

Project Proposal Application

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS			
Proposed Project Title:	Exploring the representation of peoples' experiences of living with MBS (weight-loss surgery) through creative practice		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	This proposed CDA aims to investigate peoples' experiences of living with MBS through creative practice to support and improve the health and wellbeing of those who live with bodies altered by surgery. Through a collaborative creative lens, it aims to contribute to the development of a positive understanding of those who have undergone MBS, towards challenging societal judgement and stigma. Collaborative research and co-constructed ways of working aim to support those living with MBS and develop new knowledge within this space.		
Host University:	University of Sunderland		
Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, Bariatric Surgical Unit, Kayll Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 7TP			
2. European Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ECPO)			
Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	Mr Kamal Mahawar (STSFT)	Email:	
Name:	Mr James Fullan (ECPO)	Email:	
Primary AHRC Subject Area: <i>Select one subject area from the list here. Please do <u>not</u> add or amend subjects, as there will not be a corresponding Subject Area Review Panel to assess your nomination.</i>	Applied Arts: History, Theory and Practice		
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why:

*(Maximum 100 words. Please note that your application will be assessed by the relevant **primary AHRC subject area review panel**. However, in this space you should indicate which other subject areas your proposal covers and how your methodology is genuinely interdisciplinary.)*

SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:

(Maximum 750 words)

This proposed CDA aims to investigate peoples' experiences of living with metabolic and bariatric surgery (MBS) through creative practice to support and improve the health and wellbeing of those who live with bodies altered by surgery. Through a collaborative creative lens, it aims to contribute to the development of a positive understanding of those who have undergone MBS, towards challenging societal judgement and stigma. Collaborative research and ways of working aim to support those living with MBS and develop new knowledge within this space. The use of arts within a health and wellbeing context is well documented with studies showing benefits in terms of stress reduction (Elkins –Abuhoff, 2008) the acquisition of skills (White, 2006) and improved confidence (Kramer, 2000). Creative practice arts based methods can be effective in exploring perceptions and embodied experiences of MBS ((Farnesi, 2020), however, art based interventions (Bokoch, Hass-Cohen, Fowler, Liu, 2023) within this area are somewhat limited. This project aims to contribute new understanding derived specifically from a creative practitioner research perspective through artmaking within a collaborative context and aims to develop and inform potential health and wellbeing approaches.

MBS is an intervention for treatment of obesity and obesity-related illnesses such as Type 2 Diabetes and hypertension. In the UK, it is positioned at the top of a tiered system, offered after methods such as diet, exercise, medication and psychological therapies have been attempted but not been successful (National Institute of Health and Care Excellence, 2014). Despite 30% of the UK adult population living with obesity, it is a stigmatised condition, with stigma adversely impacting on peoples' quality of life. The impact of stigma on a person's life may be as harmful as the direct effects of the disease (Puhl and Heuer, 2010). The improvement of quality of life including reduction of stigma is a main driver for people to seek MBS (Phelan et al,2018), however MBS is a contested intervention, with negative societal judgements towards those who have undergone MBS (Graham et al, 2017). There are high levels of non-disclosure in people who undergo MBS for fear of judgement of the method of weight-loss (Sutton, 2010,Coulman et al 2017, making it difficult to challenge judgement and stigma to increase societal understanding and acceptance of MBS, and the experiences of people who live with bodies altered by surgery.

In collaboration with STSFT, ECPO this project will explore the role that creative practice can play in exploring peoples' experiences of living with MBS to challenge societal judgement and stigma and thus may improve mental wellbeing. Through project partners, we will be able to provide wider support to facilitate recruitment, develop student's knowledge and build impact from the outset, and to develop potential for post-doctoral work for the student.

Research questions:

1. How might creative practice be used to explore experiences of living with MBS to improve wellbeing and challenge societal judgment and stigma? (patient perspective)
2. How might creative practice approaches engender peoples' experiences of living with MBS?
3. In what ways can creative practice engagement support the development of a positive societal understanding and acceptance of people who live with bodies altered by surgery? (societal perspective)

This research is likely to employ a multi-methods approach which positions creative practice as central. Experiential and reflective (Schön) art-based methods (Gray and Malins) will be used and a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) employed within the context of co-construction, this is supported by a rhizomatic analysis (Hickey-Moody, 2015) to support the collaborative nature of this research project. Using constructivist grounded theory will allow exploration of and support for peoples' living with MBS. Exploration of embodied experience will employ methods that support lived experience of the body (Weibe and Snowber, 2011) (Gatens, 1996) supported by a phenomenological framework (Husserl, 1970) (Merleau-Ponty 1968) that integrates the felt and lived body.

The outcomes of the research will include a body of artwork and creative practice models/methods developed through co-creation, together with artwork and a thesis developed by the researcher. Contributions will be made to the development of sustainable models that contribute new knowledge and potential to feed into the development of health and wellbeing practices towards the improvement of current bariatric service provision. This will be disseminated in the UK (STSFT), and throughout Europe (ECPO).

