



**Portsmouth  
Creates**

**Annual Report 2024**



# Portsmouth Creates CIC

## Trustees, Executive Team and Supporting Partners

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(resigned 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024)  
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Nikki Jones, Office Manager  
Lucy-Jane Fitzpatrick, Marketing & Communications Manager  
Jane Hodgkin, Project Officer  
Dylan James-Yeomans, Artsworld Breakthrough Candidate  
Jasmine Mundy, Artsworld Breakthrough Candidate

### Supporting Partners:

Arts Council England  
Victorious Festival  
University of Portsmouth  
Portsmouth City Council

**Registered Office:** Create at Playland, 1-6 City Buildings, Commercial Road, Portsmouth, PO1 4BD  
**Company Registration Number (England & Wales):** 12367811

**Website:** [www.portsmouthcreates.co.uk](http://www.portsmouthcreates.co.uk)



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# Foreword

As we reflect on the past year, it is with immense pride that we present this annual report for Portsmouth Creates — a testament to the vibrant and diverse creative community that makes our city unique. Portsmouth Creates was founded with a bold vision: to champion creativity as a force for connection, opportunity, and growth. Over the past year, that vision has continued to shape everything we do.

The creative industries in Portsmouth are a vital part of the city's identity and economy, and we have been privileged to play a key role in nurturing and celebrating local talent. Whether through supporting artists and makers, creating platforms for artistic expression, or developing partnerships across sectors, Portsmouth Creates has worked tirelessly to ensure that creativity remains at the heart of our community, and most importantly, is accessible for all.

This year, our initiatives have not only provided opportunities for artists and creatives to thrive, but have also created a sense of belonging and pride among residents and visitors alike. From large-scale public art projects to development workshops and events, we have witnessed firsthand the power of creativity to inspire, shape, and connect. The response from the community has been extraordinary, reflecting a shared belief in the transformative

power through what we collectively deliver.

We remain committed to championing creativity in all its forms, ensuring that Portsmouth's creative landscape continues to flourish. As we look ahead, our focus remains on developing inclusive spaces where creativity can be celebrated and where artists and audiences alike can come together to imagine new possibilities.

This report is more than a summary of our activities — it is a celebration of our collective achievements and a reflection of the passion and resilience that defines Portsmouth's spirit. We extend our sincere gratitude to our partners, supporters, and, most importantly, the entire creative sector, who make Portsmouth a beacon of creativity.

Here's to another year of imagination, collaboration, and growth.

**Bernie Topham**

Chair of Portsmouth Creates

# Introduction

When I began to write this introduction, I was reminded just how lucky we are to work in one of the most exciting, bold, and inspiring sectors in the UK. The creative industries are more than just an economic and social driver - they're a reflection of who we are, how we see the world, and what we believe is possible.

This past year, we as a team have had the privilege of meeting some incredible people from across our city and beyond - from early-career creatives taking their first steps into the industry, to seasoned leaders driving innovation across visual arts, performing arts, film, design, music, and beyond. These conversations have all had something in common: a deep sense of passion, purpose, and, most importantly, possibility. They have reminded me why the work we do at Portsmouth Creates matters.

Our mission has always been to support the growth of Portsmouth's creative industries, not just economically, but in a way that's inclusive, future-facing, and grounded in tangible stories. Whether we've been helping creative businesses scale, supporting talent from underrepresented backgrounds, or advocating for the sector at the highest levels, our goal has been simple: to help creativity thrive.

I'm incredibly proud of what we've

achieved this year, and even more excited about what's to come. When I talk about Portsmouth Creates, I pitch us as a **"small but mighty team"**, and I hope that this comes across in our results from 2024.

The creative industries don't stand still, and neither do we.

Thank you to our partners, funders, colleagues, and, above all, to the

creative communities across Portsmouth who continue to inspire us every day.

It's a joy to be on this journey with you.

**Gemma Nichols**  
CEO



# Strategic Objectives

Our strategy has been informed through meaningful consultation with stakeholders across the creative sector. By engaging artists, cultural organisations, industry leaders, and emerging voices, we ensured that the direction we set reflects both the needs and desires of those at the heart of creative innovation. Their insights have been instrumental in building a strategy that is collaborative, responsive, and positioned to support sustainable growth across the sector.



Driving **growth, talent,** and **inclusion** for creatives and communities through co-creation, **building capacity,** and **pathways.**

