



THE CREATIVE VILLAGE

A partnership between Creative Crawley AudioActive and Theatre Centre Apr '24 to Sept '25



It doesn't have to be perfect to be applauded

Young people report a 34% increase in self-esteem and a 20% increase in wellbeing through taking part in this project

Skills Exchange cohort, West Green Studios, June 2025

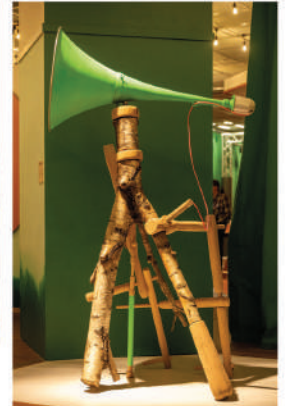
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You're making a revolution, recreating third spaces in Crawley and making art experiences accessible

- Audience member, Unit 79/80 County Mall
Super Normal Extra Natural by Requardt&Rosenberg in County Mall. Image by Ian Greenland.

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The Surgeon by Abdollah Nafisi, Unit 79/80 County Mall Image by Ian Greenland.

20 partners in Crawley create jobs for over 100 artists and cultural workers as nearly 3000 local residents get involved

The Creative Village was a Place Partnership Project funded by Arts Council England, UK Government via Crawley Borough Council, Sussex Community Foundation and Gatwick Airport Ltd.

It was led by Creative Crawley in partnership with AudioActive (a regional youth music company) and Theatre Centre (a national touring theatre company). Other partners included Crawley College, West Sussex Library Service, County Mall Shopping Centre, The Hawth, Pop Up Culture Crawley, DanceHub CIC, and three secondary and four primary schools in Crawley.

A local resident and member of the Skills Exchange cohort says, "It is inspiring and a breath of fresh air to Crawley. The vibes already feel different walking through town".

“ Crawley is JUMPING. I feel so inspired to come back at a later date says an audience member for Chris Thorpe's 'Talking About the Fire'



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Talking About The Fire by Chris Thorpe Unit 79/80 County Mall, image by Simon Edwards

“ We felt so welcomed by the Creative Crawley team

- Unit 79/80 audience member

“ I didn't realise that if you wanted to be an actor you still had to do maths to add up what you get paid

- Year 6 Bewbush Primary Student

“ It's an experience for life

- Manuela, Skills Exchange Cohort

“ Maple and Mosely are just like Gilbert and George but sexier

- Unit 79/80 audience member

Maple & Mosely, Breakfast Scene, image by Leyla Güler



Skills Exchange Programme

From July 2024 to June 2025, 10 young people aged 16 - 29 years old were part of the Skills Exchange Programme which aimed to **open up access to the creative industries** for those they may not otherwise have routes in by working side by side with creative professionals.

They took part in **monthly training sessions and three, week long residencies** in the immersive spaces at Crawley

College, the studio at The Hawth and at the West Green Studios. The monthly sessions were open to all Crawley residents as well as the cohort. We also ran a series of **creative career workshops** and assemblies with students and teachers from local schools. Some of the cohort also received **1:1 mentoring** from professional creatives. The programme was intentionally interdisciplinary, working with

practitioners who take an experimental approach to their creative practice. It encouraged participants to step out of their comfort zone and try new things.



Producer Gathering speakers, West Green Studios. Image by Ian Greenland



Clod Ensemble's Archiving workshop, West Green Studios

The programme: creating an environment for risk-taking and resilience

The monthly sessions



Sophie Eustace budgeting workshop

Fundraising with Jamie Wyld (Dreamy Place) and Sam Eden-Green (Arts Council England)

The BIPC at Crawley Library with Tim Stanton

Telling Your Story with Matt Turner (Creative Pod)

Producer Gathering in partnership with Marlborough Productions

Using Archives in Creative Practice with Clod Ensemble

Creative Health in partnership with The Hera Project

Introduction to Evaluation with Flying Geese

Using the numbers to make a project happen with Sophie Eustace (Creative Crawley)

Inclusive Facilitation with Access All Areas



Creative Health workshop with The Hera Project, Charis Centre

The week long intensives

October '24: Immersive image and sound with BrightBlack, Helen Anahita Wilson, Maggie Slabon at Crawley College

January '25: Theatre making and asking big questions with Rob Watt, Theatre Centre, Chris Thorpe and Eleanor Field at The Hawth Theatre.

April '25: Creating your own work at West Green Studios with Sarah Maple, Meg Mosley and the Creative Crawley team



Projection Mapping workshop with Maggie Slabon, Crawley College.

Workshops with local school children

We ran five workshops and one assembly in partnership with Rob Watt and Eleanor Manners with year 6 - 9 students from Thomas Bennett Community College, Ifield Community College and Seymour, Waterfield, Bewbush and Broadfield Primary Schools. The workshops explored different creative careers with the students and offered CPD opportunities for the teachers. We engaged 468 young people and their teachers.

“WOW thank you so much for delivering the best Alumni talk ever!!! The feedback was 100% positive with some students asking for it to be a bit longer.”

- Careers Advisor, Ifield Community College

“Being mentored by Abdollah Nafisi was truly a transformative experience.”

Very inspiring. Thank you so much. - James, Skills Exchange cohort



The cohort making their final pieces, West Green Studios.