This PhD would build on and consolidate collaborative work, led by creative industries and supported by the Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute using participatory approaches for creative practice with stigmatized populations.

Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:

(Maximum 200 words)

The student will have workshop access in the school of art and design, which provides a comprehensive set of innovative facilities that are available to the student alongside materials that support the creative practice research. The student will also be integrated into the *Health and Care Workforce Interdisciplinary Research Network*, where the Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute will provide resources and support the health and wellbeing element of the research, including the costs of any related training. Whilst the project is based in Sunderland and the North East, if needed, funds for any additional national travel will be sought from NBCDTP grants. Where appropriate the student can apply for internal funds at the UofS, for example to cover conference attendance.

Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:

(Maximum 200 words)

The student will have monthly academic supervisions (Livingstone/Graham) and full supervisor/advisor (Mahawar and Fullan) meetings every three months. Deadlines for the project will be set at the start and the student's progress will be monitored through the regular meetings, formal academic reviews (annual monitoring and progression) and at agreed points within the research. The supervisory team will be responsible for monitoring the research at PhD level and together with STSFT and ECPO will provide training, support and professional development required to complete the research project. The student will engage with the Patient Support Group at STSFT and also with ECPO a minimum of three times a year, so the project has potential to inform patient care and support from the onset. The supervisory team will use an online system (e- vision) to record meetings, set research goals and outcomes and support communication and planning.

What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?

(Maximum 200 words)

The student will gain experience by working with people living with MBS, patient support charities and with the professionals who provide care for them. The student will gain knowledge and professional insight with regards to living with MBS (e.g. the impact of weight stigma, the judgements of MBS and how people deal with these on a day to day basis). The student will also gain insights into clinical bariatric surgical care, engaging with the bariatric multidisciplinary team at STSFT (e/g/ surgeons, nurses etc) to understand barriers and enablers to weight management and wellbeing and explore how creative practice can be developed as an adjuvant to support care. They will develop practical experience of socially engaged practices within a specific art/health and wellbeing context that will support professional management and engender transferable skills that will contribute to the enhancement of career opportunities and employability post doctorate. The student will gain experience of developing sustainable models of practice that emerge from the collaboration and the authentic position in which to research and develop creative practice and aligned methodologies which have potential to be translated across both the UK and throughout Europe with ECPO.

STSFT has one of the highest volume centres of MBS in the UK, and will benefit from the project through development of innovative and creative approaches to better understand patients living with MBS extending the breadth of care beyond clinical practice.

ECPO will benefit, as this presents a new and innovative opportunity to engage with people living with MBS, which may increase both membership and greater understanding of living with MBS, both of which are aims of the organisation.

State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:

*(Maximum 200 words. A financial contribution is **not** a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that **non-HE partners based overseas** will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)*

STSFT will not provide financial contributions, but will support with in kind contributions, without which the project would not be feasible. Through Mahawar and Graham via STSFT, access will be provided to patients and populations living with MBS, so the student will gain insights into the lived experience of those who undergo bariatric procedures. Graham holds an embedded research position within the Trust, and works closely with Mahawar. They will work closely with the Research Office at STSFT to support the student through all governance procedures, mentor the student through NHS research ethical processes, public and patient involvement in research.

ECPO, through Fullan, will provide in-kind support for issues related to stigma and patient engagement, support recruitment and will advise on study design and dissemination, so the patient voice is embedded throughout.

Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:

(Maximum 200 words)

The student will attend patient support group meetings and spend time with staff working in the bariatric multidisciplinary team at STSFT, to understand the bariatric surgical journey and pathways of care. In the first few months the student will familiarise themselves with NHS processes to carrying out research activity, this will be supported by ethics training and approval provided by the University of Sunderland and STSFT. During the studentship further training into working with patient groups and charities will be provided by ECPO, as well as opportunities for the student to be involved in ECPO patient-focused activities with members of ECPO. The student will develop practice in the studio and will test and develop the research through co-constructed creative practice activity with patients.

This research will contribute to both arts practice and health and wellbeing fields and as such will disseminate through publication and platforms aligned to bariatric surgical patient networks and professional societies so professionals can learn and understand the value of creative practice as adjuvant to mainstream patient care. The student's expertise and completed research will inform and contribute to future developments for bariatric surgical care support pathways and demonstrate the significance of applied art materials and creative practice within this context.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Professor Andrew Livingstone
School or Department:	Creative Industries
Email Address:	_____
Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor:	Professor Yitka Graham
School or Department:	Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute (Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing)
Email Address:	

Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Kamal Mahawar
Organisation/Institution:	South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Email Address:	
Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation:	Mr James Fullan
Organisation/Institution:	European Coalition for People Living with Obesity
Email Address:	
Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any:	
Name:	
Organisation/Institution:	
Email Address:	
Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate: <i>(Maximum 500 words)</i>	
<p>This research will be supported across the subjects of applied arts/creative practice and health and wellbeing sciences – the supervision team are well positioned to support and guide the research development and consolidation.</p> <p>Professor Andrew Livingstone is leader of CARCuos (Ceramic Arts Research Centre University of Sunderland), with 20 successful PhD completions. He has completed research on both practical and theoretical aspects of ceramics and wider creative practice arts discourse including sculpture and conceptual application. His publications <i>The Ceramics Reader</i> (Bloomsbury) and <i>Beyond Disciplinarity: Historical Evolutions of Research Epistemology</i> (Routledge) will help support contextual development and understanding in terms of arts criticality and research methodologies. His expertise and professional experience of contemporary creative practice will help guide practical development and contextualization. Andrew has worked within socially engaged practices over twenty years. He has supervision expertise in creative practice and health and wellbeing engagement including completed PhD research (McHugh, 2015, AHRC) (Grant, 2017) and current research into creative practice - addiction recovery and wellbeing (Bagi, AHRC), neurodiversity and body (Lucas, AHRC) and veteran health and wellbeing (Watson, AHRC).</p> <p>Professor Yitka Graham is the Head of the Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute, with 4 successful PhD completions. She has led on participatory arts and wellbeing projects within obesity, MBS and veteran populations. She has expertise in qualitative methodology, participatory action research methods, health inequalities, public and patient involvement in research and has subject expertise in the stigma of obesity, hidden illnesses, social prescribing and patient and advocacy for greater understanding of stigmatised health conditions. She has over 100 peer-reviewed publications. Graham is co-supervisor for Lucas, Watson and Hamilton, all CDA students. Graham works collaboratively with ECPO on a range of advocacy projects.</p> <p>Kamal Mahawar is a research-active Consultant Bariatric Surgeon. Mahawar has worked with Graham since 2013 on patient-focused obesity and bariatric surgical research projects, including two PhD supervisions at the University of Sunderland. Together they have produced innovative research which has transcended traditional clinical practice and influenced bariatric follow up care and involved patients, ensuring that the sociocultural aspects of life post-surgery are explored and stigma is addressed. Sunderland is one of the highest volume bariatric surgical centres in the UK, and the population it serves suffers from higher than national average levels of socioeconomic deprivation and obesity. Through Mahawar, the unit has built up a strong relationship with its patient support group, who are supportive of this research project, with many patients offering to be involved with this project and support the student if successful.</p>	

Mr James Fullan is a Member of the European Coalition for People Living with Obesity, a charity committed to supporting people living with obesity. As a person with lived experience, Mr Fullan brings a lay perspective and will advise on issues relating to the stigma of obesity and MBS, study design and dissemination, and working with people living with obesity and MBS.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:

(Maximum 500 words)

The student will be affiliated to both the HMNCRI and Creative Industries research environments, joining a vibrant community of research students, staff, research associates and international visitors. In addition to wider university doctoral activity and support the student will form part of postgraduate art and design research which provides subject-specific research training with monthly sessions that cover practice-led methodologies and ethics.

The student will be part of creative practice research at the University of Sunderland. The research area aims to develop, support, and disseminate new knowledge and scholarly activity whilst also providing a platform for research and discussion aligned to creative practice and wider arts discourse. The arts and creative industries area provide resources that include gallery spaces for exhibition and research project development, a reading room for concentrated study including access to completed PhD's and art exhibition/catalogue and an environment to develop seminars and symposia aligned to the research. The arts and H&W areas host resident artists, guest speakers and symposia which will provide the student with a rich resource.

The disciplines of health and creative practice converge with their Health and Care Workforce Interdisciplinary Research Network, offering a space for creative thinking, training education and interaction. The Network has a core theme of Arts and Wellbeing, having successfully delivered projects in collaboration with the National Glass Centre involving marginalized populations in the local community. The student will be aligned to this Interdisciplinary Network which supports opportunities to situate the research across the two Faculties to maximise the resources available through the University. This Interdisciplinary Research Network has a multidisciplinary, diverse membership which offers opportunities to network with other research students from different backgrounds and staff to provide further experiential learning which will support the student through their studies.

The Helen McArdle Nursing and Care Research Institute oversees the governance of the Health and Care Workforce IRN and is home to the Sunderland Social Prescribing Research and Knowledge Exchange Centre, leading on the development of a robust evidence base for non-clinical wellbeing interventions to inform policy and practice. Central to the Institute's strategy is the development of research students, providing training and mentoring to support career aspirations and experiential learning.

HMNCRI and the bariatric surgical unit at STSFT have worked closely together since the Institute opened in 2019 and previously through Graham and Mahawar. Both organisations have a reputation for patient-centred research and practice in MBS care.