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A Global Majority Spotlight on Creative Mental Health in Greater Manchester: Evaluation Report Executive Summary



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Myriad is part of the Greater Manchester Creative Health Place Partnership. Jointly commissioned by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care, and supported by Baring Foundation, the project was managed by Company Chameleon and co-designed and delivered by a consortium of cultural and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations including Afrocats, Music Action International, Community Arts North West, Factory International, 42nd Street, and Caribbean & African Health Network.

Myriad brought together creative practitioners, cultural organisations, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations, grassroots groups and mental health professionals to develop and train global majority practitioners and to co-create and deliver culturally competent, emotionally safe, non-clinical forms of support for people experiencing, or at risk of, mental distress.

The project began with the recognition that recovery and connection often happen outside clinical settings, and that creativity can provide powerful routes to expression, affirmation, and belonging.



This is an independent evaluation report prepared for Greater Manchester Combined Authority and NHS Greater Manchester by Local Creative Project Ltd.
<https://www.wearelocal.org.uk/>

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About Myriad

Myriad was a two-year creative health initiative exploring how creative, community-led practice could offer mental health and wellbeing support to global majority communities in Greater Manchester. The project aimed to address systemic inequalities and to develop a creative-based, culturally competent offer for global majority* communities who often face barriers to accessing mental health services and support.

Greater Manchester is home to 2.9 million people and is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in England.

Nearly one in four people in GM experience a mental health or wellbeing issue, yet the access to, experience of, and outcomes from mental health services for many minority ethnic communities are simply not good enough. Barriers to getting the right help and support at the right time include; not knowing that help is available or where to go to get it; language; financial barriers, such as paying for private counselling and not feeling listened to or understood by healthcare professionals.

**Global majority is a collective term for people of African, Asian, indigenous, Latin American, or mixed-heritage backgrounds, who constitute approximately 85 percent of the global population.*



Key Strands of Myriad Activity

Myriad had two main strands – **1) A practitioner development programme** and **2) A series of test and learn projects**, designed to support global majority communities. Myriad supported a total of 55 practitioners through group supervision, action learning, practitioner training, placements and practitioners employed. It delivered five test and learn projects with five VCFSE organisations in Greater Manchester who, in turn supported over 110 people from global majority backgrounds including refugees and asylum seekers, people living with trauma or social isolation, and young people from LGBTQ+, care-experienced or racially minority backgrounds.



Practitioner Development

Myriad invested in the skills, wellbeing, and professional growth of global majority creative practitioners by:

- Developing and delivering a 6-day training course for emerging practitioners (14 participants)
- Offering an action learning set to leaders and established practitioners (5 participants)
- Providing group supervision (22 participants)
- Creating a peer network and events (over 200 attendees)
- Supporting placements for emerging practitioners with voluntary and community partners (5 participants)

A key outcome of the programme was the creation of the **Myriad Core Competency Framework** – a shared foundation for developing, recognising, and sustaining high-quality, culturally competent, creative practice. It identifies the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed by creative practitioners working in mental health contexts with global majority communities and provides a clear structure for reflection, training, and professional growth.

“It reminded me that caring for myself is part of the work – not separate from it.”
Participant

The Framework serves multiple functions:

- **For practitioners:** a tool for reflection, self-assessment, and identifying learning priorities.
- **For trainers and educators:** a guide to designing inclusive and responsive training content.
- **For organisations and commissioners:** a structure for recruitment, quality assurance, and workforce development.
- **More broadly:** a shared reference point that strengthens understanding of culturally competent creative practice and practitioner wellbeing.

It supports both new and established practitioners to evaluate their readiness to work in mental health contexts and to identify training or supervision needs. It also enables leaders to assess workforce capacity and address skills gaps.

Myriad’s practitioner support activity combined training, reflection and peer learning and has contributed to a more resilient and confident mental health workforce which is more representative of the communities it serves.

Step change impact was also evident: practitioners articulated their purpose with clarity, worked more safely, and collaborated more effectively.

Test and Learn Projects

Myriad funded five test and learn projects to develop partnerships with global majority led or focussed VCFSE organisations to explore new models of emotionally safe, culturally grounded creative support that could complement or bridge gaps in statutory provision. Each project was co-designed and led by global majority practitioners and rooted in lived experience.

Over 110 people from global majority backgrounds participated across the five projects.

Participants included refugees and asylum seekers, people living with trauma or social isolation, and young people from LGBTQ+, care-experienced or racially minority backgrounds.

Each project was built on choice, trust, and relationships and co-designed in exploratory workshops. Sessions often included shared food, prayer breaks, and flexibility for childcare - practical expressions of care and support.



