



CREATIVE EXPLORERS

IMPACT REPORT JUNE 2025

"I think the creativity of the displays has made me think the younger generation has a lot to do and contribute."

Audience member, Imagine Bamboo in Nuneaton and Bedworth, Survey September 2024

113,505
AUDIENCES



2,966
PARTICIPANTS

"Aren't young people brilliant!"

Audience member, Milesians, Survey September 2024

WELCOME

The journey we have been on through Creative Explorers has been about much more than delivering a series of projects. It has been about developing a shared sense of ownership and civic confidence across Nuneaton and Bedworth – empowering our communities to become makers of their own future.

Through this programme, we have fostered skills, collaboration and creativity at a grassroots level, and international ambition. We challenged people to move from passive spectators to active contributors, shaping their own stories alongside their neighbours.

Creative Explorers provided a framework for artists, organisations and members of the community to come together, learn from each other and produce something distinctly theirs – a unique cultural expression of Nuneaton and Bedworth's character and ambitions.

This has all been made possible through a strong partnership between Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council, funders – including the Arts Council England, as well as support from local businesses. The programme reflects our ongoing commitment to putting culture, people and place at the heart of our plans.

Brady Hughes

Portfolio Holder/Leisure and Health,
Nuneaton and Bedworth



Art on the Streets, GRIT Arts

“Everyone coming together to create something incredible.”

Bunting feedback, Public Sense Making,
November 2024

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Thank you

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ARTISTS EMPLOYED

ABOUT CREATIVE EXPLORERS

Creative Explorers was an 18-month cultural programme led by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council in partnership and Warwickshire County Council, and arts organisations, including Artichoke and Imagineer.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, local artists and communities in Nuneaton and Bedworth came together to produce and experience a rich programme of cultural events. The aim was to celebrate and raise the profile of a growing – yet largely hidden – network of artists and creative activity, to engage all sectors of the community, and to inspire people to value and embed creativity in their daily lives.

Creative Explorers was funded by an Arts Council England Place Partnership award, Big Local National Lottery Community Fund, Philip Bates Trust, The Alan Edward Higgs Charity and The Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The programme forms part of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's long-term strategy for sustainable regeneration in the Borough; in addition to generous in-kind support from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, the community and local businesses.

Mileians' The Coming of the Gaels, Circolombia/Imagineer



Art on the Streets, GRIT Arts



Art on the Streets, GRIT Arts

NoFit State, Imagine Bamboo

KEY OUTPUTS INCLUDED:

Milesians' The Coming of the Gaels: Produced by Circolombia in association with Imagineer and supported by Bedworth Civic Hall, this outdoor spectacle was performed late June in All Saints Park, Bedworth. The piece was created and directed by Felicity Simpson and Kathi Leahy in collaboration with local artists and communities, blending circus, physical theatre, acrobatics, dance and live music.

GRIT's Art on the Streets: In August 2024, the local artists' group GRIT presented a unique event transforming the town with site-specific artworks and opportunities for the community to get creative. The day included live street art, large-scale artworks on lorries for 'CONVOY' and on nearby walls, stage performances featuring local stories through verbatim and physical theatre, alongside spoken word and music.

GRIT and Dauntless Evolution's Odyssey: Dauntless visited schools and colleges across Nuneaton to discover what matters most to the next generation. The team used these conversations to develop a brand-new production, which was performed at the Art on the Streets festival and later at The Abbey Theatre in September.

GRIT's Your Story: Performed by Sudden Impulse Production Company, Your Story was a piece of theatre created from months of community engagement sessions in Wembrook, Whitestone, Stockingford and Attleborough.

GRIT Art Central: Playing a key role in tying together the different strands of the programme, GRIT Art Central provided a base for collaboration and creativity across Nuneaton and featured a breadth of community stalls.

Imagineer's Imagine Bamboo Nuneaton and Bedworth: Through workshops and events, artists, designers, engineers and communities from across the UK and overseas came together, under the direction of Orit Azaz, to explore the potential of bamboo, including bamboo sculptures by local artists. The programme culminated in a family-friendly showcase day in September, in Riversley Park, featuring a performance by NoFit State – an outdoor circus production – and a sound installation, The Harmony Project, by Australian artists Cave Urban.