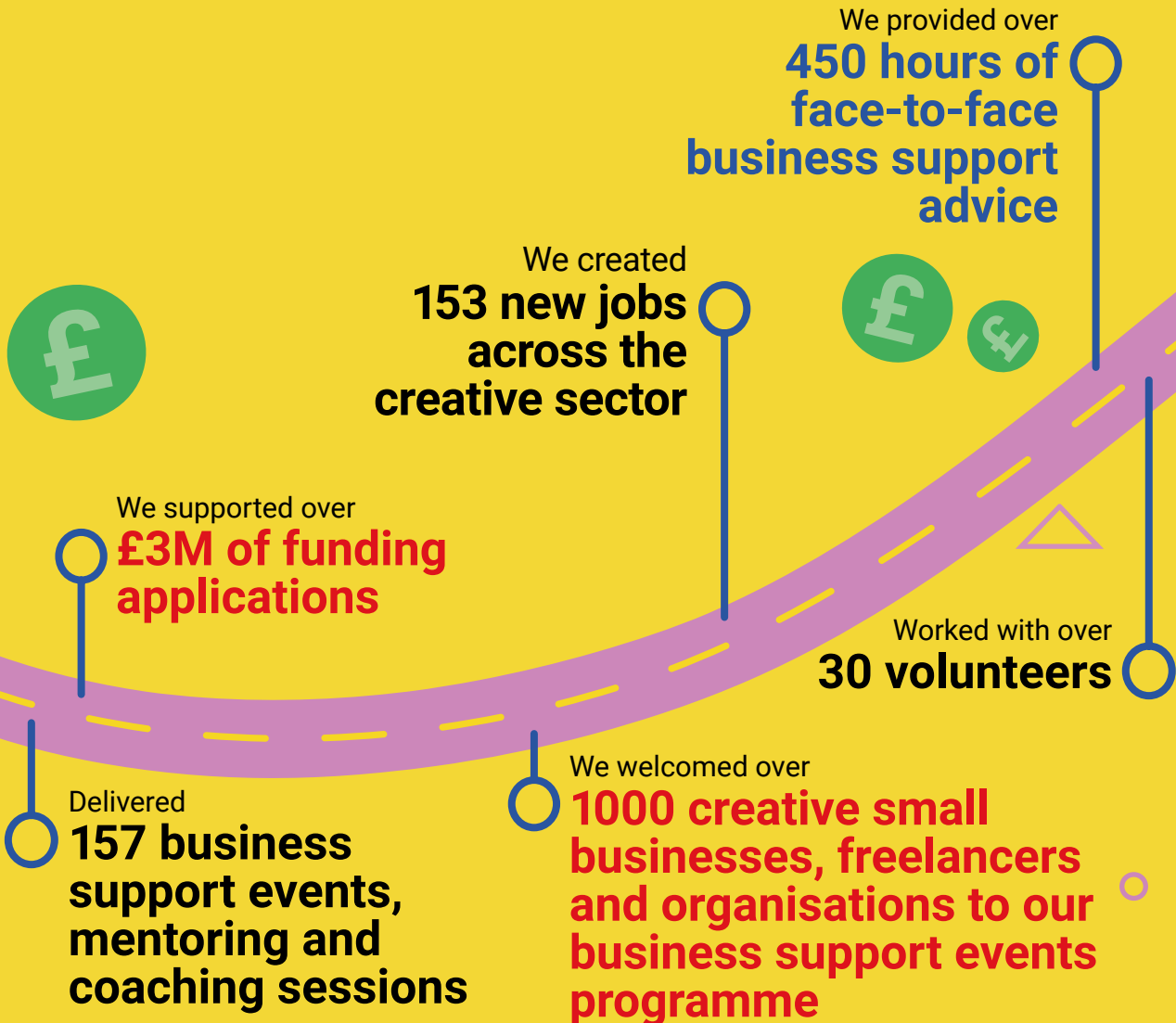
Nurturing talent via **business support,** shared learning, and developing new commissioning opportunities.

Impacts will be multifaceted - building the foundations for a **confident sector** through a nurturing environment where talent can flourish, while also igniting a platform for community engagement. Together, these will result in a diverse sustainable landscape that enriches our cultural fabric.

**Creating access** for **young people** through a mentoring and apprentice program, developing cultural leaders of the future. Platforming youth voice to be heard via a youth board.

Identifying gaps of provision and facilitating a **solution-based ecosystem** of creators via creative hubs in locations of need across the city.

