

Creative Crawley Business Plan 2026 - 2029

Crawley's got something to say

***'I can't believe this is happening in Crawley.
It's brilliant.'***

James, audience member at Unit 79/80
County Mall Shopping Centre 2025



CREATIVE
CRAWLEY

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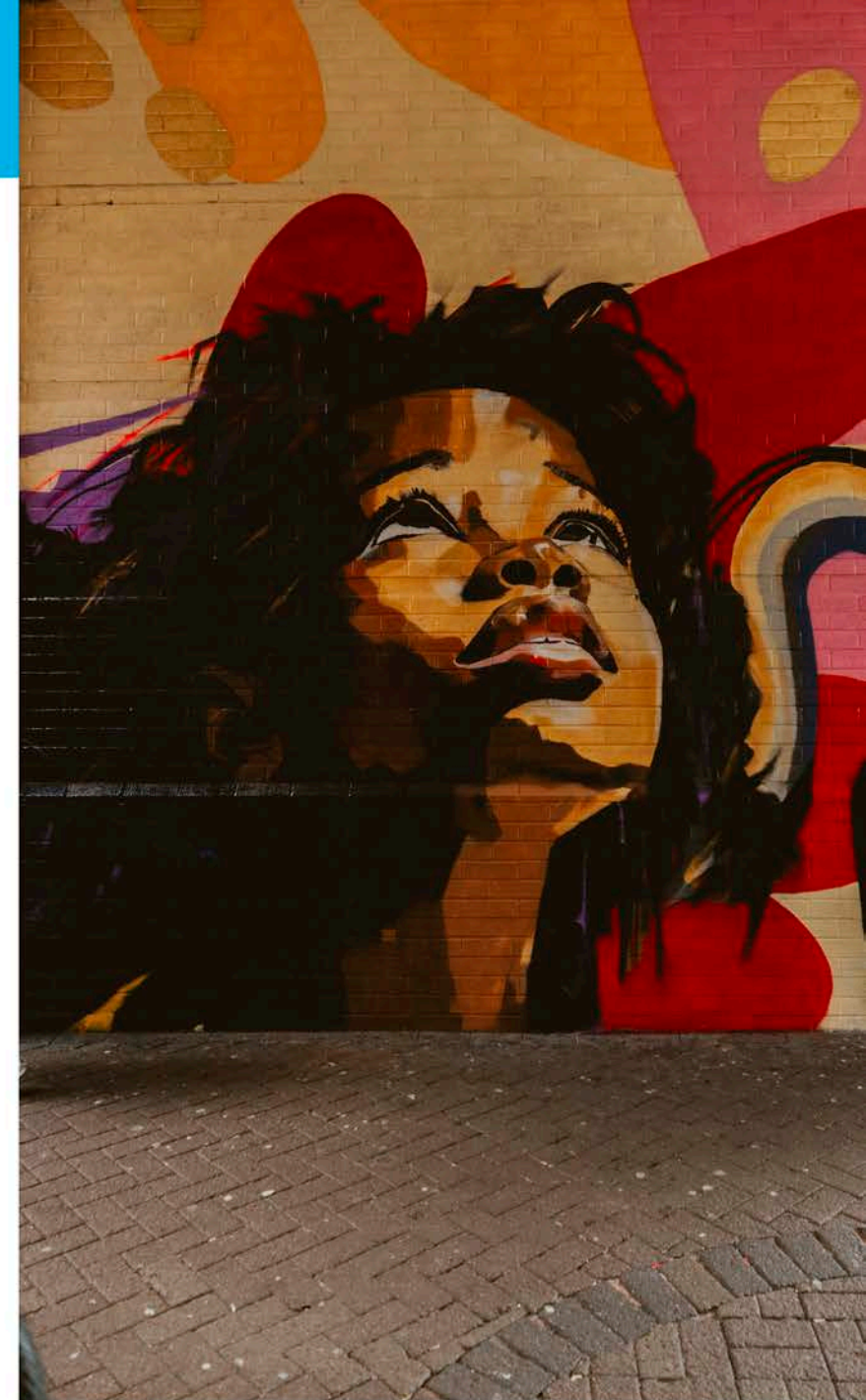
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Gateway to the World by Alec Saunders
County Mall Shopping Centre, 2024
©Rosie Powell

Introduction

Welcome to Creative Crawley. This place is for you. Whether you live, work, study or visit here, this town has creativity to share.

Creative Crawley has grown in response to the urgent need for better access to arts and culture. Crawley is full of voices and possibilities, yet opportunities for high-quality creative experiences remain limited despite our diverse population and brilliant location.

In five years as a charity, we've brought colour and joy through eight public murals, festivals like *Around the Lake* and *Aura's Odyssey*, and two pop-up creative spaces including a 60 seat flexible theatre, recording studio and exhibition hub in the shopping mall. We've hosted shows, workshops, feasts, podcasts and commissioned new artworks — from foraging to films, we've woven creativity into everyday life.

People have told us what they need, and we've listened; offering extraordinary creative experiences in homes, libraries, schools and unexpected places that make people feel better, safer, inspired.

We have fertile soil in which we can grow and look forward with confidence despite the changing weather. We hope you will join us to change Crawley for the better through creativity. Together, we can grow a cultural transformation that is working, but still fragile.

Louise Blackwell (Creative Director) and Lorraine Lecourtois (Chair of Trustees), April 2026



Billie Gold performing in The Posh Club's *High Fashion Special*
Unit 79/80 County Mall Shopping Centre, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

Executive Summary

Our journey to 2029 will see us make quality creativity happen for all in Crawley.

We will:

- Develop and deliver a major arts festival in Crawley in partnership with nationally significant collaborators
- Strive to develop a robust cultural ecology for Crawley
- Successfully deliver Crawley's Creative Playground phase 2
- Transform Creative Crawley's business model to create a secure and flourishing organisation

With two main programme strands;

Everyday Creativity and Cultural Ecology Development

Everyday Creativity is our way of saying creativity belongs to everyone. It's the doodle, the dance-break, the recipe experiment, the thing you make just because it feels good. This strand cheers people on to follow their creative impulses; self-led, self-made and joyfully woven into everyday life.

Cultural Ecology is about growing a place where creativity can bloom wildly. Think skills, jobs, spaces, networks, training, ideas labs and makers and shapers connecting professionally. It's everything that helps culture take root and flourish; including shaping policy so culture sits at the heart of a place where people and communities thrive.

We will:

- Deliver work **grounded in the here and now**, as we focus on **Crawley's neighbourhoods, stories and communities**.
- Look beyond borders and connect with **regional, national and international partners**. Put **care for people and the planet** at the heart of everything we do.
- **Lead with purpose, showing how arts and culture can be a catalyst for civic renewal, economic resilience, and community connection.**

We can't develop the cultural ecology of Crawley without working in partnership and **we know we can't control external forces. We will do what we can and understand where our energy is best spent.**



Audience at *Puppets with Guts*, Stories of Strength Festival
Queens Square, Crawley town centre, 2021
©Jess Hand

Context

People

Creative Crawley exists because of people. It began as Covid-19 hit, when a group came together to celebrate how creativity helped residents cope in 2020/21. Crawley's people are resilient, proud and joyful, and it's a privilege to work alongside them.

Crawley's population grew by 11.2% between 2011 and 2021, reaching an estimated 124,008 in 2024. It remains Sussex's most multicultural town: over one in five residents were born outside the UK and more than 90 languages are spoken. Key communities include Indian, Pakistani, Romanian, Sri Lankan, Chagossian, Polish and Portuguese groups. Yet only 41% of residents feel neighbours pull together, one of the lowest rates nationally. With 21.5% of the population aged 0–15 and 18.8% of children living in low-income households, Crawley is the most deprived district in West Sussex.

Place

Crawley, a new town turning 80 in 2027, spans 17.36 square miles across 14 neighbourhoods, blending green spaces with Brutalist, Medieval and Tudor architecture. The town is changing fast, with regeneration, new infrastructure and investment following the pandemic's exposure of its reliance on Gatwick Airport. While overall employment and income match national averages, several neighbourhoods remain among the 20% most deprived in the UK.



The Place that Does it All by Orakel Workshop
Manor Royal, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

What we will achieve by 2029

1 Develop and deliver a major arts festival in Crawley in partnership with nationally significant collaborators

We will:

Celebrate Crawley people through play by focussing on the town centre and connecting with the neighbourhoods

- Raise the profile of Crawley, connecting communities and supporting local, national and international creative professionals.

Work in partnership with national place-making and design agencies, University of Sussex, West Sussex Records Office, West Sussex Library Service and other nationally recognised partners.

