

Unit 79/80 County Mall

Originally home to a sofa shop on the first floor of County Mall Shopping Centre, Crawley, the unit became a flexible theatre, exhibition space and recording studio when it opened on 27 March 2025, in partnership with AudioActive. It was conceived as part of The Creative Village project, initially funded for just six months. Over a year on, with that project funding now ended, County Mall has invited Creative Crawley to stay on, and the breadth of who and what now uses the space, and the continual effort required to keep it running, tell the story of what Unit 79/80 has become for Crawley.

In 2026 Creative Crawley invited three artists to set up their studios in Unit 79/80 and built them a bespoke creative space. A dedicated recording studio and workshop area created in the original build also continues to be utilised by AudioActive's young musicians, who now use it more than three times a week.

“It's a great place to allow people with little resources delve into their creativity and musical side.

Wish I had this years ago but it's such a good opportunity for me and others to get the chance to get a real feel for the music scene

Young AudioActive participant

7,477

attendees through
Unit 79/80 in 25/26

96

creative professionals
worked in the space

1,270

people took part in the
workshops, training and
community sessions

5,472

audience members
at performances
and exhibitions

30,020

views of the two new
Window Gallery
commissions in 2026

19

Welcome Team
members, all local
to Crawley

3

resident artists given
a bespoke creative
home

14

freelance technicians
and production staff
employed



Top: Unit 79/80. Photo by Ian Greenland.

Middle: AudioActive in County Mall

Bottom: Beth Williams, Sarah Maple and Karl Singaporewala at the
Artist Studios in Unit 79/80. Photo by Ian Greenland.

**The following pages map
Unit 79/80's impact against
Creative Crawley's
strategic pillars →**

PILLAR 1: ON THE DOORSTEP

Community use is at the heart of Unit 79/80, and it continues to grow. The space is used regularly by a wide range of local groups: Diverse Crawley brings African, Caribbean and Chagossian culture to the space through song, dance, poetry and food; Mr Lilley's New Voices runs a weekly choir for Crawley primary school children; Ensemble Reza, a local professional orchestral group, has rehearsed and performed there; and Mandy Makes hosts regular craft markets with local sellers. Dimensions, a group of learning disabled adults, used the space to show a film made in collaboration with Creative Crawley to an audience of 40.

3,345

attendees at Mandy Makes craft markets over 9 days

366

attendees at Diverse Crawley's celebration

174

children attending Mr. Lilley's New Voices choir across the year



“Made my experience in the mall completely different. I came here to pick up a parcel from Boots and I've seen all this.

Open Day attendee



PILLAR 2: BIG PICTURE

Unit 79/80 works in partnership with County Mall Shopping Centre, who offer the space and power in kind. Crawley Borough Council provides full rate relief and has used the space for its own events, including the launch of its Cultural Framework and a two day Solstice laser show that drew 777 people across 31 short performances. The space first opened through a partnership with AudioActive with funding from Arts Council England with support from Pop Up Culture Crawley, part of the Towns Fund programme funded by UK Government and distributed via Crawley Borough Council, as part of the wider Creative Village project.

That project funding has since come to an end, but County Mall has invited Creative Crawley to remain in Unit 79/80 beyond its original six month pilot, with the relationship renegotiated and extended until at least June 2027.

100%

business rates relief secured from County Borough Council

9,880

views of *Connections* (Version #1) 2016 - 2025 by Simon Edwards

20,140

views of *Invasive Species* by Tracey Graham



“A true driving force in the ongoing revitalisation of Crawley Town Centre.

General Manager, County Mall

BIG PICTURE (cont.)

The arrangement can end with a month's notice if a commercial tenant comes forward, so Creative Crawley continues to fundraise and seek hire income to keep the space running as a resource for Crawley's creative community. Since taking on Unit 79/80 in January 2025, Creative Crawley has invested just over £60,000 in setting up and running the space, a figure that covers transformation and direct running costs but not core staff time, programme or marketing. Including those, the total is closer to £100,000. Running costs continue at around £25,000 a year.

The Window Gallery extends the reach further still. Originally commissioning Abdollah Nafisi's *The Surgeon*, an Arts Council England project grant then funded two further installations, *Connections (Version #1) 2016-2025* by Simon Edwards and *Invasive Species* by Tracey Graham. Together they mean the space keeps engaging the public with visual art even when Unit 79/80 itself is closed.