Project	Delivery lead and partners	Artform / method	Participants	Highlights
Ephrata Church Community	Afrocats with Ephrata Church Community	African dance & mindfulness	Women and men from African and French-speaking refugee communities	Reduced stress and pain; 92% “feel more like myself again.”
Greater Manchester Youth Network & Music Action International	GMYN + Contact Theatre + MAI	Songwriting, beat-making and performance	Young asylum-seeking women (15–19)	Confidence up; peer bonding up; language learning through music.
Talk Changes	Independent facilitator collective	Reflective writing and zine making	Global majority women with lived experience of trauma	83% “better able to manage emotions”; safe peer space.
Portraits of Recovery (PORe)	PORe + Manchester Museum + Devine Southgate Smith	Object based storytelling and collage	Black women in recovery (30–55)	89% “more connected to who I am”; renewed pride and identity.
42nd Street	42nd Street + artist Chanje Kunda	Visual art and installation	LGBTQ+ and global majority young people (16–25)	93% up confidence; permanent artwork legacy in the building.

Key Learning from Myriad

1. Culturally competent creative health practice improves wellbeing

Participants across all areas of activity reported measurable gains in mental wellbeing, confidence, and social connection. Creative expression provided safe, culturally relevant ways to process emotion and rebuild identity.

● “We sang in our own languages... and suddenly we belonged.”

2. Practitioner wellbeing is integral to high quality delivery

Supervision, action learning and training gave practitioners time to reflect, build emotional resilience and strengthen facilitation skills. This investment directly enhanced the safety and quality of community delivery.

● “For the first time in my life, I’m learning to take care of myself.”

3. Culturally competent practice builds trust

When facilitators shared cultural or lived experience with participants, trust formed quickly and engagement deepened. Projects embedded language support, food, and faith sensitive practices to create safety and belonging.

4. Culturally competent creative health practice strengthens local capacity and collaboration

VCFSE organisations reported greater confidence articulating creative health outcomes, improved safeguarding practice, and new partnerships across the region.

Headline Outcomes

Area	Highlights
Community Wellbeing	81% of community participants noted improved mood/ reduced stress; 78% noted increased confidence/ self-expression; 74% felt more socially connected
Practitioner Growth	91% of practitioners increased professional confidence; 89% improved knowledge of trauma-informed & culturally competent practice; 94% felt more supported as part of a practitioner community.
Organisational Learning	10+ new/deepened partnerships across VCFSE organisations, cultural institutions, youth & mental health services, grassroots/community groups, and creative practitioners; 92% stronger understanding of creative health; trauma informed methods adopted across partners.
Sector Influence	<p>Built a shared evaluation and reflective practice approach across five programme strands, establishing a practice library that underpins the published Myriad Online Resource.</p> <p>Models/tools for the Myriad Online resource (2025), shared regionally.</p> <p>Co-designed, tested and published a Core Competency Framework for practitioners and organisations supporting global majority communities through creative practice.</p>



Headline Recommendations and Next Steps

Learning from Myriad should inform future policy, commissioning, and practice. We make the following recommendations:

- Invest in community-led culturally competent creative health delivery, particularly within global majority communities.
- Sustain practitioner support structures such as supervision and reflective learning to maintain quality and prevent burnout.
- Embed cultural competence within commissioning frameworks.
- Strengthen evaluation capacity across the sector using accessible, trauma-aware tools.
- Develop a sustainable practice network to share learning and peer support beyond the programme.

These recommendations are intended for commissioners, statutory and VCFSE mental health organisations, NHS trusts, local and combined authorities, funders, cultural and creative organisations - all those with an interest in ensuring that mental health support is equitable, sustainable, and grounded in lived experience.



Legacy

A key legacy of the Myriad programme is the creation of the Myriad Core Competency Framework - a shared foundation for developing, recognising, and sustaining high-quality, culturally competent, creative practice. It identifies the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed by creative practitioners working in mental health contexts with global majority communities and provides a clear structure for reflection, training, and professional growth.

The Framework responds to a recognised sector gap: the need for a consistent, culturally competent approach to professional standards in creative health practice. It offers a common language for practitioners, employers and commissioners, bridging creative, community and clinical contexts and supporting the professionalisation of the field.

Myriad's greatest achievement lies in proving that when practitioners are supported, communities thrive. It has created models of trauma-informed, culturally safe practice that can support future commissioning, policy, and training.

“People came for the art but stayed for the belonging - that’s where the real healing happened.”

Participant reflection, Ephrata Dance for Wellbeing

Further Information about all Myriad activity, including the full evaluation report, training resources and a downloadable copy of the Myriad Core Competency Framework are available at:
myriadproject.co.uk