2. Strive to develop a robust cultural ecology for Crawley

We will:

- Create showcasing opportunities for local, national and international creative professionals
- Continue to prototype temporary creative and cultural spaces
- Create learning opportunities and routes into the Creative Industries for local people
- Represent West Sussex creatives at a pan-Sussex level ensuring arts and culture in our area is at the forefront of new regional Strategic Priorities
- Ensure there are opportunities for creative professionals to network and have impact on decisions about the ecology
- Play a leading role in creating a dedicated governance group (Cultural Compact) who embed culture across Crawley's ecology; one of the key recommendations of 'A Town Renewed: A Cultural Framework for Crawley, Sept 2025' by Tom Fleming Consultancy.



Lifted by Mimbire
Broadfield Barton, 2023
@iangreenlandphoto

3. Successful delivery of Crawley's Creative Playground phase 2

We are the Lead Body for this Arts Council England (ACE) funded Creative People and Places (CPP) programme. And this means we will:

- Work with people to deliver a bold, high quality programme that places local residents at the heart of decision making.
- Expand creative opportunities for every Crawley resident, especially those who are not engaged in arts and culture to experience and benefit from it
- Increase local people's aspiration and skills through targeted programme strands (such as Come With Us and Boost)
- Connect communities across the town by making people feel part of something through creativity as an action learning project and use the learning from Creative Playground to inform both our development and the other stakeholders involved.

4. Transform Creative Crawley's business model to create a secure and flourishing organisation

We will explore new partnerships and develop the income mix to ensure we are not 100% reliant on grant income.

We will:

- Strive to secure multi-year funding from Trusts and Foundations like Garfield Weston, Paul Hamlyn and Esmée Fairbairn
- Work with the new Mayoral Authority in Sussex
- Work with the new Local Authority post Local Government Reorganisation
- Develop our partnerships with Higher Education including University of Sussex
- Develop our partnerships with Gatwick Airport Ltd and Manor Royal BID
- Build new partnerships with Crawley town centre businesses
- Develop new cross sector partnerships including sport, leisure, health & wellbeing
- Maximise the income potential of any meanwhile spaces we create



Roll Model by Simple Cypher
Basketball Court at Broadfield Community Centre, 2023
@iangreenlandphoto

Mission and Vision

Mission

Creativity for everyone, everyday in Crawley

Vision

What if arts and culture in Crawley were open to all?

Creativity becomes part of everyday life – people here create, share, and enjoy art as an important part of who they are.

Visitors see Crawley as a lively and welcoming place full of different cultural experiences.

Crawley people feel happier, healthier and safer due to the inspiring experiences that Creative Crawley offers - experiences that spark confidence, imagination, and offer people chances to make their own choices and changes.

Artists and people who work in the creative industries are supported and celebrated.

Crawley is thriving, and communities feel connected. Crawley is a town where arts and culture are for everyone.

What if?



Audience at The Posh Club's *High Fashion Special*
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

Values and Golden Threads

- Bold:** we take risks and are willing to challenge perceptions
- Thoughtful:** we take care and actively listen to the people and world around us
- Committed:** we don't give up easily and are driven by our mission
- Kind:** we treat everyone we encounter with respect and care

Golden Threads

In addition to our values we have Golden Threads that run through everything we do. They are:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

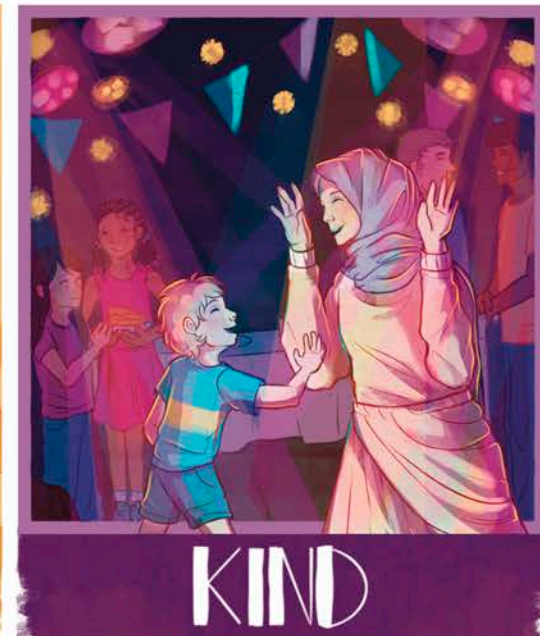
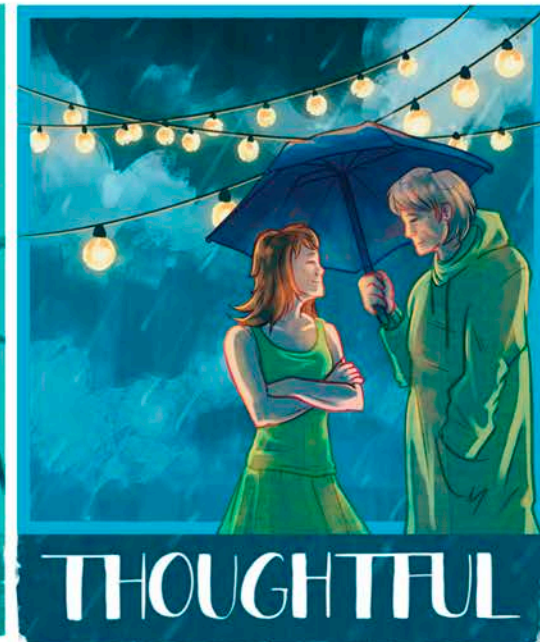
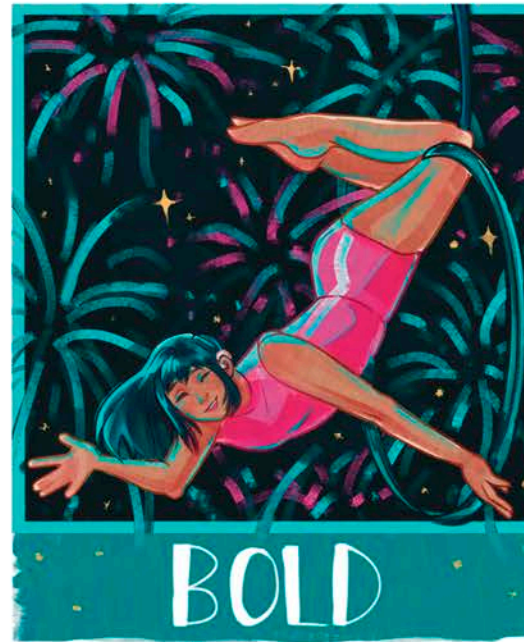
Sustainability

Innovation

Learning

Accessibility

You can read more about these throughout the document.



Illustrations
©Luis McLellan

Golden Thread

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to being an anti-racist organisation, adapting our practices to include easy to ignore communities. We work to ensure they not only participate but help shape culture in Crawley. Our policy and action plan is reviewed quarterly.

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

Isaias, Skills Exchange cohort, June 2025

“To see the different backgrounds of different people that are around and the volume of people and the number of activities. It's a positive thing.”

Around The Lake Festival audience member, July 2024

Audience members at *Future Cargo*
by Requardt&Rosenberg
Memorial Gardens, 2022
@iangreenlandphoto

What we do and why

Creative Crawley brings arts and culture to life for everyone in everyday spaces across Crawley, West Sussex.

At Creative Crawley, we make things with care. And we believe that how something's made - and who gets to be part of the making - matters.

Our work is grounded in rigour and collaboration. Whether it's a pop-up performance, a powerful piece of public art or an informal drop-in session, everything we do is shaped with attention, curiosity and imagination. We take time with the details, because we want what we create to be joyful, thoughtful and welcoming for everyone.

Crawley is a place full of voices, stories, and possibilities. We collaborate with local, national and international people, artists, businesses and organisations to shape cultural experiences that truly resonate - experiences that feel rooted and relevant.

Quality to us doesn't mean fancy. It means we want you to feel something real - connection, curiosity, joy and perhaps something you didn't expect. Like stumbling across a brilliant book or hearing a song that stays with you, we craft experiences with care and intention, designed to linger.

Creative Crawley is always learning. We're curious about how creativity and cultural work can shape communities, make lasting impact and change things for the better. We're on a journey - trying new things, listening more deeply, growing together.

Above all, we believe creativity should feel like belonging. The spaces, the projects, the partnerships are open to all - because Crawley's got something to say.



Audience at Maple & Mosley's *Breakfast Scene*
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2025
@leylagulerphoto

What we do and why

Crawley is a town with huge potential.

It's a place where over 90 languages are spoken with the biggest Business Improvement District in the region, geographically located between London and Brighton with a thriving voluntary sector.

But with some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and higher than average youth population, opportunities to make residents' lives better through arts and culture are not plentiful. The people of Crawley deserve more.