# Portsmouth Creates at a Glance



Worked with over

**36 different  
community groups**

We launched our free

**Creative Directory with  
112 creatives now live**

We supported

**70 creative businesses  
to generate income at  
our We Create markets**

We supported

**12 local artists to  
retail and showcase  
their work at our  
Curating Spaces  
programme**

Partnered and engaged with

**8 schools and  
colleges**

We reached

**1.1M with our  
marketing content  
in 2024!**

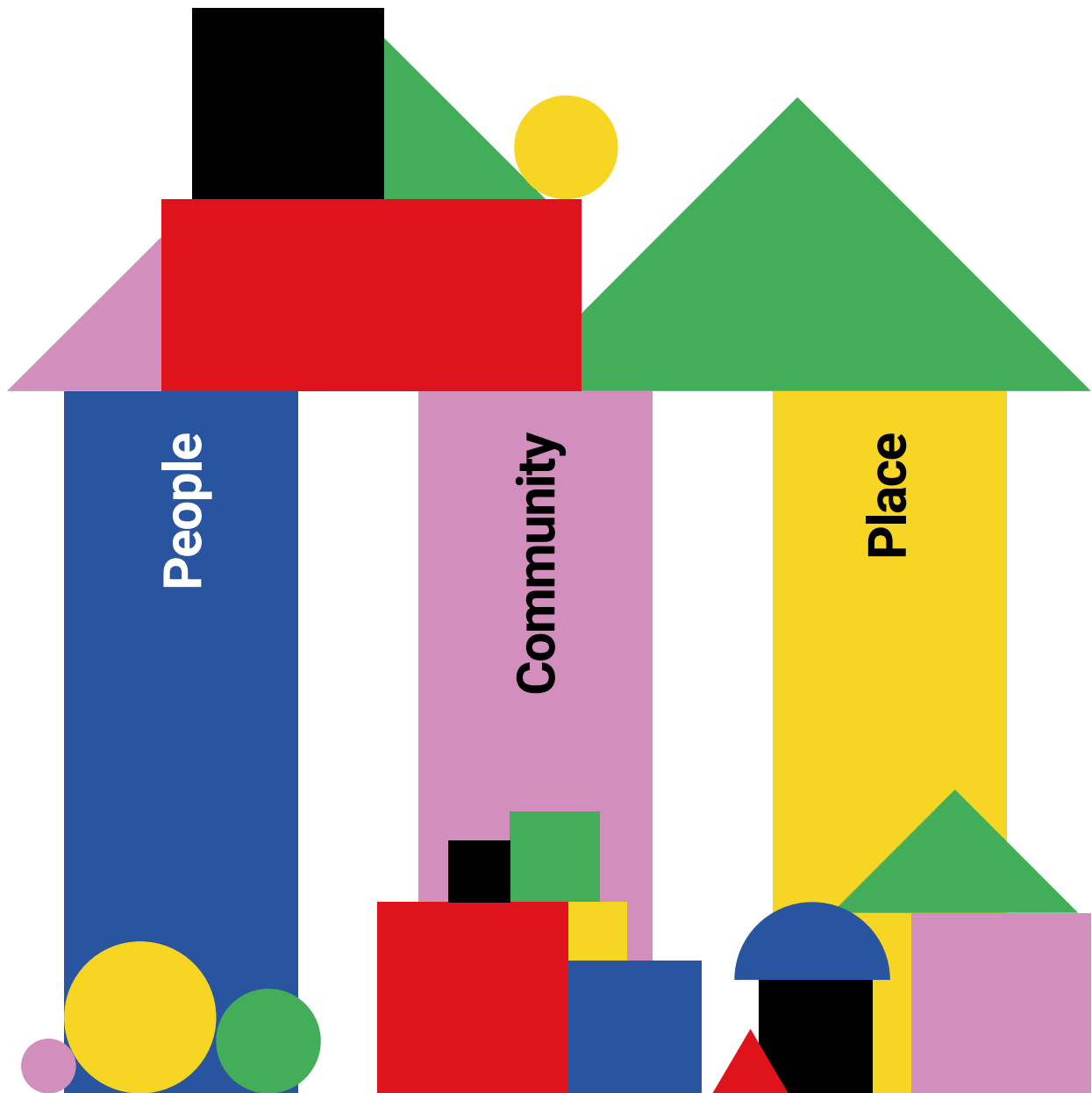
Delivered creative events across

**6 wards of the city**



# Achievements & Programme Delivery

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to the people and communities of Portsmouth. We believe that creativity thrives when it is rooted in real lives, shared experiences, and the unique character of our city. By focusing on people, we amplify local voices; by investing in community, we build belonging and collaboration; and by celebrating place, we honour unique Portsmouth's identity, heritage, and future potential.



# Pillar 1: People

We recognise ideas, explore possibilities, and champion Portsmouth's creativity - not just in all shapes and sizes, but at all stages of development.

## Portsmouth Creates Business Support Programme

The creative and cultural industries play a crucial role in driving innovation, economic growth, and cultural enrichment. Through our business support programme, which is dedicated to these industries it is essential that we nurture talent, strengthen creative enterprises, and ensure long-term sustainability. The impact of our programmes extends far beyond the individual businesses that it supports, which in turn influences the broader economy and enriches the social fabric of Portsmouth's communities.

From an economic perspective, creative industries are powerful drivers of growth. They contribute significantly to local and national economies by generating employment, attracting investment, and boosting tourism. Business support programmes provide creative entrepreneurs and enterprises with access to critical resources such as funding, training, mentorship, and networking opportunities. These initiatives

empower creatives to develop sustainable business models, scale their operations, and build resilience against market challenges. As a result, supported businesses become better equipped to innovate, increase productivity, and contribute to a diverse economic landscape.

Furthermore, creative industries often intersect with other sectors, creating ripple effects that stimulate wider economic activity. By generating cross-sector collaboration, these programmes help spark new ideas, products, and services, enhancing the region's competitiveness on a global scale.

The social impact of supporting creative industries is equally profound. Creativity has the power to connect people, celebrate cultural diversity, and build a sense of identity and belonging. Business support programmes that empower creatives directly enrich communities by providing platforms for artistic expression, storytelling, and shared experiences. This not only strengthens social cohesion but also ensures diverse voices are represented and celebrated.

Moreover, these programmes create accessible pathways for underrepresented groups to enter and thrive within the creative industries, promoting inclusivity and equity. By investing in creative

talent, we pave the way for the next generation of artists, performers, and innovators to flourish, resulting in a vibrant and dynamic cultural landscape.

In summary, a business support programme for the creative industries is a catalyst for economic vitality and social enrichment. It empowers creative individuals and enterprises to unlock their potential, driving innovation, economic prosperity, and cultural vibrancy. As the creative sector continues to grow and evolve, sustained support is essential to ensuring its continued contribution to both the economy and society at large.

Throughout 2024 we have actively worked with partners across the city to support the overall development and growth of the creative sector. Through our Place Partnership programme we have worked with Portsmouth City Council, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Business Support Programme, Shaping Portsmouth, Federation of Small Businesses and Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to facilitate and deliver a programme of activity that has actively supported the sector.

# Business Support Activity

## Business Reach & Participation

**92** businesses directly engaged

**Types of businesses;** creative freelancers, sole traders, CIC's, CIOs, SMEs, and micro-creatives

Over **450 hours** of 1:1 business support advice given

**51** mentoring and coaching sessions delivered

**157** workshops, training sessions, advice surgeries, and We Connect networking events

**Topics covered:** Fundraising, Marketing, Wellbeing at Work, Communications, Community Engagement and Co-Creation, and Commercialisation

## Capacity Building

**1,473** attendance of events

## Funding & Resources:

**£77,200** value of support-in-kind provided, adding capacity and resource to wider cultural delivery

**£1,442,636** income generation across businesses through 1:1 advice, match funds, and commissioning

**51** businesses receiving funding support and guidance

## Impact & Outcomes

**20** collaborations or partnerships formed

**153** new jobs created across the creative sector

## Long-Term Engagement

**20** ongoing mentorship and support programmes

**20** reoccurring business support candidates

# Soft Skills Development

## Communication Skills

**60% of creative businesses** have reported increased communication skills as part of the Portsmouth Creates Business Support Programme



## Collaboration & Teamwork

Through our leadership role within Portsmouth's Cultural Collective, we have been able to **identity a significant growth across collaboration and teamwork** in the city

## Leadership & Initiative

**70% of creative businesses** have reported a growth in their leadership skills

## Adaptability & Resilience

We have actively worked across the sector to explore commercial modelling that will **enable more resilience and allow businesses to adapt to the ever-changing financial landscape** of the sector

## Time & Project Management



Workshops have included sessions that focus on project management, exploring methodologies that support project delivery. **80% of attendees report they felt more confident**



## Creative Thinking & Problem Solving

We operate an open-door policy and **offer a support network for creatives** across Portsmouth. Through this approach, we encourage, talk through, and support when challenges are faced by the sector

## Networking & Relationship Building



**85% of attendees** of our We Connect networking events feel that these events are not only informative, but they are also a source of confidence building

## Confidence & Self-efficacy



**80% of businesses** that have been supported through our programme have reported a greater confidence in understanding their values and objectives as creatives from a social and economic perspective



**Case Study:**

# **Misty Ceramics**

**Celebrating the Coast Through Art**

## Background

Founded by ceramic artist Karen, Misty Ceramics began its journey two years ago with a simple yet powerful vision: **“Celebrating the Coast Through Art.”** Drawing inspiration from her love of scuba diving and coastal life, Karen channels her passion into creating unique ceramic pieces that are both functional and sculptural. Misty Ceramics also offers hands-on workshops that allow others to connect with coastal themes through art. Operating from a converted home studio, the business reflects both personal dedication and community-centred creativity.