“It was an outrageously fun, bizarre, nurturing and creative experience” - James, Skills Exchange cohort

“One of the most interesting weeks of my life so far, very grateful & inspired”
- Grace, Skills Exchange cohort

“The school is buzzing with talks of different career options, and this wouldn't be possible without the engagement of employers like you”

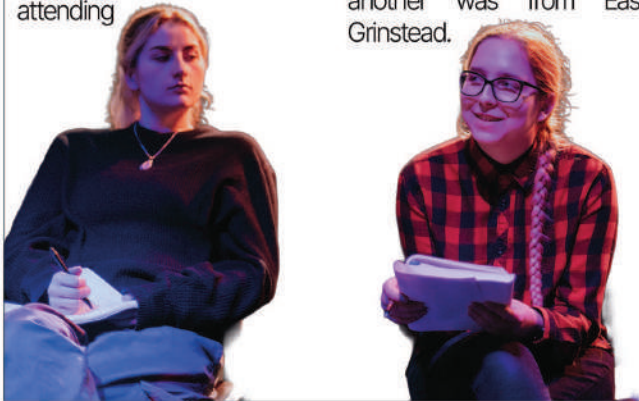
- Teacher, Ifield Community College

The Cohort

The cohort comprised 10 young people aged between 16 and 27 years, drawn primarily from Crawley and its surrounding areas.

Crawley neighbourhoods represented were Bewbush (3 cohort members), Tilgate (3 cohort members) with 2 attending

The Gatwick School, 1 cohort member from Gossops Green, and another member from Forge Wood. 2 participants came from further afield: 1 cohort member attended Thomas Bennett Community College and lives in Reigate, and another was from East Grinstead.



In terms of ethnicity, the cohort included 5 White British participants (50%), two Latin participants (20%), 1 British/Slavic participant (10%), 1 Mixed Heritage participant (10%), and 1 Black/Other participant (10%). Gender identity was varied, with 5 female participants (50%), 4 male participants (40%), and 1 non-binary participant (10%). The group reflected a range of lived experiences: 2 individuals were neurodivergent (including ADHD) and one was a wheelchair user.

“**The accessibility provided throughout the program has been exceptional, fully accommodating my disability needs and fostering a sense of inclusion.**

I felt well-supported and able to engage comfortably in all activities.

- Isaias, Skills Exchange cohort

“**I'm surprised by my own capabilities**

- Luiba, Skills Exchange cohort

Pictured: Grace and Izzy, Skills Exchange cohort, The Hawth, Jan 2025. Image by Kaleido Shoots

What they learnt

Meeting professional artists brought the cohort practical guidance and valuable insight into what it really means to work in the creative sector. Our evaluators (RMR) observed the following positive impacts on the cohort:



Cohort at the Access All Areas workshop, Unit 79/80 County Mall. Image by Charlotte White

Developing a community

Building confidence

Developing skills (and trying something new)

Learning from professional artists

Thinking (and talking about themselves) as artists

They identified three types of learning here:

Reflecting on and developing their creative practice

Finding a balance between life and creative practice

Insights into life as a professional artist

And in all these areas, The Creative Village provided an opportunity for young artists to have vital conversations that are so rarely had, helping them gain a fast pass into understanding elements that are crucial to becoming a creative professional.

“**The confidence of the young people and how they described their own professional creativity — it was clear [the Creative Crawley team] had really bolstered their confidence.**

- Skills Exchange Programme Partner



The Cohort and Resident Artists, West Green Studios



Participants at Producer Gathering, West Green Studios, Image by Ian Greenland

“ It doesn't have to be perfect to be applauded. ”

– Most impactful statement, agreed by all the cohort during the Most Significant Change* reflection session

As part of the reflection session, the cohort developed a set of learnings that they felt was essential to take their career forward as artists:

DEVELOPING YOUR MINDSET, SKILLS AND CREATIVE PRACTICE

Being and growing with people in completely different stages of their lives

Inspiration and improvement in my craft

Evolving your creative career

Having the ability to articulate my ideas in front of others

Working with a mentor

Thinking ahead and thinking strategically

TAKING RISKS

Don't be afraid to dive into things

Trying new things and being flexible

Trusting my own ideas

Letting go of perfectionism and the fear of making mistakes in my work

Pushing out of your comfort zone

IMPACT ON OTHERS

Think of your target audience and the effect it will cause

Your practice impacts others

All of us together in the space was so impactful on our development

- All of us together in the space was so impactful on our development

- We were affected by each other and by the creative professionals that we worked with

- Learning to collaborate and learn from others

ENVIRONMENT

- Realising the importance of an inspiring environment and letting it lead you

- Being inspired by the world around you and being present in it

CONFIDENCE

Gaining confidence through trying

Having confidence in myself

A huge change in confidence from Sept to June

Without confidence you can't grow as an artist

*Most Significant Change is a storytelling approach to gathering and exploring change outcomes that was developed in the context of public health and international development (Davies and Dart, 2005).



Chris Thorpe and the Skills Exchange cohort, The Hawth, Jan 2025. Image by Kaleido Shoots

33% increase in confidence

20% increase in wellbeing

34% increase in self-esteem

40% of the cohort said “learning new things” was what they enjoyed the most

50% recognised the connection between sharing their ideas and increased confidence

These reflections demonstrate that the programme effectively captured the right balance.

It created an environment for risk-taking and resilience, with cohort reporting increased confidence and greater willingness to share imperfect work alongside measurable improvements in wellbeing and self-esteem, demonstrating a sense of safety.

“ We got the best out of each other and learnt from each other’s skills.

Collaboration has brought unusual and unexpected ideas to life.

– Skills Exchange cohort

“ It was so helpful having workshops from different creative professionals, such as Matt Turner, Brightblack and Dizzy, to showcase the variety of options there are for creative work. *– Skills Exchange cohort*



Cohort members at Producer Gathering, West Green Studios. Image by Ian Greenland.