We began in 2021, growing out of an online celebration of creativity during the Covid-19 pandemic called the *Right Here Festival*.

What started as response to a report commissioned by Crawley Borough Council and led by our founder in 2018, which highlighted a lack of a local organisation to champion arts and culture in all forms across the town, low engagement in arts and culture and a lack of cultural spaces, has since evolved into a thriving organisation with a dedicated core team and a turnover of just under £1 million.

“Creative Crawley has made a significant impact on Crawley Town Centre since their arrival. We've proudly partnered with Creative Crawley on several events and are excited to continue working with them in the future. They are not only a valuable asset to the shopping centre but a true driving force in the ongoing revitalisation of Crawley Town Centre.”

Simon Cuckow, General Manager, County Mall Shopping Centre 2025



Crawley Oak, by Eloise Gillow
Kingsgate, 2024
@iangreenlandphoto

The cost-of-living crisis and cuts to local council budgets are hitting Crawley hard. In 2025, more than 600 people used the Bewbush Freeshop each week. Crawley Borough Council's Community Development budget, including arts and culture, was cut and the Arts Development Officer role removed. West Sussex County Council has no cultural strategy or cultural staff, creating a significant gap that Creative Crawley helps fill.

Town centre redevelopment includes cultural ambitions but is largely housing-led. While County Mall is thriving, the wider centre is declining as major retailers leave. Creative Crawley's role in ensuring culture shapes renewal is crucial.

Devolution and local government changes bring uncertainty but also opportunities for regional leadership, with new collaborations emerging across Sussex.

A growing anti-difference climate and global unrest make Crawley's communities more vulnerable; our work has faced backlash and required increased security. Many people live in marginalised communities, often feeling unsafe having arrived in Crawley as a result of global unrest. We remain committed to uniting communities through innovative creative work that celebrates difference and nurtures joyful togetherness.

Meanwhile, the UK arts funding ecosystem remains fragile, with reduced investment and shrinking opportunities. New models for supporting the arts must be developed.



Y.A Poet performing at Around the Lake Festival
Tilgate Park, 2024
@iangreenlandphoto

Golden Thread Sustainability

We put care for people and the planet at the heart of everything we do. It's about making creativity meaningful, sustainable and shared. We have a Sustainability and Environment Policy that is updated annually and by the end of June 2026 we will have created a 'Meanwhile Spaces: a Green Guide' - an action plan for how we place sustainability at the centre of our peripatetic practice and share it with cultural colleagues.

“A real highlight for me was hearing a net zero campaigner and a Gatwick employee get into a properly robust conversation about what decarbonisation means for the aviation industry - which was held with care and mutual respect. Feels like there's so much potential here to explore how creativity can help with hard conversations like this.”

Workshop facilitator, *Climate Sustainability* event, 2025

*Bonded by Alleyne Dance,
Around the Lake Festival
Tilgate Park, 2024
@iangreenlandphoto*

Our vision for Crawley's future

In 2036

Every Crawley resident has access to excellent arts and culture on a regular basis

Different Crawley residents, who previously have not had agency, make decisions about and participate in what art happens in their town, shaping the cultural life of Crawley

Young people in Crawley have embedded, high quality, regular opportunities to learn about and pursue creative careers

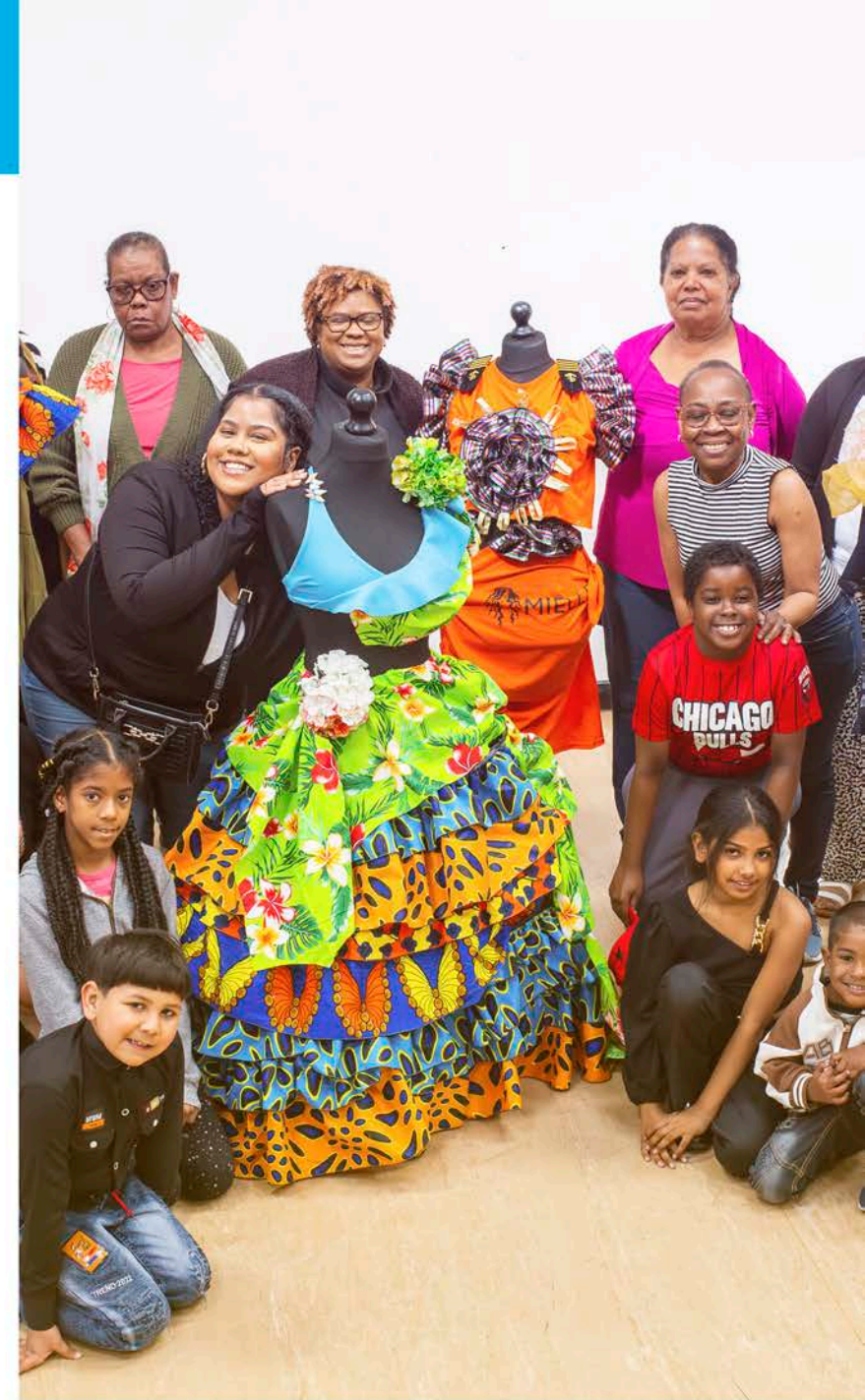
Visitors to Crawley see a thriving cultural scene with a night-time economy supported by regular brilliant cultural events

Internationally renowned creative professionals work in Crawley bringing world class activity to the town and Crawley's creative professional talent is exported around the world

There is a thriving cultural infrastructure with spaces for making, presenting and learning about arts and culture of all kinds used by thousands of people

Crawley's national and international reputation has been transformed by arts and culture into a place where people want to live, study, visit and work because of what goes on here

Creative Crawley has a stable business model and dynamic staff team that has evolved and changed to respond to the ever shifting world



Participants at a garment making workshop
Broadfield Community Centre, 2025
@leylagulerphoto

How we will achieve this

Our four priorities are:

1. On the doorstep

Grounded in the here and now, we focus on Crawley's neighbourhoods, stories and communities - bringing creativity into familiar spaces and everyday moments. It's about working side-by-side with local people to shape meaningful experiences right where they live.

2. Big Picture

We look beyond borders. We connect with regional, national and international partners to share ideas, spark collaboration and create opportunities that reflect Crawley's creative energy on a wider stage. It's about lifting local voices into global conversations - and inviting new ones in.

3. People and Planet

We put care for people and the planet at the heart of everything we do. From inclusive programming to low-impact production methods, we're committed to creating cultural experiences that nourish communities and tread lightly on the Earth. It's about making creativity meaningful, sustainable and shared.

4. Value in Action

We lead with purpose, showing how arts and culture can be a catalyst for civic renewal, economic resilience, and community connection. We engage funders, partners and investors with commitment in a kind and thoughtful way. From transforming local spaces and developing the cultural changemakers of the future, to shaping Crawley's future economy, we're committed to cultural leadership that's bold, inclusive and rooted in place.