PILLAR 3: PEOPLE AND PLANET

Having the space has enabled Creative Crawley to employ casual local staff. 19 Welcome Team members, all local to Crawley, work alongside a team of 14 freelance technicians and production staff and a local part time Venue Coordinator. The team have completed First Aid in the Workplace training and been offered trauma-informed training, and several Welcome Team members have gone on to work in other parts of Creative Crawley's programme. Developing Unit 79/80 also led to *Meanwhile Spaces: A Green Guide* reflecting Creative Crawley's wider commitment to people and planet.

The space has also hosted workshops created with under-represented communities. Garment-making workshops with Afghan and Ukrainian women, run by artists Cee Boulaki and Mahenau Rafiq using translators, resulted in a dress representing both communities' cultures. Workshops with Crawley's LGBTQ+ (now Sussex LGBTQ+) community, run by local artists Beth Williams and Sophie Merriner, upcycled clothes into prom outfits leading to an Unmasked Prom event.

68

participants across 4 workshops with Afghan and Ukrainian women

38

participants across 6 workshops with Crawley LGBTQ+ residents

5

training sessions delivered for the Welcome team and Duty Managers



“Crawley needs things like this to happen.

Welcome Team member

PILLAR 4: VALUE IN ACTION

Unit 79/80 has supported artists to take real steps forward in their careers. *Breakfast Scene* by Sarah Maple and Meg Mosley, originally commissioned by Creative Crawley and exhibited at Unit 79/80, was shown at the Royal Academy Summer Show in 2026, Abdollah Nafisi exhibited at Frieze 2025, Karl Singporewala and Sarah Maple joined the Runjeet Singh gallery, Beth Williams exhibited at Kew, and Saaj Raja developed his one man show *Bad Indian* at Unit 79/80 before taking it to Brighton Fringe and Greenwich Theatre.

The programme itself spans professionals and hobbyists across artforms, curated by the Creative Crawley team, often in partnership with local residents. Highlights include presenting performances by internationally renowned choreographers and theatre makers such as Frauke Requardt, David Rosenberg and Chris Thorpe and visual artists such as Leap Then Look. The Fashion Show for Crawley was curated by two resident designers and featured seven local artists and 19 local people as models or dressers and The Posh Club's *High Fashion Special*, a celebratory event for over 60s featuring Figs in Wigs, Symone and Billy Gold alongside high tea and dancing.

96

creative professionals
programmes across
the year

83

audience members at
the Creative Crawley
Fashion Show

154

audience members across 2 Posh
Club shows for over 60s



“ I have always wanted a studio in Crawley and it's been almost impossible to find a suitable space.

I am about to work on a photography series for Creative Crawley and a large painting commission for a museum, so it is perfect timing to have the space in County Mall.

Sarah Maple, Resident Artist



IMPACT SUMMARY: UNIT 79/80 COUNTY MALL

- 7,477 attendees engaged with Unit 79/80 in 25/26, with a further 30,020 people viewing its two Window Gallery commissions
- 96 creative professionals worked in the space, supported by 19 local Welcome Team members and around 14 technicians and production staff
- Three resident artists were given a bespoke creative home, alongside a dedicated recording studio and workshop for AudioActive's young musicians
- Community groups including Diverse Crawley, Mr Lilley's New Voices, Ensemble Reza and Mandy Makes use the space regularly, reaching thousands of local people across the year
- Garment-making workshops with Afghan and Ukrainian women, and with Crawley's LGBTQ+ community, used creative practice to build connection and celebrate identity
- Partnership with County Mall Shopping Centre and Crawley Borough Council, including in-kind space, power and full rates relief, has kept the space sustainable and rooted in the town centre
- Although The Creative Village project funding that originally created Unit 79/80 has ended, County Mall has invited Creative Crawley to stay on, recognising the value the space has brought to the centre and the town
- Artists supported through the space have gone on to exhibit at the Royal Academy Summer Show, Frieze 2025 and Kew, and to tour new work to Brighton Fringe and Greenwich Theatre
- *Meanwhile Spaces: A Green Guide* was developed as a direct result of the project, reflecting Creative Crawley's commitment to people and planet

A note on the figures

Attendance and engagement figures are drawn from Creative Crawley's internal event records for Unit 79/80, covering April 2025 to March 2026.