## Innovative Practices

Misty Ceramics stands out in the local arts scene for its commitment to sustainability and innovation. A hallmark of Karen's work is the incorporation of recycled glass into her ceramic pieces. This environmentally conscious technique not only adds a distinct aesthetic value but also aligns with broader eco-friendly practices in art. Karen also engages in community outreach by:

- Collaborating with community studios to host pottery and pyrography workshops.
- Partnering with local schools on Arts Council England-supported projects, integrating arts education with environmental awareness.

## Challenges and Learnings

The transition to operating as a sole trader was initially challenging. However, in 2022, Karen participated in online training funded by Abri, which provided vital skills just before the funding program closed. Abri's support also facilitated Misty Ceramics' participation in the We Create Market during the We Shine Festival, where Karen was introduced to the team at Portsmouth Creates – a turning point for the business.

## Networking and Community Support

Portsmouth Creates played a pivotal role in building Karen's confidence and public profile. Attending their We Connect networking evenings helped Karen:

- Understand and begin using key digital marketing tools like Instagram and Canva.
- Meet fellow artists and creatives, sparking new ideas and collaborative opportunities.
- Break through initial hesitancy in promoting her work and engaging with potential clients.

These purposeful events laid the groundwork for a support network that helped Misty Ceramics grow beyond the studio.

## Collaborations and Exhibitions

A standout moment came when Karen was invited to collaborate with mixed media artist Freya Perry for the Curating Spaces exhibition at Southsea Library, hosted by Portsmouth Creates. This opportunity led to:

- Direct sales of ceramic pieces
- A commission for a custom work
- New bookings for workshops

Karen also attended an Arts Council England Funding Surgery, organised by Portsmouth Creates, which provided insights into future funding and personal development strategies.

## Future Plans and Opportunities

Looking ahead, Misty Ceramics continues to benefit from its growing visibility:

- Registration in the Portsmouth Creates Directory opens doors to broader community engagement.
- Participation in Portsmouth and South Coast Business Week 2024 led to discussions about new projects and reinforced ongoing collaborations.
- An invitation to exhibit at the Hotwalls Studios Christmas Market and to serve as a guest artist in January 2024 further cemented Karen's presence in the local creative ecosystem.

## Conclusion

Misty Ceramics' journey illustrates the power of community support, creative networking, and continuous learning. Karen's success is not only a testament to her talent but also to the vital infrastructure that Portsmouth Creates provide for emerging local artists.

***"Portsmouth Creates has supported me in raising my profile and my confidence. I've made connections, built collaborations, and found the courage to grow. None of this would have been possible without their support."***

- Karen, Founder of Misty Ceramics.

Business support goes beyond developing hard skills – it's also about nurturing lifelong soft skills. Through our business support programme, we've actively empowered local creatives to strengthen these essential skills, helping them grow both personally and professionally.

Soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, adaptability, and collaboration play a pivotal role in generating a creative mindset.

By nurturing these soft skills, individuals not only enhance their ability to think creatively but also build a strong foundation for meaningful connections and teamwork. In

essence, soft skills act as a bridge between creative potential and its practical application, transforming innovative ideas into reality. Investing in soft skills development is, therefore, a crucial step toward unlocking creativity, enabling individuals and teams to thrive in dynamic environments and push the boundaries of creative innovation.

**“Portsmouth Creates has supported me in raising my profile and my confidence.”**





**Case Study:**

# **Downtown Pompey**

# “Portsmouth Creates is doing great work in trying to bring everyone together...”

Portsmouth Creates has been pleased to work with Downtown Pompey, a performance-based organisation bringing together a variety of local communities in Portsmouth. Through queer art practices, they offer a space to explore identities while understanding that everyone has a voice and a place to be heard.

Formally set up in 2020, the organisation focuses on education, community, and professional theatre, and by using art, social work, and community awareness, this fabulous team practises ways to collectively action inclusion in all the work they do.

Being a queer-led organisation, they hold strong values around inclusion, equality, and care. This can be seen through all the recent projects they have worked on since 2020.

Speaking to Josh Breach, founder of Downtown Pompey, they said that Portsmouth Creates had helped consistently over the last few years. They said, ***“I think it’s been ongoing,***

***which has been really helpful. There have been opportunities to drop in for projects when it felt appropriate, but generally, Gemma’s been consistent with her support. That’s great for us because various things come up in our projects and we tap into Portsmouth Creates as a resource for many different things.***

***“There’s lots of support around funding, and it helps you paint that picture, which is super important. Also, having a good relationship with Gemma allows me to pick up the phone and say, “This is what’s happened, oh my gosh, what do you think? Can you help me?” That level of regular objectivity helps us to keep pushing forward.”***

When asked about various projects, Josh said, ***“What Gemma and Portsmouth Creates are particularly helpful with is understanding where we sit within the city’s landscape.”***

At Downtown Pompey, we talk a lot about our role within Portsmouth and Gemma’s good at putting that perspective on it, which has been

great.

***“A particular project to note was when we were putting together our press pack for the heritage project. Lucy and Gemma gave us great ideas on how to pull that press pack together, which we had never done before. The ability to be part of that upskilling process is super beneficial. It’s got many prongs, and it’s hard to condense all the support they’ve given into bite-sized pieces, but stuff like that is where we’ve really benefited.”***

Working with Portsmouth Creates isn’t just about funding but also giving workshops and providing organisations and individuals in the city the tools and scope to gain what they need. Josh loved support with strategic development. They said, “It has been important for us to think about commercial strategies as well as funding opportunities. I feel the team at Portsmouth Creates has been great at being responsive to what people need from them, which helps my team as it means we feel we are appreciated and listened to.