Super Normal Extra Natural by Requardt&Rosenberg
County Mall Shopping Centre, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

Programme strands

Everyday Creativity

Our works on everyday creativity ensures all types of arts and culture are available to everyone in Crawley.

It encompasses **Crawley's Creative Playground** project; an Arts Council funded programme called Creative People and Places which is part of a national network of 44 other places around England. It's embedded locally but connected nationally enabling invigorated decision making which embraces civil society's insight, expertise and constructive challenge.

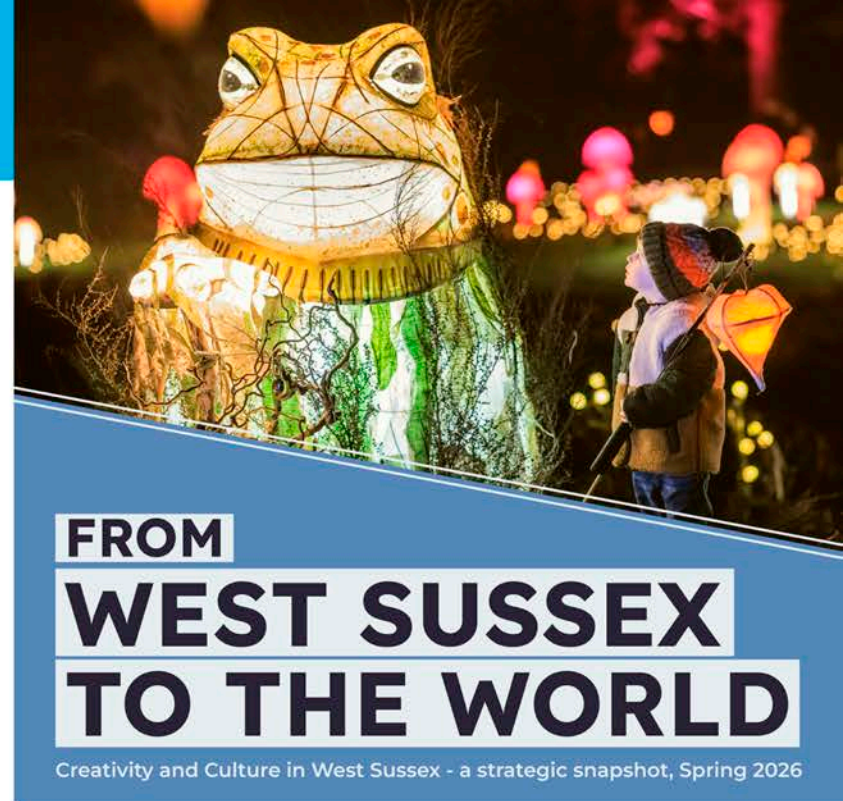
This work is rooted in people and place. We work with residents to listen to what their interests are and what they need to be happy and healthy.

This work supports **resilient and connected communities** with inclusive opportunities for participation which strengthen social fabric. We respond with creative opportunities that are shaped by residents and our team collaboratively to ensure innovative long-term problem solving to benefit Crawley people, encouraging a strong democracy where all people can participate and **where all voices are heard.**

Cultural Ecology Development

Our work aims to develop a fit for purpose cultural ecology in the town ensuring a **strong, sustainable and independent civil society.** From skills development to physical spaces in which culture can be made and shown, to creating opportunities for creative professionals to meet, showcase their work and contribute to the ecology, this vital work is only possible in collaboration with local stakeholders.

It encompasses our current work developing the **Crawley and West Sussex Creatives networks** with over 150 creative professionals and the development of creative spaces and the presentation of showcase events across artforms. From 2021 - 2025 it included our work with Crawley Town Centre Business Improvement District to enliven the town centre (2021 - 2024), The Creative Village, the Cultural Quarter Feasibility Study and Crawley's Cultural Framework (2024 - 2025).



Participants, Broadfield Arts Festival 2023
@iangreenlandphoto

Who it is for?

Local audiences and participants: families, young people, and individuals rooted in Crawley's neighbourhoods, with accessible, welcoming invitations to take part.

People we don't know yet: Passersby who might stumble across our work, local people who feel that "art isn't for them", those who see creativity as something that only happens in theatres, galleries, or opera houses

Creative collaborators: artists, makers, and producers whose work reflects and amplifies local voices, embracing innovation and inclusivity.

Civic and cultural stakeholders: partners in education, business, local government, and the voluntary sector who support long-term cultural impact.

Curious visitors and digital explorers: those beyond Crawley who engage with us in person and online, or contribute to broader cultural conversations.

“ I feel that now I am involved with Creative Crawley, my ideas of making Crawley better will be heard properly because it is a group that has connections with things like the council. When you are involved with Creative Crawley you will have a 100% more chance of getting heard. ”

Mark, Volunteer Playmaker 2025



Choogh Choogh by Beeja
Seymour Primary School, 2023
©Kaleidoshoots

What is it? 2026 - 2029

Town Wide Festival Research and Development (2026)

We will continue to listen to locals and develop projects with artists to ensure the festival is rooted in the town and its people.

Town Wide Festival (2027)

This is the backbone of this period of work. Developed from a series of conversations and events with local residents, it will celebrate the different identities in the town through the theme of play, focusing on the future by looking at the past. The legacy of the festival will include permanent commissions. If the festival is successful it will continue to evolve placing play at the heart of the way the town operates.

Skills Exchange (2027/2028)

Building on the programme in 24/25 and rooted in the festival work, we will create a programme where young people, other local residents, schools and creative professionals share their skills and open up routes into the creative industries by connecting with professional creative activities.

Come With Us (2026 - 2029)

Visits to creative events and activities in places outside Crawley (e.g London and Brighton) so residents and the team can experience high quality activity which then impacts the programme in Crawley.

Showcase & Beacon events (2026 - 2029)

We will present high quality, one off local, national and international performances, exhibitions, installations and more across artforms and in all sorts of places in the town.

Invite Us (2026 - 2029)

Events that we are invited to attend in Crawley which give the opportunity to learn about people who live here such as careers events, coffee mornings, summer fayres etc.



Participant painting *Gateway to the World* by Alec Saunders
County Mall Shopping Centre, 2024
@creativecrawley

What is it? 2026 - 2029

Playmakers events (2026 - 2029)

Open days, shows, workshops, feasts, talks: light touch, regular ways for people to connect with the programme, stumble across us and a way for us to offer volunteers new opportunities.

Boost (2026 - 2029)

We are committed to skilling up local people to run their own events and to receive the training needed to do this alongside offering training to existing creative professionals.

West Sussex and Crawley Creatives network (2026)

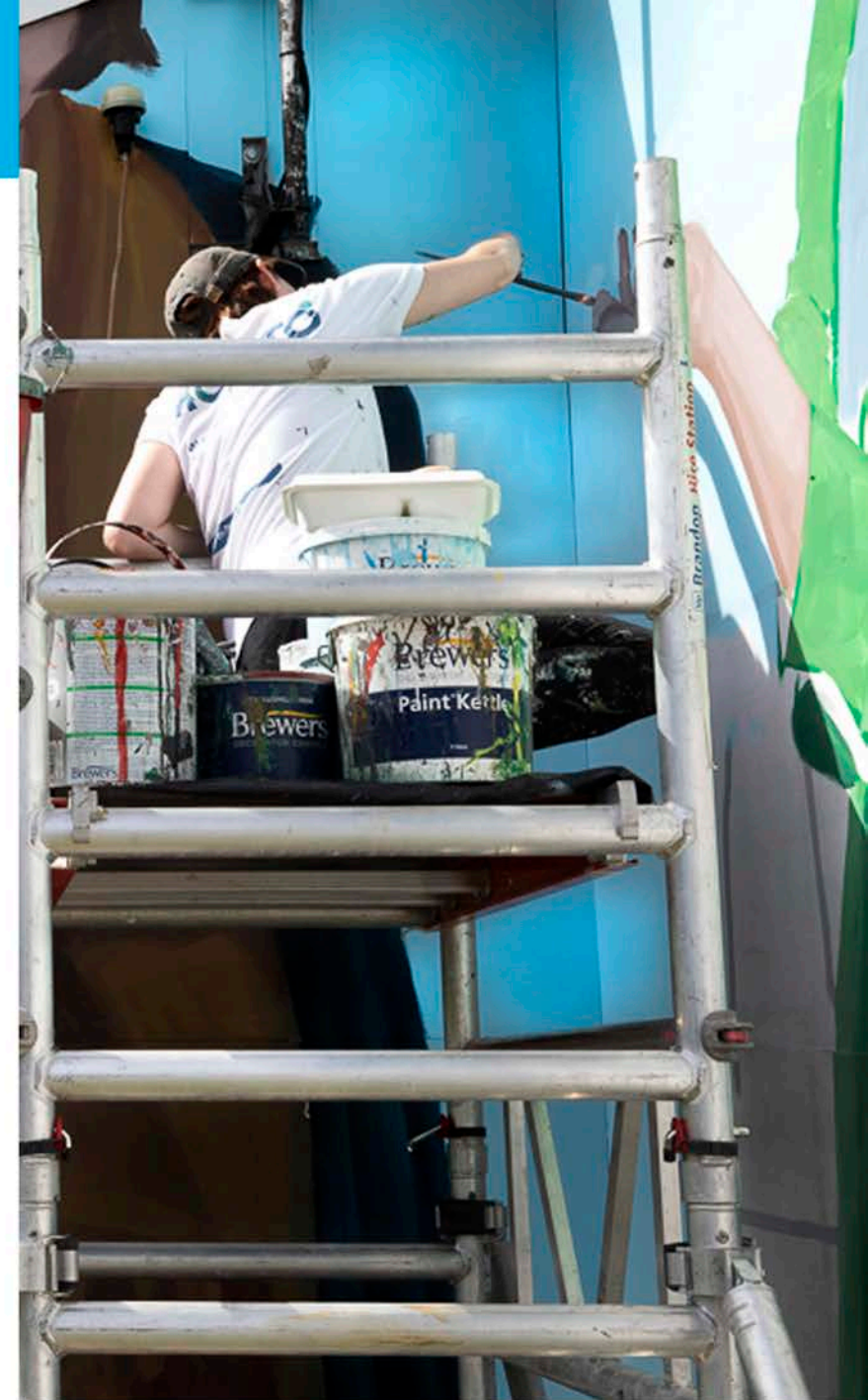
We take a leadership position across the region to embed arts and culture in policy and strategic plans. We will host meet ups and showcases, influence policy and engage in other activities to support the development of local creative professionals.