Artichoke's Babylon Gamelan took place over three days in September at the Miners' Welfare Park, Bedworth and was a vibrant fusion of art and sound for everyone to enjoy. This joyous mechanical sculpture and interactive sound installation were produced by Rag & Bone and created by artist Dave Young. Interactive sound-making artworks were created by Nuneaton artist Spencer Jenkins with local community groups and schools. An art trail of community made percussive markers, designed by local artist Julia Snowdin, guided visitors to the sonic sculptures. This pilot project explored the potential for a regular biennial arts festival to celebrate local industrial heritage and culture.

Shout Out for the Arts' The Borough Mural Project Young people of Nuneaton worked together this summer to create an epic art mural in the town centre, alongside artists, Nathan Parker (n4t4) and Alisha Miller.

Shout Out for the Arts' Creative Careers Week Shout Out for the Arts (shoutoutforhearts.co.uk) is a programme of work driven by young people and arts organisations across Warwickshire, the first in the UK Local Cultural Education Partnership to be youth-led. In November 2024, the board created a series of careers events for their peers to learn more about working in creative jobs.

Ultimately, Creative Explorers demonstrated the power of collaboration, imagination and shared effort in developing a unique cultural identity – strengthening civic pride and confidence, developing skills and opportunities, and contributing to a thriving, creative borough.

This report aims to bring together some of our key achievements and ambitions for the next steps.

1 / A UNIQUE BOROUGH

Creative Explorers demonstrated the transformative power of creativity and culture in renewing communities and strengthening identity. The programme enhanced the visitor economy by showcasing the borough's rich heritage – its stories, people, and places – placing them at the heart of its cultural offer. It inspired both residents and visitors to engage with and take pride in their surroundings, fostering a vibrant and culturally confident community.

Artists, organisations, and local residents collaborated to deliver a diverse programme of activity – from large-scale public events to intimate, community-led workshops. These initiatives captured a wide range of voices and perspectives, enriching the borough's growing reputation as a creative destination.

Identity was a key driver in the production and shaping of programmes. 100% of SOFTA and Art on the Street participants felt the work reflected their area, with 83% of the latter's audience agreeing that the work felt rooted in the local context.

In turn, the programmes soared a strong sense of pride, with responses including feeling "Very happy and proud of Nuneaton", "Proud to live in this town" and "Very impressed, proud of the local talent." It also shifted perspectives: "Today put Nuneaton's art scene on the map. I've never seen such a rich and artistic vibe around the town" noted one audience member, another reflecting how: "It's really lovely to see the town so lively. It normally looks so run down and shabby, and this has really brightened the place up and brought people in."

Even the word GRIT, is deeply tied to the borough's cultural identity. As Jane Hytch, Executive Producer, noted:

"There's something about the word 'Grit'... it speaks to cultural identity, to the determination and ambition of the people here. It's come through strongly in our evaluation sessions and the work itself – it feels like it truly belongs to Nuneaton and Bedworth."



Art on the Streets, GRIT Arts

2 / EXPANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUTURE



Bedworth Library Mural, Shout Out for the Arts

Young people were a priority throughout.

The Teach-Make: Nuneaton and Bedworth (TMNB) project built on the success of Teach-Make: Coventry, extending the arts-rich TAME approach to learning into local schools and allowing teachers to learn through arts-rich practices as well as learning the techniques necessary to use these practices in their classrooms

Despite initial challenges in engaging schools, partly due to structural disconnections between cultural and educational services, the project succeeded in embedding creative teaching practices.

A significant pedagogical shift noted by teachers was the transition towards inquiry- and project-based learning frameworks. Teachers described how these approaches promoted student autonomy, curiosity, and a profound level of engagement with the curriculum, substantially enhancing the quality of educational experiences

Teachers continued hands-on learning alongside artists from Imagine Bamboo, GRIT, and Artichoke, with many describing the experience as 'transformative'. The programme nurtured their confidence to use movement-based and inquiry-led methods in the classroom, which in turn boosted student curiosity, ownership, and pride in their learning.