Talking of struggles over the last 4 years, Josh said, *"It's the personal stuff, like understanding that certain doors feel closed, and conversations are hard. Portsmouth Creates have offered the objective to support and mitigate challenges. For organisations of my size, having that level of expertise and guidance is unbelievably beneficial."*

When asked about the projects that Downtown Pompey has brought to the city, Josh said, *"Generally, we work on many things at once. With Portsmouth Creates, it's been their infrastructural support that's most valuable. They provide ongoing support regardless of the project,*

*and that really helps us as a team."*

Josh said that if Portsmouth Creates weren't here in the city, it would have made trying to maintain and develop projects in Portsmouth a lot harder. They said, *"It just makes things easier to manage with their infrastructure support and mentorship. The relationship is growing and developing, and I can see us working more closely with them in the future. Trusting organisations and individuals in our work is a massive thing for me."*

Speaking of the future, the city needs to look at ways of helping the community and how that can

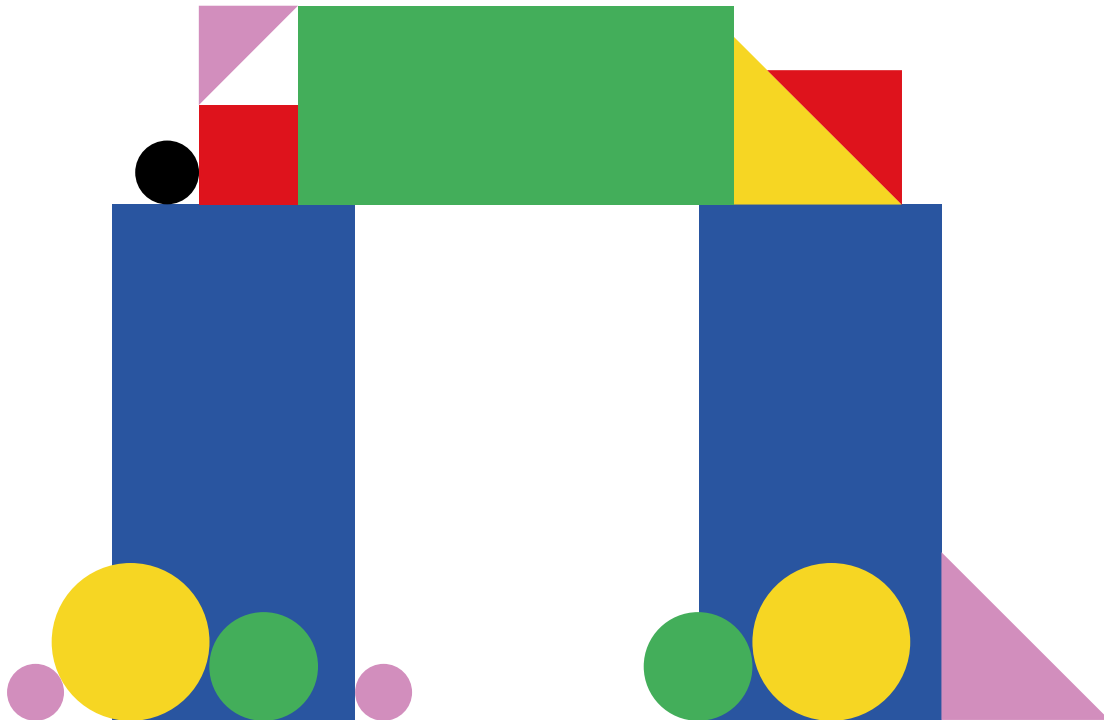
be done effectively. Josh said they feel there needs to be more strategic development and communication. They said, *"Portsmouth Creates is doing great work in trying to bring everyone together, and I see that moving forward positively. It's a challenge, but their efforts to cultivate new relationships and work collaboratively are significant."*

“They provide ongoing support regardless of the project and that really helps us as a team.”



# Bridging the Skills Gap

Portsmouth Creates, in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth and the Solent Growth Partnership, strategically spearheaded the development and delivery of a transformative Creative Management Skills Bootcamp to empower local creatives. This initiative aimed to strengthen the creative ecosystem by equipping artists, designers, writers, and many other creative practitioners with essential skills to enhance their careers and expand their impact.



The Bootcamp provided targeted training in critical areas such as project management, digital marketing, and leadership, ensuring participants gained practical, actionable insights tailored to the unique challenges faced by creatives. By focusing on these key competencies, the programme not only enhanced individual skill sets but also bolstered the capacity of creative enterprises to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape.

In 2024, Portsmouth Creates successfully delivered three courses, offering over 30 local creatives free access to this comprehensive programme. The initiative not only upskilled participants but also generated a network of empowered creative professionals poised to drive innovation and contribute meaningfully to the region's cultural and economic growth.

### Practice what we preach!

We know that as a team, we need to ensure that we can actively support the growth of the creative sector with confidence. Here at Portsmouth Creates, we are committed to supporting the growth of our team. In 2024, we have supported two members of the team with their own professional development.

*"Be bold, be brave! The AMA Conference is always an inspiring experience, offering a wealth of insights across a range of topics and skill levels. Over the two days, I gained new knowledge, fresh perspectives, and practical*

*takeaways. I particularly enjoyed Building a Multi-Year Strategy, AI Fundamentals and Ideas, Ethics, and the Rikki Beadle-Blair session. It's helped reconnect me with the arts marketing as a community, provided me with confidence in tackling creative challenges, and has given me the tools to approach my work with renewed energy. Moving forward, I feel more equipped to innovate and make a real impact for Portsmouth Creates."*

### Lucy-Jane Fitzpatrick

Marketing and Communications Manager, Portsmouth Creates

*"Undertaking 100 hours in 14 weeks of tutorials (4 hours each), booster workshops (2 hours each) and 1-1s (1 hour each), the Digital Marketing Skills Boot Camp is not for the 'faint-hearted'... Funded through the Solent Partners Scheme and facilitated by Get Set For Skills and YTKO, I feel I have now developed a range of valuable new skills. These include proficiency in data analysis,*

*digital marketing strategies, and the use of industry-standard tools such as Google Analytics, Google Search Console, Ahrefs, Capcut, and Canva. Gaining hands-on experience with these platforms will enable me to apply digital skills effectively, particularly in interpreting data insights and creating compelling visual content.*

*Moving forward, these new skills will enhance my personal CPD portfolio and enable me to contribute more effectively to digital tasks, whether by optimising online campaigns, making data-driven decisions, or improving the overall business's digital presence. Having spent 30 years managing traditional marketing strategies, I now feel more confident with the digital aspect of marketing."*

### Jane Hodgkins

Project Officer, Portsmouth Creates

**“...I feel more equipped to innovate and make a real impact for Portsmouth Creates.”**



In addition, we also saw the arrival of Dylan and Jasmine, who joined us as part of the Artsworld Breakthrough programme. The Breakthrough programme is a paid 6-month training and work-based learning programme run by Artsworld, where organisations such as Portsmouth Creates take on young trainees. The training is delivered by the Artsworld team but was also amplified with in-house and external training opportunities such as Arts Marketing Association training.