Spaces (2026- 2029)

We will continue to transform meanwhile and everyday spaces into places in which arts and culture can be made and shown, contributing to the long term aim of building a fit for purpose cultural infrastructure in the town.

Legacy projects and new approaches (2026 - 2029)

In the last 5 years we have created 7 permanent murals, a podcast series and *The Book of Crawley* a guidebook made by 200 primary school children. We will continue to utilise these projects to engage with new people. We will also respond to new approaches from partners who invite us to be part of projects that connect with our priorities.



Eloise Gillow painting *Broadfield Conversations*
Broadfield Community Centre, 2024
©Naresh Kushal

Golden Thread Innovation



We are often making things happen in Crawley that have never happened before. We explore new methods and try new ideas as a core part of our practice. We learn from our experiences and inject energy and invention into everything we do.

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

“Such a magical space! I was blown away by the exhibition, the playful spaces and the 'can do' attitude. It inspired me and fired me up to make more of a difference in my community.”

Audience members, Unit 79/80 County Mall 2025

Participant at
Creative Crawley Open Day
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2026
@iangreenlandphoto

Priorities for each year:

— 2026 —

Develop, plan and raise money for the Town Wide Festival

Focus on longer term fundraising

Continue to manage, programme and evaluate Unit 79/80 County Mall as a cultural hub

— 2027 —

Deliver a Skills Exchange programme

Deliver (June '27) and evaluate the impact of the Town Wide Festival

Focus on longer term fundraising

— 2028 —

Deliver a Skills Exchange programme

Embed the legacy of the Town Wide Festival

— Across all three years —

Develop Culture Board Sussex / Crawley Compact

Run networking events for Crawley and West Sussex creative professionals

Deliver Crawley's Creative Playground

Showcase creative events by local, national and international artists in a range of locations in the town

Our Collaborators

Local people: Families and individuals across Crawley's neighbourhoods, are offered accessible, welcoming invitations to take part and co-create with us.

Children and Young People: We will build on work with primary and secondary schools through T-KAT and Head Teacher networks, and with Crawley College, AudioActive and Crawley Community Youth Service.

Creative practitioners: Artists, makers and producers whose work reflects local voices. We will support local artists for the benefit of Crawley.

We will continue work with Outdoor Arts UK, The Place, Stomping Ground and HemingwayDesign, and grow relationships with Brighton Dome and Festival, Chichester Festival Theatre, De La Warr Pavilion and Towner Gallery.

We will develop work with Global Streets and an Associate Producer partnership with Split Lip.

Civic and cultural stakeholders: Partners in education, business, local government and the voluntary sector. We will keep working with Arts Council England, Freeshop Crawley, Broadfield Community Centre, County Mall Shopping Centre, Crawley Borough Council, Crawley College, Crawley Community Action, Gatwick Diamond Business, Manor Green College, Manor Royal Business District, Sussex Community Foundation, Tamil Learning Centre and The Posh Club.

We will develop new relationships with Gatwick Airport Ltd, University of Sussex, University of Chichester, the new Mayoral Authority and local government across West Sussex post-reorganisation.



Miss High Leg Kick and friends
Unit 79/80 County Mall 2026
@iangreenlandphoto

Our team

Board of Trustees: We will increase board membership in this period adding individuals with skills in a range of areas including Communications, Higher Education, Children and Young People and more. Our Trustees are key to our success and oversee the Charity.

Core Consortium: This group of organisations oversee the Arts Council funded Creative People and Places programme Crawley's Creative Playground.

Delivery Team: Our staff team comprises a mixture of full and part time paid staff with a mix of fixed-term employment contracts and freelancers. The team grows and shrinks based on activity.

Playmakers: local volunteers who work with us to create and shape new projects and guide the Creative Playground programme. Typically working as a group of 20 or 30 people, we work with them over a period of 9 months to a year to deliver a project from start to finish.

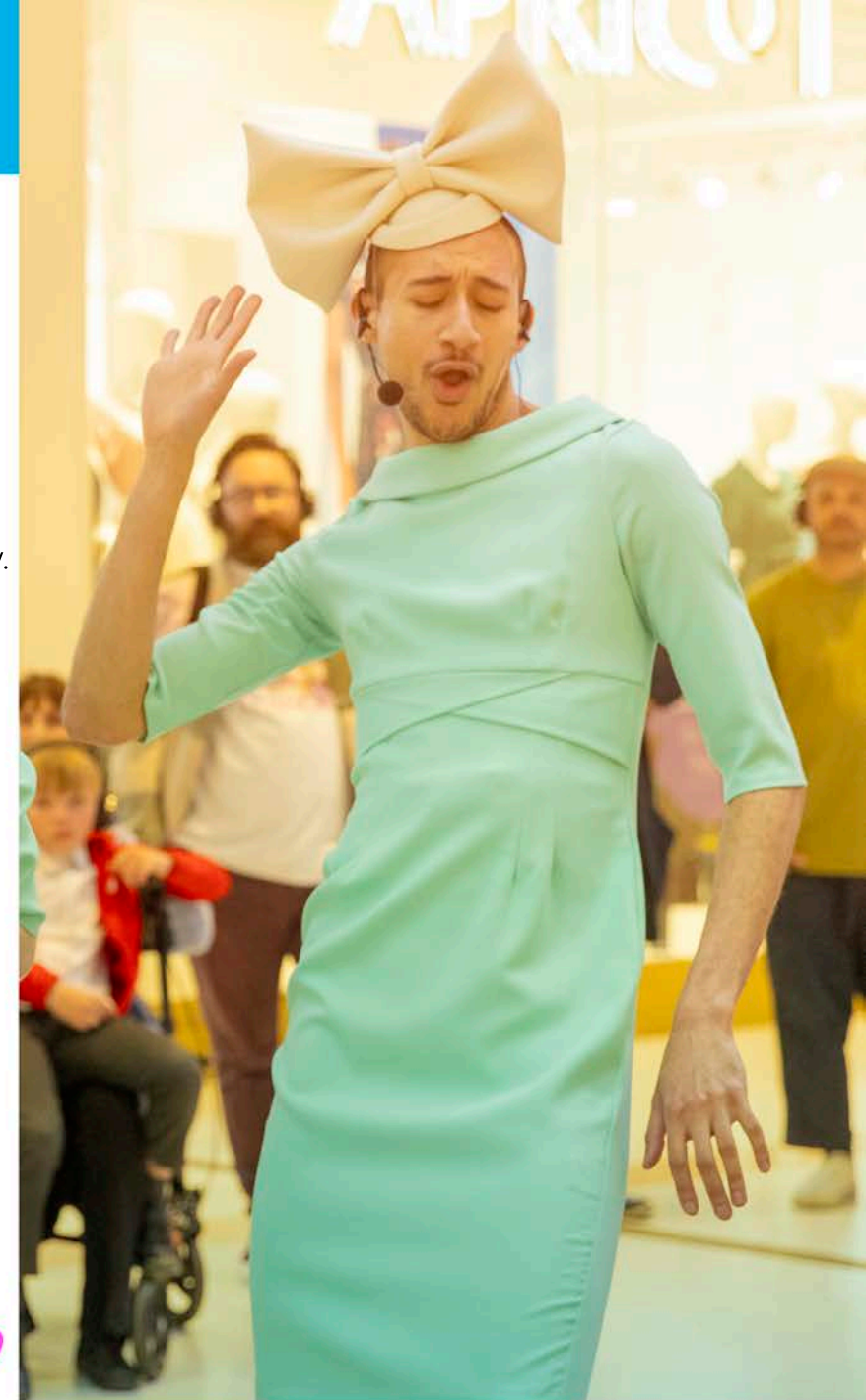
Community Programmers: paid local people (often who have been or are still Playmakers) who work with us (and sometimes our national partners) to make decisions about what happens in our programme.

