of them described personal growth, increased confidence and new skills.

One participant from Lancashire said: "On a personal note, the experience allows one to see that there is a life worth living, no matter what you may be experiencing here and now, there is hope, there is a future and even though it may not feel like it right now, you are far more than the diagnosis you have been given, you are a person, a life, unique, special and worth the effort you may not think you deserve. I was deeply impacted by this course."

Scaling up through a hub model

As interest grew, the team developed the Change Minds hub to help other organisations deliver their own projects. Each new partnership between an archive service and a local mental health provider is supported by The Restoration Trust

and Norfolk Record Office's years of expertise.

The hub website provides step-by-step guides covering:

- **Initiation phase**: editable leaflets, evaluation frameworks, training and meeting templates
- **Research workshops**: How to prepare, structure a session and choose research subjects with positive outcomes. This is accompanied by materials for each workshop, such as videos.
- **Creative phase**: options for delivery, documents for commissioning creative practitioners and art form choices
- **Celebration session**: an event where participants can share work with family and friends

During the project, the hub supported six projects working with 58 participants, including a partnership between Bristol Archives and Rethink Mental Illness. Since then, more projects have run in England and Wales. Anyone interested in running a Change Minds project can find out more on the Change Minds website.

Running a wellbeing project?

If you're thinking of running a project prioritising participant wellbeing, look at our wellbeing guidance or get inspired by other projects using heritage to promote positive mental health.



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Retired professional football goalkeeper Trevor Swinburne previously played for Sunderland. Credit: Foundation of Light.



tage-based learning

Reimagine, Remake, Replay is a Kick the Dust programme that ran in Northern Ireland.



ellbeing during heritage projects

Five ways museums can improve mental health and wellbeing