

# FUTURE CREATIVE



## Lawrence Batley Theatre - Get involved



Lawrence Batley Theatre serves as the home of live performance in Kirklees and operates as a registered charity. Each year, it hosts more than 450 performances, workshops, and events, attracting an annual audience of over 70,000 people both within the theatre and throughout the community. Community engagement remains a core focus, with over 3,000 local residents participating in creative sessions each year. These sessions foster confidence and a sense of pride within the community.



This small local charity supports charities, community and voluntary groups, and social enterprises in Kirklees, helping them grow, develop, and achieve meaningful impact. It provides free support, advice, and training while fostering partnerships, trust, and collaboration. As the accredited Volunteer Centre for Kirklees, it connects individuals interested in volunteering with organisations in need of volunteers and advocates for high-quality, inclusive volunteering opportunities.



Kirklees Year of Music took place in 2023 and celebrated the district's world class music and rich and diverse musical heritage. Led by Kirklees Council; it reached thousands of residents and visitors through a programme of live events and programmes.

## WHAT IS THE IN FUTURE CREATIVE PROJECT ABOUT?

The **Future Creative project** ran alongside **Kirklees Year of Music 2023** as a **strategic partnership** between **Lawrence Batley Theatre and Kirklees Council**. Engaging **disadvantaged young people** from across the district, the project offered **volunteering opportunities** in events and the **arts and cultural sector**.

The project ran over **2 years and engaged with 184 young people aged 16-24 living in the district**. This was made up of 75 young people as dedicated Future Creative volunteers and a further 109 who volunteered through partner projects.

Over 50% of volunteers had never volunteered before, offering **new opportunity, challenge and experiences**. The project was **aimed specifically at young people from diverse backgrounds**, living in deprived wards, isolated by disability, health issues/mental ill-health, LGBTQ+ and young carers.

Future Creative worked with **38 creative partner organisations** and continued to develop relationships with **key cultural, health, youth & grassroots groups that have trusted relationships with young people**. These included **Radio Sangam**, which reaches Muslim, Hindu & Sikh communities, award-winning **Conscious Youth**, who connect with Afro-Caribbean young people to reach their potential as well as **Hoot Creative and Locala** who reach young carers & young people affected by mental health issues.

Future Creative **volunteers supported 85 different events across Kirklees** including **festivals, theatre, exhibitions, workshops and parades**. Volunteering strands included event volunteering, digital/remote volunteering and work placement.

**Skills sessions were also embedded in the programme** ranging from screen printing to CV writing workshops, speaking with confidence and live music crash courses **developing skills and encouraging creativity**.

## HOW WAS THE PROJECT FUNDED?

The Future Creative project was funded by an **Arts Council England, National Lottery Project Grant**.

## WHAT ASPECTS OF HEALTH DID THE PROJECT ADDRESS?

The Future Creative project addressed **mental health, physical health, disability, health inequalities, health prevention and social isolation**.

## WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT?

**Young people aged 16-24, from diverse backgrounds** living in deprived wards across the Kirklees borough.

## HOW DO YOU DEMONSTRATE IMPACT AND SUCCESS?

Future Creative has enabled Lawrence Batley Theatre to **grow its volunteering network, supporting the creative sector in Kirklees and developing good practice in relation to delivering inclusive volunteering**. Testing **innovative approaches to engaging young people** in flexible, event-based volunteering has been a key factor in the project's success.

As a result of the project, **a stronger network of creative organisations offering high-quality volunteering** has been established, which continue to work and partner with Lawrence Batley Theatre. Creative organisations have been able to **gain support from volunteering specialists and increase the diversity of their volunteer teams**.

*"Thank you so much for all your help and support with Slaithwaite Moonraking 2023. The feedback we have had has been overwhelmingly positive".*

Sky Burton, Slaithwaite Moonraking Festival

*"Each and every one of the Future Creatives have been an incredible asset to the team, helping existing stewards to deliver their role to the highest standards. You are all so personable, smiley, helpful and willing to learn – exactly the kind of people we love here at Lawrence Batley Theatre!"*

Mollie Wood, Duty Manager at Lawrence Batley Theatre

The Future Creative project has had **a significant impact on the lives of the young people** who took part as volunteers. Many describing **experiences of personal and professional progress and achievement**. Many participants have **successfully secured employment, apprenticeships, internships, and skills bootcamps**, while others have **continued to volunteer more regularly as a direct result of their involvement in the programme**.