Young people also played a central role through Shout Out for the Arts (SOFTA). From creating a public mural in the town centre to designing a Creative Careers Week for their peers, they gained real-world skills and a platform to express their aspirations. As one participant reflected, they learned how to collaborate, plan, and run events – skills vital for future creative careers.

"Skills of leading and supporting others and empathy are really missing from the curriculum. I think Teach-Make brings all of those skills in."

Chris

All these opportunities were born from listening to young people and co-designing responses with them. As SOFTA's coordinator put it, this was "genuine co-creation" – young people led the work, defined its purpose, and helped shape its impact on others.

Through Teach-Make and SOFTA, young people from Nuneaton and Bedworth were empowered to imagine and shape a future for themselves – one rooted in creativity, confidence, and connection to their place.

3 / PROFILING LOCAL ART AND ARTISTS

Creative Explorers fostered a thriving ecosystem of artists and organisations, enabling future cultural activity to grow from strong local roots. Artists involved described how collaboration and co-creation reshaped their practice – from prioritising ownership and inclusivity, to recognising creativity as a vehicle for social change.

For many, this was transformational. One artist shared how working with children on a community windmill project marked a turning point: "It's about collaboration not competition... our children are our best teachers." Others echoed how the programme reignited their creative energy and sense of purpose after periods of isolation during the pandemic.

"This is the start of something, and it's about collaboration not competition. From this grassroots thing, it has been so empowering, it has changed me forever in a good way. My creative practice now has all stemmed from this. It's about being person centred and realising that it's about creativity not art."

Anthony Greentree, Artist, Bamboo
Artist Sense Making Session, October 2024

The return of Artichoke to the borough – after their earlier work on Sanctuary – was a meaningful moment for the community. Locals were visibly moved to see Babylon Gamelan emerge from the same team, with 68% of survey respondents having attended the previous event. This continuity-built trust and a sense of pride in Nuneaton & Bedworth, as a place where significant art happens.

Initiatives like GRIT's artist-led space and Sketch Club created powerful community bonds. Participants spoke of regaining a sense of identity and connection: "It stops me being alone. I feel like I'm not just a mum but a person."¹

Through this work, Creative Explorers brought to life all five of the New Economics Foundation's² "ways to wellbeing" – connecting people, encouraging activity, sparking curiosity, and offering opportunities to learn and give back. The commissioning of artists also led to employment and wider opportunities.

Artist Anthony Greentree, Imagine Bamboo



"I have never felt so close to Nuneaton. People coming from outside felt connected. It is a place with incredible people and stories, a place with colour and images."

Public Sense Making, Group discussion,
November 2024

¹ Sketch Club member 8, Feedback boards, 2024

² "Five Ways to Wellbeing", New Economics Foundation, 22 October, 2008.

4 / BUILDING COLLECTIVE MEMORIES

Imagine Bamboo, Bedworth



At the heart of Creative Explorers has been a commitment to co-creation, ensuring that communities not only participated in the work, but shaped it. Collaboration has emerged as a core value

"The biggest pro has been collaboration, collaborating with other artists, collaborating with professionals, collaborating with community and various community groups and meeting all these new people. For me, that collaboration has done nothing but be positive, and result in positive outcomes."

Simon Winterman,
GRIT team reflection session, September 2024

The GRIT building itself became a vital space for public engagement—offering far more than a physical location. It became a hub for connection and creativity, a role echoed in projects like Babylon Gamelan and Imagine Bamboo, where artists helped forge lasting relationships with communities.

Creative Explorers brought together over 60 local groups across the borough, with a strong emphasis on inclusion – particularly in areas of greatest need (LSOAs). Free access to all events was crucial in removing barriers and encouraging a broad spectrum of participation.

Partners brought unique approaches to community-led practice. For SOFTA, young people guided the direction of the programme from the very beginning:

"We just listened to young people and asked them what they wanted – that shaped the entire programme."

Kim Hackleman, SOFTA, October 2024

SOFTA's work, such as the murals, evolved through constant reflection and youth input, with each session shaped by feedback. This iterative approach deepened engagement and gave young people genuine ownership of the outcomes:

This emphasis on listening and shared authorship has been key in ensuring Creative Explorers is rooted in local relevance. By involving communities in the making of the work, from concept to completion, the programme has fostered a collective memory – an imprint of creativity, connection, and care that resonates beyond individual events.

