

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

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

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

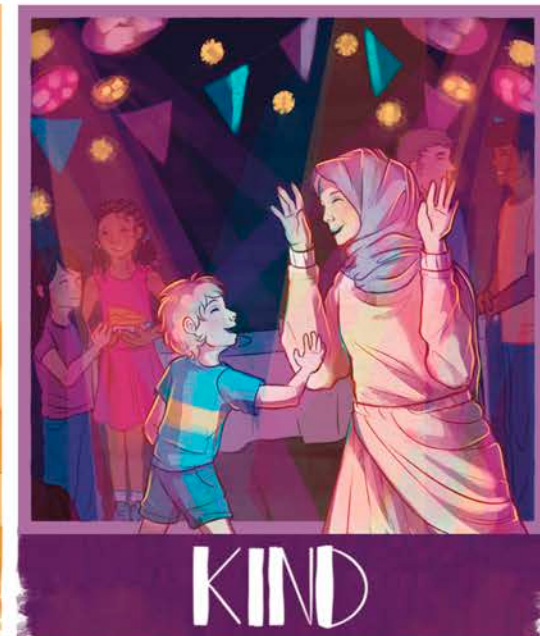
Sustainability

Innovation

Learning

Accessibility

You can read more about these throughout the document.



Illustrations
©Luis McLellan

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

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.

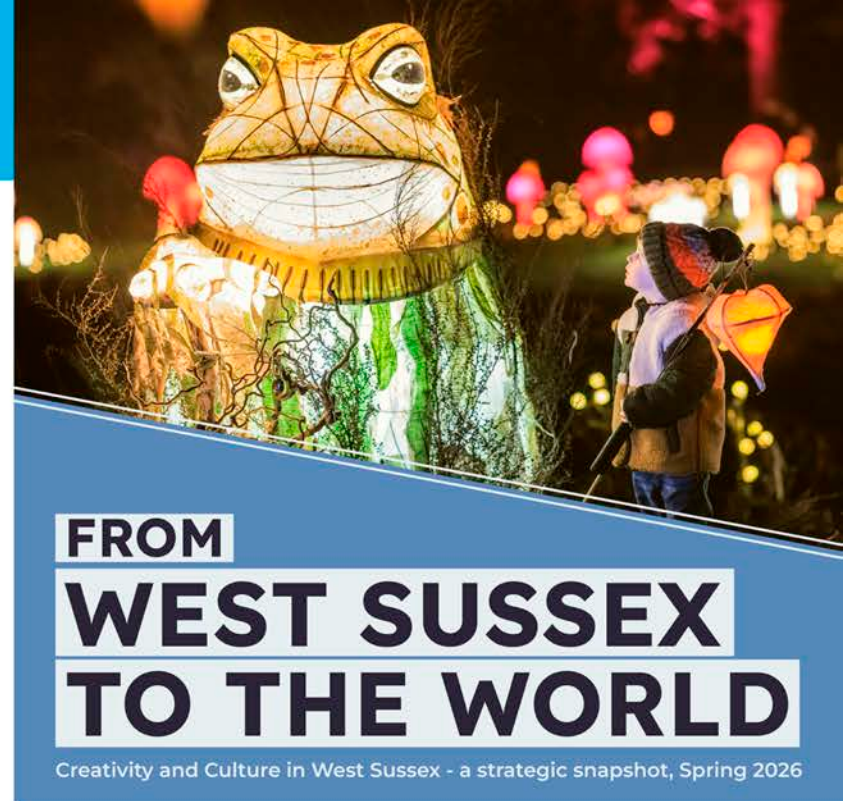
This work is rooted in people and place. We work with residents to listen to what their interests are and what they need to be happy and healthy.

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).



FROM WEST SUSSEX TO THE WORLD

Creativity and Culture in West Sussex - a strategic snapshot, Spring 2026



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
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