Dylan joined us to develop her skills in Event Coordination – here's her account of the experience:

*"My journey working on We Shine started on the 28th of October, with the first meeting I had with Gemma about We Shine as a whole. At that point, I was still fresh into Portsmouth Creates, having only been there for roughly a month. We discussed where it would be taking*

*place, who would be speaking, what the invitation would look like, if there would be catering, and if there were any places in the area that would fit for the launch event specifically. For a while afterward, my main three tasks were to look for places that would fit the catering for the launch, to log any RSVP emails, and to create a running order for the launch event. I was slightly nervous going into this as this would be my first large scale event that I would be working on, but I also went into it thinking that any mistakes I made anyways would be a learning experience for me.*

*Through my experiences, I started to grow more confident in talking to people and in actually asking other people for help when I needed it, since I never used to that much and struggled to due to being very introverted. But as of recently, it is not as much of an issue as it used to be for me anymore. Communicating with people, both online and in*

*person, became much less stressful because everyone I worked alongside was welcoming, kind, and patient with me – especially since I was still very new and didn't know certain things.*

*Something that I learnt to do slightly closer to the launch event was how to properly write a risk assessment. While I had a very slight small experience with this earlier into my college life, I hadn't had a proper go at writing or putting one together until fairly recently, where I was writing one about the one place I would be working at for the next few days over the span of the event, St Mary's Church. I initially thought that writing a risk assessment would be like being extremely anxious of everything around you and how it could go wrong – which in some ways it is – but now I see it as just being extra careful and mindful of the things around you.*

*To me it was so interesting to see the inner workings of what goes into a large-scale project like We Shine - to see how every part contributes to the overall project. When the day of the event came, I was excited to finally work on my first event, and on arrival to St Mary's Church, I was immediately put to work on preparing the launch event by setting up tables, pouring drinks, and putting up the pull-up banners, which had our branding on them, awaiting when everyone would arrive.*

*As more people started to arrive, I realised I had underestimated the*

number of people that would be attending and started to pour drinks faster as more people were coming over. As the launch event went on, I got to speak to a lot of people briefly and got to see the incredible new installation that was put into the church. Once the launch event had come to an end, I went outside to see many people flooding the various installations, which was a delight to see.

The next day came, and I arrived around 4pm, where I was swiftly put on to the Circle of Hope installation. From what I saw while I was there, it was one of the most crowded installations since in a way, I thought it appealed to most, if not all, age groups. I got to help a lot of children and some adults with putting up

their hearts. Everyone was so appreciative and polite about asking for help to put them up, which I was very happy to do. However, since I was also in charge of handing out the zip ties to put them up, it did make a small delay. Personally, that one was of my favourite installations out of the ones I saw at St Mary's.

Next was the Festival of Light parade. I started having to try and herd people away from where the parade would be moving through, which admittedly I wasn't the best at, but there were other people there to help, which was appreciated. I was surprised at how well choreographed and in-sync all of the drummers were while guiding a massive group of people behind them. After that, the rest of the parade carried on

smoothly, where they had a final performance in the middle of the field outside the church, which so many people came to watch. Overall, while it was sad that everything wouldn't be running on Saturday, it probably did help the number of people that were attending on the Friday in fear of missing out on the opportunity of seeing everything.

The prep for the event all the way from the middle of October was a very new experience for me. While I had done semi-similar things during college, that was more doing it in practice at a much smaller scale in comparison to We Shine. I was given the opportunity to learn so many new things through hands-on experience, rather than the traditional way I was taught in college, where someone simply talked at you about what you needed to do – something I never found to be a valuable source of learning. Now, I feel like I could confidently do something like a risk assessment after doing one for everything at St Mary's.

In terms of personal skills, I feel like that through doing this my confidence in talking to people and my confidence overall has gotten better, as has being able to ask for help when I need it, as I have struggled with that for a long time."

**Dylan James-Yeoman**  
Breakthrough Candidate 2024/5

“Communicating with people both online and in person became so much less stressful for me since everyone I was working alongside was very welcoming and kind...”

You said... We did...

# Portsmouth Creative Directory

As a team, we actively believe in consultation and collaboration as key components to our delivery. Through this methodology, we ensure that the voice of the creative sector is front and centre. As part of the Business Support programme, our regular We Connect networking events give the sector the opportunity to come together and outline their needs for greater sector growth. Through this consultation method, we identified a need to create a free digital platform that would showcase and promote the creatives from across Portsmouth. In response to this, the Portsmouth Creative Directory was developed and launch in January 2024.

In 2024, we saw:







## Mentoring Matters

Mentoring plays a crucial role in shaping the success and growth of businesses and individuals, offering guidance, wisdom, and support that extend far beyond day-to-day operations. In the dynamic and often unpredictable creative sector, mentorship creates a bridge between experience and ambition, providing individuals and organisations with the tools to navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and build meaningful connections. Whether it's through one-on-one coaching, peer-to-

peer networking, or organisational mentorship programmes, the insights and encouragement gained from seasoned professionals empower mentees to make informed decisions, develop essential skills, and cultivate the confidence needed to thrive. Beyond personal development, mentoring creates a culture of collaboration and innovation, strengthening the broader creative community by promoting knowledge-sharing and creating pathways for sustainable growth. In essence, mentorship serves as a catalyst for transformation, helping those not only to survive but flourish in an ever-changing landscape.