*"I was really nervous wondering if this is for me when I have been at home for so long, meeting people again after COVID, it was quite anxious for me. But now if I see an event, I sign up immediately...it's like a little family really".*

-Iqra

*"One of the main reasons I started volunteering was just to get me out of the house, get me talking to people, doing new things. Volunteering has definitely helped me to be more open, be more myself. It has given me confidence to do things that I just would never have considered before".*

-Luke

## WHAT KEY LEARNINGS HAVE EMERGED FROM THE PROJECT AND HOW ARE THESE INFORMING YOUR PRACTICE?

The implementation of the new volunteer programme took longer than anticipated, with the first nine months dedicated to recruiting a project lead, establishing a supervisory committee, and developing the necessary training, policies, and procedures. **A crucial milestone was the recruitment of a Programme Co-ordinator, who was a young person with experience in volunteering within the creative sector.** This individual proved to be a strong advocate and provided valuable insight into the process.

**Continuous learning** was a key aspect of the project, **particularly through interactions with the volunteers.** Recruitment and promotional strategies were frequently reviewed with volunteers to enhance effectiveness. It became evident that **using friendly and accessible language during promotion, especially at the recruitment stage, was essential.** A bespoke app via Volunteerero was trialled, offering a user-friendly and accessible platform for volunteers while also allowing the organisation to efficiently track the wide range of volunteering activities across various sites and partners.

**Face-to-face meetings significantly outperformed online marketing** in terms of recruitment and conversion rates, leading to a **strategic shift toward in-person engagement** efforts. **Volunteers demonstrated a strong preference for event-based opportunities over digital or remote volunteer tasks.**

A considerable amount of project staff time was allocated to **supporting volunteers with disabilities and additional needs to ensure their inclusion and well-being.** Identity played a crucial role for volunteers, with a **strong desire to feel safe and accepted in their volunteering environments.** Branded clothing was particularly popular among participants.

**Transport posed a significant challenge,** as the vast majority of volunteers relied on public transportation, which was often unreliable. To address this, taxis were arranged for evening volunteering to ensure safe travel home. **Reimbursing volunteer expenses proved to be critical, as many volunteers would not have been able to participate without financial support.**

**Recognition and celebration events were planned with volunteers at key milestones to highlight their achievements, and these events were highly valued by participants.** A combination of personalised support, flexible opportunities, expense coverage, transport assistance, and regular recognition contributed to a notably high volunteer retention rate throughout the project.

**These key learnings continue to shape ongoing practice, with a focus on accessibility, inclusive support structures, and refining recruitment methods to foster sustained volunteer engagement.**

## HOW HAS THE PROJECT MADE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

The Future Creative project has played a **crucial role in improving young people's wellbeing, particularly for those experiencing mental health challenges, many of which stemmed from isolation during the pandemic.** By providing opportunities for volunteering, the project offered participants **a renewed sense of purpose, helping them rebuild confidence and strengthen social connections.** Many volunteers progressed into regular volunteering, employment, and further training, **reinforcing their personal growth and stability.** Additionally, inclusive support structures—such as accessible recruitment practices, transport assistance, and financial reimbursement—ensured **participants felt valued and empowered.** Through a combination of personal development opportunities and a strong community network, **the project has fostered resilience and enhanced overall wellbeing among young people.**



# Volunteer Feedback

*"I loved today's session; it was very inclusive and the everyone was very accommodating."*



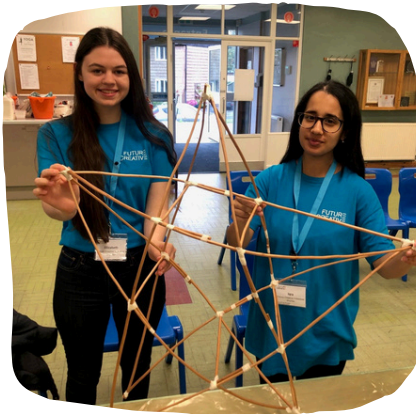
*"A different experience with some great workshops and so many people with ukuleles."*



*"This was such an exciting and unique opportunity. As someone who would love to work in radio one day, I found it informative and fun to be involved in the creative process of making an advertisement for the radio. Can't wait to hear the finished product!"*



*"A very relaxing and fun session showing visitors how to do jelly prints on paper using stencils and rollers with beautiful paints. Really enjoyed this workshop."*



*"Very informative, good experience. Nice to be a part of future creative!"*



*"I had a lovely time! I enjoyed sewing and the atmosphere was delightfully cozy."*



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