Community Connectors: paid local people who are rooted in a particular community and help us connect and start conversations with new people.

Welcome Team: paid local people who are the first people our audiences and participants come into contact with at our events. They are ushers, bar people, workshops facilitators, door people and more.

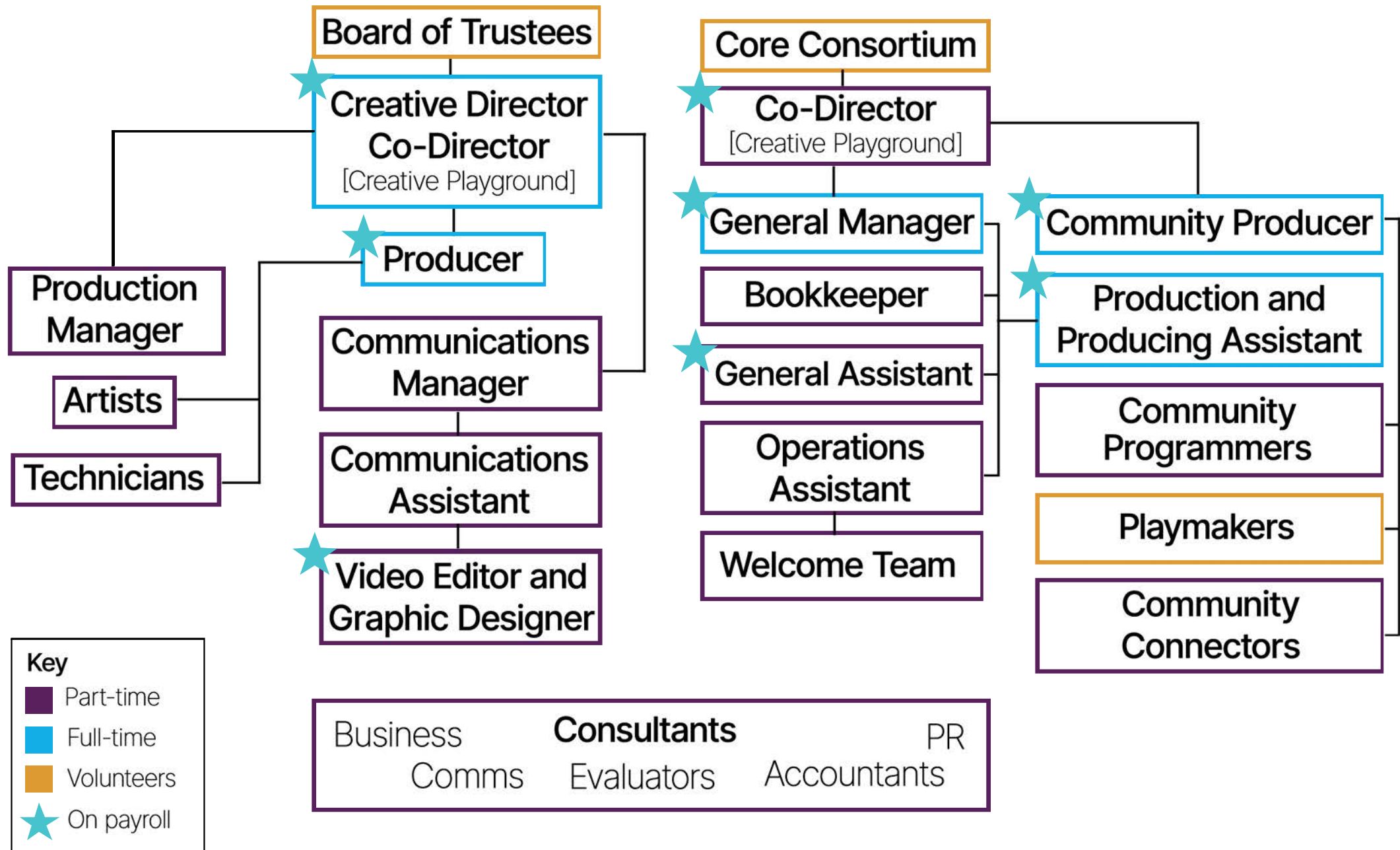
“The entire team at CC is just wonderful. They are the beating heart of Creative Crawley and are what makes the initiatives so special. They are passionate about community and art. This transmits into each event I have attended.”

The Creative Village audience 2025



Super Normal Extra Natural by Requardt&Rosenberg
County Mall Shopping Centre, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

Staff Team Model



How we will support our team

Training & development

We are committed to offering training to our team and the wider community of Crawley when possible. An annual appraisal process and regular team check ins, define training needs. We regularly work with Artswork on the Breakthrough Programme and support paid placements from Universities to help people gain experience in a supported way.

Pastoral support

We will continue to offer care and support for the team and create budget lines to pay for this.

Succession planning

In this period we will undertake succession planning by identifying key positions in the organisation, defining the must-have skills for those roles, list potential internal candidates and successors, create development plans and a transition timeline.



The Surgeon by Abdollah Nafisi
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

Golden Thread Learning



Learning sits at the heart of our work. We reflect, evaluate and use local, regional and national research to shape a programme that responds to Crawley's context and needs.

Our 2026 programme has been built from what we've learned. We listened to residents and created activities around the themes they told us mattered most. We listened to local creatives, whose needs led us to open two new pop-up creative spaces. We recognised we weren't reaching neurodivergent and learning disabled people, so we developed dedicated projects to engage them.

“I'm fresh out of Uni, it's a struggle, everyone knows it's a struggle to be doing art and getting anywhere with it. And then on top of that it's a struggle for me with a disability. So it really is, in multiple ways, invaluable to have this opportunity, and for Creative Crawley to be doing these things to help boost for artists, but also in turn it benefits the community as well.”

Beth, Resident artist, West Green Studios, Crawley 2025

“I got to experience so many different events, activities and aspects of working here. This opportunity has changed my life and my career... so thanks a lot!”

Mawadda, Breakthrough placement (24/25)

Participant at Leap Then Look's
Play Interact Explore
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2025
@iangreenlandphoto

How we will measure progress

Creative Crawley is important because we are changing Crawley for the better

There is a need

Crawley is a diverse and fast-growing town with huge creative potential, yet access to arts and culture remains uneven. Many residents do not experience creativity as part of everyday life, and the town's cultural identity is not yet fully recognised or celebrated.

Economic pressures, social division and political uncertainty create additional challenges. Creative practitioners face limited local pathways and support as the cultural ecology is not fit for purpose. Participation in arts and culture risks remaining unequal.

The needs are

- Creativity is not yet embedded in everyday life in Crawley.
- Crawley lacks a strong, visible and widely recognised cultural identity.
- Economic pressure and social division limit wellbeing, confidence and belonging.
- Creative practitioners lack consistent support, paid opportunities, access to making and presentation spaces and clear cultural pathways.
- Communities need shared creative experiences that build trust across cultures, identities and generations.
- Arts participation risks remaining unequal without intentional inclusion.

And we are making a positive impact

Creative Crawley is embedding creativity into everyday spaces across the town. We are creating visible, high-quality cultural experiences that bring people together, strengthen belonging and raise Crawley's cultural profile.

We support artists, connect communities and build partnerships that position culture at the heart of civic renewal and economic resilience and develop the cultural ecology.

We are

- Creating safe, joyful and inspiring cultural spaces.
- Supporting artists and creative workers to thrive.
- Building connections across cultures, generations and neighbourhoods, using shared creative experiences to foster trust and understanding.
- Designing inclusive opportunities from the outset.
- Positioning culture at the heart of Crawley's renewal.
- Evolving and strengthening our organisation.

Our impact will be

- Creativity becomes part of everyday life in Crawley.
- Crawley is recognised as a vibrant, welcoming cultural town.
- People feel happier, healthier and safer.
- Artists and creative workers build sustainable careers locally.
- Communities feel more connected across cultures and generations.
- Arts and culture are accessible, inclusive and representative.
- Crawley thrives culturally, socially and economically.
- Creative Crawley is a flourishing, resilient and sustainable organisation.