### Outcomes:

- 51 mentoring and coaching sessions delivered via the business support programme
- 73 mentoring sessions as part of We Shine
- 13 young people as part Young Creates at We Create
- Partnership with Liverpool, We Shine and River of Light, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange



## Sector Specifics

This year, our work has focused on supporting development across artform. Our sector-specific approach in driving the growth and resilience of the creative sector focuses on disciplines ranging from visual and performing arts to music and many more. We've seen how this targeted approach has supported creative exchange and innovation, diversification of practice, and the expansion of audiences. At the same time, we have actively played a key role in the advocacy for individual sectors, allowing us to respond to

the unique challenges and begin to unlock their full potential locally and regionally.

In response to this, we have actively played a role across the following sector specific forums and development groups:

- Portsmouth Cultural Collective
- Solent Cultural Forum
- Solent Growth Partnership Business Board
- Portsmouth Visual Arts Network
- Portsmouth Cultural Education Partnership
- Portsmouth City Alliance
- Portsmouth Health & Wellbeing Board
- Portsmouth Seafront Development

Group

- Solent Regional Film Office Development
- Portsmouth Music Sector Growth Working Group



# Pillar 2: Community

We work with, for, and in communities, co-creating across Portsmouth to animate spaces, supporting creative engagement and opportunities.

## We Shine 2024:

2024 saw the return of We Shine in the city. We Shine is a free hyper-local combined arts and light festival that transforms Portsmouth into an accessible, vibrant gallery of illuminated installations by local, national, and international artists. The festival features mesmerising light displays and interactive experiences that take place on the doorsteps of communities in locations such as Fratton, Hilsea, and Charles Dickens Ward.



1,403

Community Participation  
Pre-Event

1,110

Community Participation  
Live-Event

78

Paid Roles

16

National Artists

22

Paid Commissions  
Delivered

36

Community Groups  
Involved

60k

Attendees

11

International  
Artists

769

Community  
Participation  
Workshops

1,026

Children and Young  
People Participation –  
Live-Event

73

Mentoring  
Programme  
Participation

12

Pieces of Press /  
Media Coverage

We Shine

**42k**

Facebook  
Engagements

**218k**

Instagram  
Impressions

**882k**

Combined Press  
Audience Reach

**18,500**

Advertising Value Equivalent

**300k**

Outdoor Advertising  
Opportunity To See Value

**232,500**

Facebook Reach

**260,300**

Instagram Video Views

**107,800**

Instagram Reach

**984,500**

Facebook Video Views

**463**

Children and Young  
People Participation –  
Creative Education

**71**

Business Support  
Programmes – Skills  
Development

**at a Glance**

# We Shine - Highlights

This year's event was linked back to our strategic objective of sector growth and had a strong sense of mentoring and artistic development throughout.

## 1. Heinrich & Palmer Collaboration

Renowned artists Heinrich & Palmer mentored three MA Interior Architecture students from the University of Portsmouth. Together, they designed a light installation to complement Heinrich & Palmer's main projection, "Once a Sea," displayed inside St. Mary's Church in Fratton. The students' complementary piece was showcased in the churchyard, highlighting community and creativity.

## 2. Limbic Cinema's "Forged in Water"

Limbic Cinema's "Forged in Water" installation immersed viewers in underwater worlds. Local students contributed by creating animations for water projections at Hilsea Lido. Additionally, local musician VESPER composed music for the installation, enhancing the collaborative experience.

## 3. Young Creatives at We Create Market

Partnering with HSDC and City of Portsmouth College, We Shine provided young makers and creatives the opportunity to showcase their talents at the We Create Market's 'Young Creatives' area. This mentorship enabled participants to develop new products and engage with the community, nurturing their creative growth and contributing to Portsmouth's cultural landscape.

## 4. Thomas Buckley's "A Hand, Held"

Artist Thomas Buckley collaborated with young people from Motiv8 and Portsmouth Creates to develop "A Hand, Held," an interactive projection at Hilsea. Through workshops at The Base, participants developed digital skills, creating visuals and sounds for a large-scale installation on Hilsea Bridge. The installation invited visitors to engage by holding hands, triggering dynamic projections and soundscapes.

## 5. Splodge Designs Workshops

Students from The Portsmouth Academy and The Madani Academy participated in stop-motion animation workshops led by Splodge Designs and Fratton Together. Over three sessions, students explored storytelling, set and character creation, and animation filming inspired by fossils. Their animations

were showcased at St. Mary's Church during the festival.

## 6. Liverpool and Portsmouth

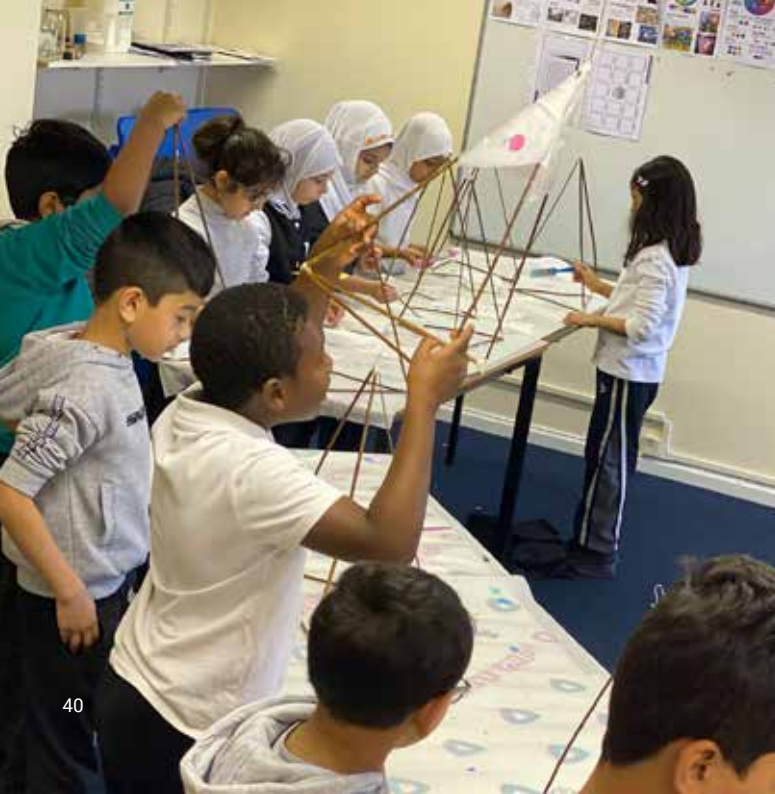
This year the team at Portsmouth Creates worked with Culture Liverpool, which delivers an annual Light Art event, River of Light. This outdoor gallery-style event is free for communities to enjoy and bears many similarities to We Shine. Working collectively, we explored an opportunity to showcase international commissions in Portsmouth through shared resources, introductions, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