Bringing communities out into spaces together was a clear outcome. Participants across programmes spoke of how it 'got them out of the house', whilst the environmental focus of Imagine Bamboo has also nurtured a sense of connectivity with and appreciation of the environment,

"It makes me feel more alive and connected to both the environment and the local community. It makes me feel excited and hopeful."

Audience member, Imagine Bamboo in Nuneaton and Bedworth, Survey September 2024

"I hope more events like this can happen more in the future, for children and everyone to enjoy the arts and learn more and to appreciate the world and what it gives us."

Participant Survey, Imagine Bamboo in Nuneaton & Bedworth, September 2024

The programme also identified and explored a variety of local locations as perfect for outdoor arts events, including, the Miners' Welfare Park, Bedworth.

5 / WHAT'S NEXT?

Artist Alisha Miller, CONVOY



Creative Explorers has laid the foundation for a continued, community-rooted cultural programme – one that doesn't "start from scratch" but evolves from what has already been built. Both artists and local people have clearly expressed a desire for more activity rooted in local identity, sharing ideas for future projects and articulating what infrastructure and support would be needed to make these ambitions a reality.

Crucially, continuity and familiarity have proven key to meaningful engagement. Any future programme must recognise this – building on the relationships, momentum, and trust developed through Creative Explorers.

"We have proved there is demand, it has touched a lot of people—not just artists."

Public Sense Making Discussion, November 2024

There is a strong body of evidence to show that the programme has addressed pressing social challenges such as isolation, and has positively impacted wellbeing. It aligns with NBBC's wider strategic goals to enhance quality of life through cultural engagement.

We learnt that:

1. Community-Centred Design Deepens Engagement

Projects embedded in local communities and built on existing networks achieved high cultural relevance and deeper participation.

2. Partnerships Spread Risk and Build Capacity

Collaborating with experienced external partners offset internal resource limitations and ensured consistent delivery.

3. Financial Resilience through Conservative Planning

Conservative budgeting and scenario planning helped mitigate risks and maintain momentum.

4. The Funding Landscape Requires Strategic Focus

As competition for funding grows, relationships with funders and strategic partners may need to be reviewed and strengthened.

Priorities for next steps are:

- **Creative Continuity:** Build a programme that evolves from Creative Explorers – sustaining existing relationships and community ownership.
- **Celebrate Cultural Identity:** Continue to celebrate what is unique about Nuneaton and Bedworth – past, present, and future – through art.
- **Support Local Artists and Producers:** Employ local artists and explore new community roles to animate high streets and public spaces.
- **Youth Voice and Leadership:** Ensure young people are active decision-makers and part of steering or governance structures.
- **Strengthen Local Networks:** Reduce isolation and animate spaces through stronger inter-community connections.
- **Improve Communication:** Use hyperlocal and word-of-mouth networks alongside digital channels to reach wider audiences.
- **Secure Infrastructure:** Invest in the physical and organisational infrastructure needed to maintain progress and take work forward.
- **Amplify Visibility:** Maintain consistent marketing and publicity to attract local and national attention.

Creative Explorers has succeeded in creating something powerful: a programme that has brought national and international artists into collaboration with local communities, sparked pride, and opened career pathways into the creative industries. It has made Nuneaton and Bedworth more outward-looking and built the capacity for future co-production, touring work, and community-led cultural production.

The call from the community is clear: keep going.

"There's a list as long as your arm for children's workshops."

GRIT Artists Collective Film Transcript,
September 2024

"What was interesting was the size of the audience. People say the town centre is deserted, but people came out in flocks. This proved there is a need – and that it needs to happen more in the future."

Public Sense Making, November 2024



Imagine Bamboo, Riversley Park

"We've changed hearts and minds across the borough about what art can do. We've reached people who wouldn't normally engage with the arts – and that's essential."

Simon Winterman,
GRIT, September 2024

THANK YOU

None of this would have been possible without the investment and support of:

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Photography by Andrew Moore