We will know we have been successful when

Creativity is embedded in everyday life

People move from first encounter to deeper involvement - from passerby to participants, from participants to co-creators. Where creativity becomes something they regularly experience, shape and expect in their lives.

Crawley's cultural identity is confident and visible

Crawley is recognised locally and nationally as a vibrant, diverse and welcoming cultural town, with a reputation that reflects the creativity of its people

Cultural participation strengthens wellbeing

Residents describe feeling more confident, connected and hopeful as a result of engaging with creative activity and cultural spaces feel safe, joyful and welcoming

Creative careers are viable and visible

Artists, young people and emerging creatives can see clear pathways to develop locally, with paid opportunities, professional networks and sustained support rooted in Crawley

Communities are meaningfully connected

Creative activity brings together people from different cultures, generations and neighbourhoods, strengthening trust and shared ownership of the town's cultural life.

Participation reflects Crawley's diversity

The artists, audiences and collaborators involved in Creative Crawley reflect the full demographic diversity of the town, and barriers to access are actively reduced.

Culture contributes to Crawley's renewal

Creative activity influences civic conversations, attracts investment and partnership, and plays a recognised role in the town's long-term resilience and regeneration

Creative Crawley is a flourishing organisation

The organisation is financially secure, data informed, well-led and supported by a happy, capable team.

Golden Thread Accessibility



We care deeply about making our work accessible. Enabling free or low cost entry to events, ensuring we are adapting the spaces we work in or putting in place partnerships to make public transport available, we want to make the work we do available to all. We try hard to cultivate an accessible culture within our team, adapting to colleague's needs as much as possible.

“ I have extreme social anxiety and when Vic introduced herself at the shop I just froze. I couldn't properly speak to her but now I have seen the show and I have met you guys. I think I will be ok to have a conversation. I want to tell her what I thought. ”

Cary-Anne, Participant in
Come With Us with artist in residence Victoria Melody, 2025

“ This is the best morning that I have had and I can't remember feeling this safe and comfortable before. I don't feel like I belong anywhere but I do here. ”

SEN student Year 9,
Breathe Academy workshop participant, 2024

Participants at Leap Then Look's
Play Interact Explore
Unit 79/80 County Mall, 2025
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Resourcing: our commitments

We will develop our business model

We will develop our income model so we come less reliant on public funding and have a more balanced mix of earned income, contributed funds and grants. We have not, so far, been successful in securing funding from many Trusts & Foundations despite great effort. Therefore, we urgently need to explore other options.

Asset income: We will build on the hire income secured from Unit 79/80 County Mall and develop the hiring of equipment and other assets we now own.

Corporate partnerships: We will develop new business partnerships through (for example) working together for Crawley town centre and approaching businesses for festival and other programme sponsorship.

Donations: We will build on the work started on developing a High Net Worth Individual giving strategy and actively promote online giving.

Public sector grants: We will build on our relationship with Arts Council England and Crawley Borough Council. We will work in partnership with our friends in Bewbush to access Pride in Place funding. We will develop new relationships with Universities, the new Mayoral Strategic Authority and other local government bodies.

We will develop a relationship with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Community Foundation.

We will take advantage of any new government initiative such as tourism levies or tax breaks for cultural organisations.

Trusts & foundations: We will build on our partnership with Sussex Community Foundation and the Chalk Cliff Trust. We will try to develop multi-year partnerships with Garfield Weston Trust, Esme Fairbairn Foundation and Paul Hamlyn Foundation and other major private sector funders.

Fees for Services: We will use the skills and experience of our team to bring in fees for consultancy and advice on our areas of expertise.

Fundraising events: We will develop fun and innovative ideas for events utilising our contacts and assets to explore fundraising activities.

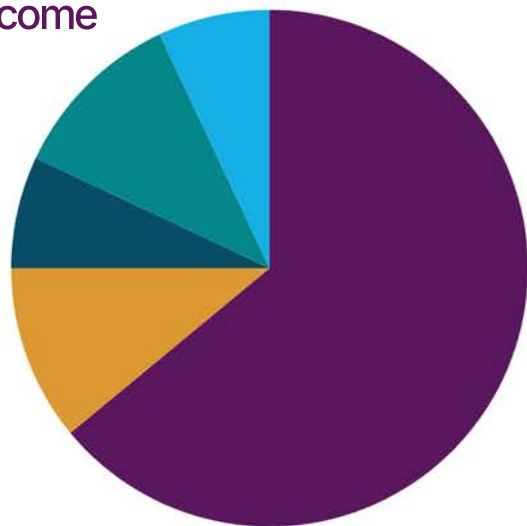
We will be prudent with our finances

Our budget forecast shows a planned increase in turnover in 2027-28 to match the level of programme delivery.
Our turnover grows and falls based on whether we are delivering Beacon projects or are in a phase of research and development.

Key financial forecast figures 2026 - 29

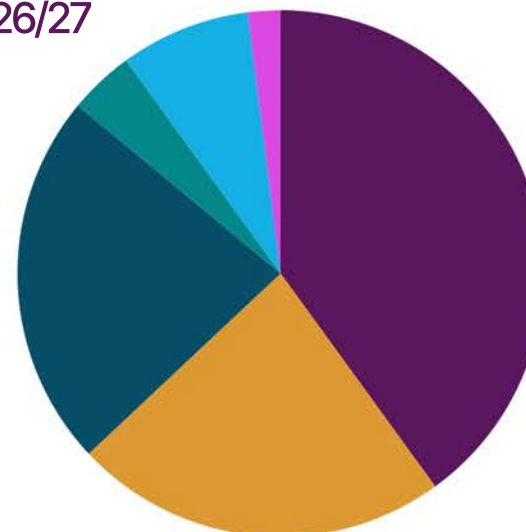
INCOME	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Creative Crawley	£124,462	£350,000	£633,500
Creative Playground (£1.05m confirmed)	£421,800	£510,000	£441,000
TOTAL INCOME	£546,262	£860,000	£1,074,500
Value of donated good and services	£63,300	£74,500	£50,000
TOTAL TURNOVER	£609,562	£934,500	£1,124,500
EXPENDITURE	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Creative Crawley	£166,577	£338,000	£600,000
Creative Playground (£1.05m confirmed)	£421,800	£510,000	£441,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£588,377	£848,000	£1,041,000
IN YEAR PROFIT (Loss)	(£42,538)	£12,000	£33,500
Previous Year Carry Forward	£78,545	£36,007	£49,007
ACCUMULATED PROFIT / (Loss)	£36,007	£48,007	£82,507
YEAR END FUNDS ANALYSIS	YE 2027	YE 2028	YE 2029
Creative Crawley operating reserve	£20,000	£35,000	£70,000
Mural maintenance designated reserve	£11,000	£8,250	£5,250
Creative Crawley unrestricted carry forward surplus	£4,757	£4,757	£7,257

2026/27 Income



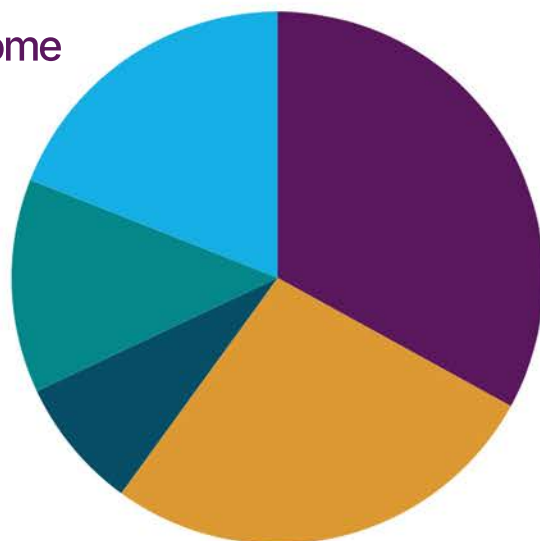
ACE CPP Grant (64%)
 Local Authority/Other Partners Funding (7%)
 Earned Income/sponsorship (7%)
 Other Arts Council/Lottery Funding (11%)
 Other Trusts and Foundations (11%)

Expenditure 26/27



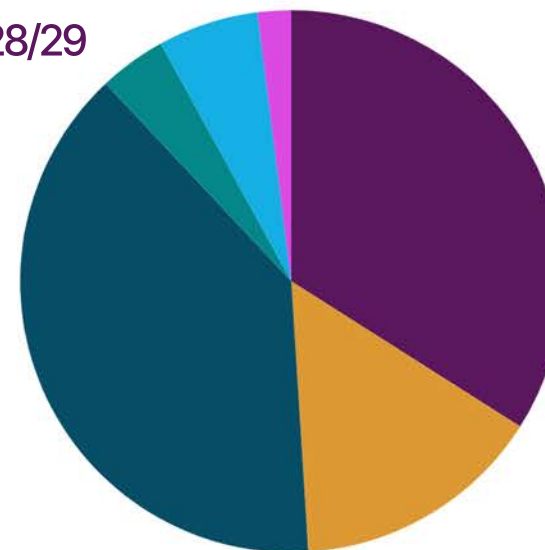
Staffing (40%)
 Core Marketing (4%)
 Programme staffing (23%)
 Overheads and access (8%)
 Programme (23%)
 Contingency (2%)

2028/29 Income



ACE CPP Grant (33%)
 Local Authority/Other Partners Funding (8%)
 Earned Income/sponsorship (19%)
 Other Arts Council/Lottery Funding (27%)
 Other Trusts and Foundations (13%)

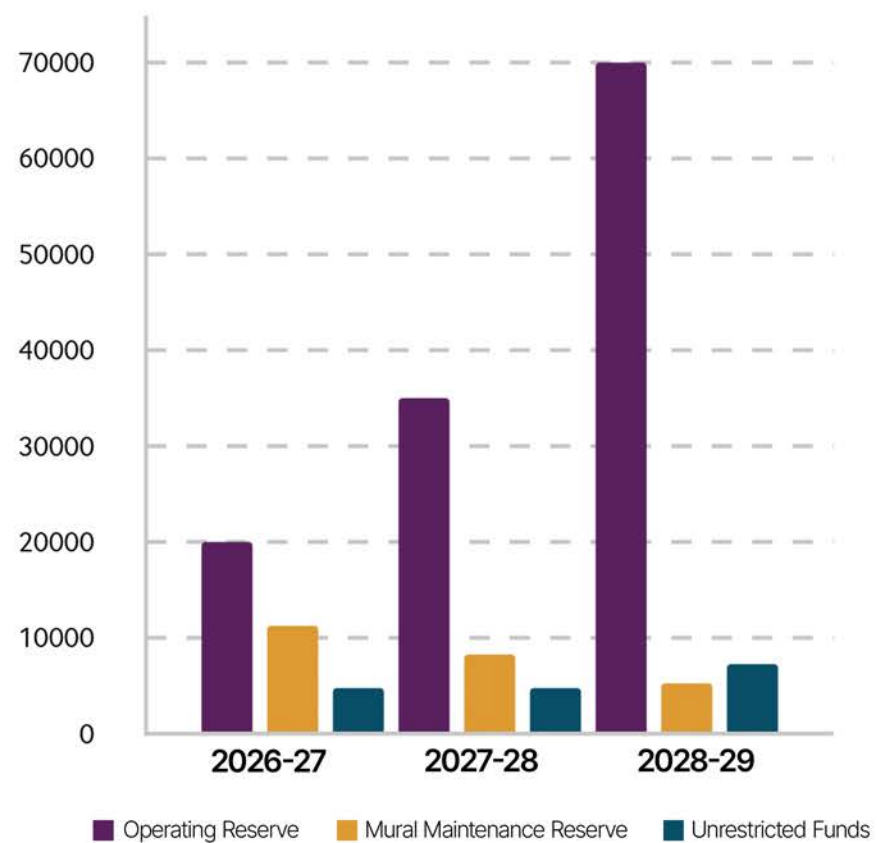
Expenditure 28/29



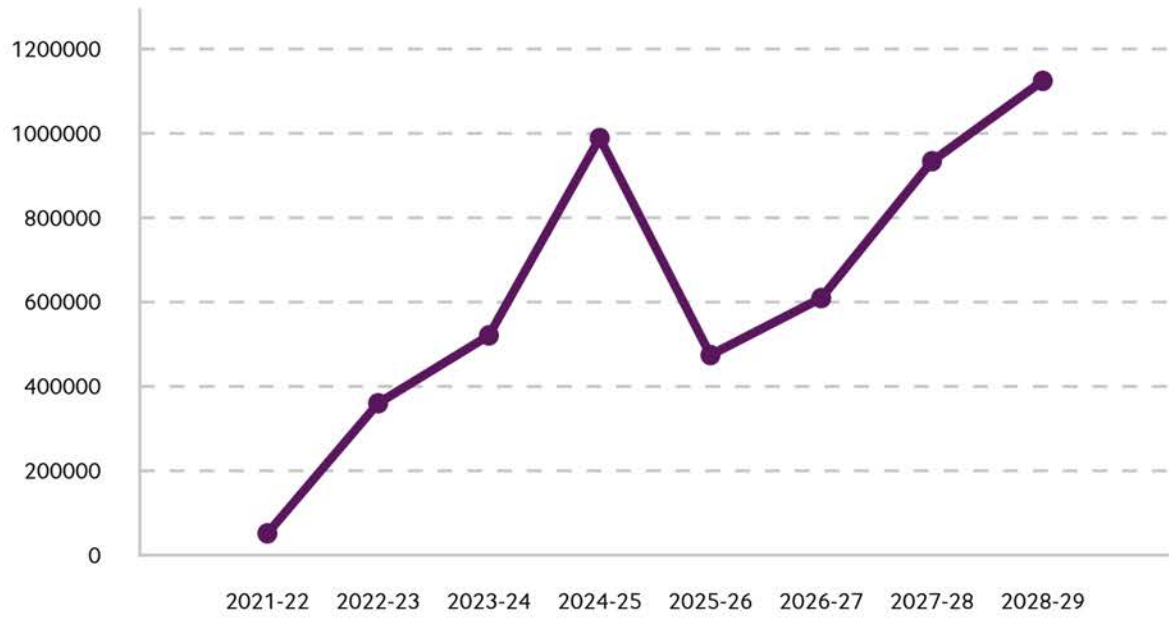
Staffing (34%)
 Core Marketing (4%)
 Programme staffing (15%)
 Overheads and access (6%)
 Programme (39%)
 Contingency (2%)

We are aiming for an income mix of 1/3 public funding, 1/3 earned income and 1/3 trusts & foundations funding. We will work towards this over the period of the business plan. Our turnover grows and shrinks depending on if we are in a year with a major event or project, or if we are in a research and development phase.

Creative Crawley Year End Funds Analysis



Creative Crawley Turnover



We are committed to effective management of risk, particularly given the significant degree of organisational development which lies ahead as set out in this Business Plan.

We're mindful of Charity Commission best practice in this area and we review Charity Commission guidance annually to ensure ongoing compliance. As part of developing this Business Plan, an updated Risk Register has been created to reflect our goals. Trustees are committed to reviewing and refreshing the Risk Register at each Board meeting (i.e. four times per year) and to interrogating those areas identified as being of highest risk.

We have identified the following top three risks:

Lack of long term support from Local Authority, business community and charitable funders means Creative Crawley cannot secure our business model

Arts Council England funding priorities shift meaning the creative ecology in Crawley becomes even more vulnerable

Key staff move on and the project based business model means it's challenging to recruit people with as much experience and knowledge

You can link to our detailed risk register [here](#)

“Our partnership with Creative Crawley has been nothing short of transformative for our school community. For the 30% of our pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium and may face disadvantage, the opportunities Creative Crawley provides have opened magical doors proving that easy, meaningful access to the arts can dissolve barriers.”

Carol Collins, Headteacher, Seymour Primary School, Broadfield 2025



Future Cargo by Requardt&Rosenberg
Memorial Gardens, 2022
@iangreenlandphoto

Our home: We will remain nomadic

Since the start of Creative Crawley, we have been based at Crawley College and value this support in kind partnership enormously; being based in a building in which young people learn and develop is of great value to us.

In the past couple of years we have also created and been based at two meanwhile creative spaces that we have developed in partnership with other arts organisations. Our relationship with Unit 79/80 County Mall will continue through to the end of June 2027 at least. We remain committed to creating spaces in which arts and culture are made and presented. However, it is not our aim to maintain one, or more, buildings on our own.

Our work takes place all over Crawley. In parks, community centres, libraries, shopping parades, car parks, playgrounds, town squares and more. We are a nomadic organisation. Crawley is our home. We build partnerships with people to make creative spaces happen whether for a night or for a year (or longer).

“The murals created by the Creative Playground project have enabled a different way of looking at public space in Crawley. Some of the areas where the murals exist have changed those spaces and made them safer for the public to be in. I’m interested in continuing to work with Creative Crawley and develop the potential for arts and culture to have a positive impact on contextual safeguarding in the town.”

Steve Turner CT651, A/Chief Inspector, District Commander, Crawley & Mid Sussex, West Sussex Division, Sussex Police, 2025



Unit 79/80 County Mall Shopping Centre 2026
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