***"Ultimately, We Shine has enabled me to realise a vision of an ambitious new work and to present that to a public audience. I now intend to develop the work to apply to exhibit in other light festivals around the country"***

***"We Shine has opened up a new world. I have been on a massive journey of learning and understanding new technologies, in particular, LED lighting and programming. Watching the public engage with the work has engendered further research on the effects of light and colour"***

***"Collaborating in We Shine has made me think of art in a public space and how people react to it. It has made me think of other ideas that can be produced within a public space and how animated light can be combined with physical art"***





As a combined arts festival, we are committed to partnering and showcasing many different artforms in an accessible way. Below outlines some of the programme elements. 2024's programme included visual arts, performing arts, film, music, and digital.

## Community Engagement Programme:

As part of the We Shine 2024 festival, animation workshops took place the lead up to the festival at Madani Academy and The Portsmouth Academy Secondary Schools. Led by the team at Splodge Designs, these workshops introduced pupils to the art of stop-motion animation, exploring the theme of Fossils.

- **Madani Academy:** 12 Year 5-6 girls worked in three groups to create their animations, developing storytelling and technical skills.
- **The Portsmouth Academy:** 16 young people participated, each crafting unique animations that reflected their creativity and collaboration.

The final animations were proudly exhibited on screens at St Mary's Fratton during the event, offering students the chance to showcase their hard work and artistic expression to the wider community.

## Community Lantern Making Workshops

In preparation for the Fratton Parade, Splodge Designs led a series of lantern-making workshops organised by Fratton Together, bringing diverse community members together in creative collaboration. Each workshop encouraged participants to craft illuminated lanterns, adding a magical glow to the parade.

- **November 2024 – The Deaf Centre, Fratton:** Six adults and two Splodge members created fish fossil-shaped lanterns from willow wood, wrapping battery-powered lighting wires around the frames.
- **Half-term Workshops at Manor School, Fratton:** Over 150 lanterns were crafted and stored for the parade, demonstrating enthusiastic community engagement.
- **November 2024 – Madani Academy, Fratton:** Two sessions with 16 children per group produced Fossil Frame Lanterns, with pupils layering tissue paper over wooden triangular frames, adding black fossil shapes, and inserting lights for a luminous effect.
- **November 2024 – Portsmouth Girl Guides, Buckland Reform Church:** 21 Girl Guides aged 10-14 applied the same techniques to create additional lanterns, which were distributed at the start of the parade.

## Community Dance Performance: Once a Sea Exhibition

The Portsmouth Academy Dance Company added another layer of artistic expression by performing a dance piece at St Mary's Church in response to the Once a Sea exhibition by Heinrich and Palmer.

After nearly two months of dedicated after-school rehearsals, the dancers delivered a deeply moving performance that resonated with the audience, complementing the emotional themes of the exhibition.

## Outcomes

Through the community engagement programme, we achieved the following outcomes:

- **Increased Participation:** Residents of all ages engaged in creative projects, strengthening their connection to the community.
- **Enhanced Social Engagement:** Participants collaborated across schools and community groups, building lasting relationships.
- **Transformed Public Spaces:** Artistic contributions illuminated public spaces, celebrating creativity through exhibitions and performances.
- **Positive Mental Health Impact:** Many participants expressed feelings of fulfilment, relaxation, and accomplishment, showcasing the wider social value of artistic expression.

## What you told us

This year, we worked with our Founding Partners – the University of Portsmouth – to gain a greater understanding of the impacts of We Shine in our community.

Through the participant and visitor feedback, we noted that We Shine was widely praised for generating community pride, creativity, and connection. Participants saw it as a symbol of the city's potential, appreciating its family-friendly atmosphere and artistic showcases. Highlights included St. Mary's Church involvement and drumming performances as part of the Lantern Parade, though there were calls for better advertising, accessibility, and logistical planning. The feedback received emphasised the need for more creative spaces, especially for children and families, and a desire for more diverse events with broader cultural representation. Overall, the community expressed enthusiasm for future events and a strong interest in enhancing Portsmouth's cultural landscape with inclusivity and engagement at its core.

## Outcomes

### Visitor Demographics:

- Estimated **c.60,000 attendees**
- **40% of respondents** had not visited **We Shine** before, indicating that the festival is attracting **new audiences**.
- The remaining **60%** had attended on **previous occasions**.

- The survey was primarily conducted among **visitors to St. Mary's**, with **26%** stating this would be the **only site** they would visit.
- The majority (**74%**) intended to visit **other festival sites**:

- **63%** planned to visit **Victoria Park**.
- Other popular locations included **Casemates Studios (14%)**, **Hilsea Moat and Lido (23%)**, and **Fratton Together Festival (21%)**.

### Sources of Information:

- Respondents primarily learned about We Shine through:
- **Social media (44%)**,
- **Previous festival attendance (39%)**,
- **Personal contacts (34%)**,
- **General advertising (14%)**.

### Resident Profile:

**Portsmouth residents (81%).**

- **79%** had lived in the city for over **5 years**.
  - Most respondents lived within **3 miles of St. Mary's Church**.
- Travel to the Event:**

- Most respondents travelled to the festival sites by:

- **Foot (46%)**,
- **Car (35%)**,
- **Bus (11%)**.

## Demographics by Gender and Age:

- **69%** of respondents were **women**, **28%** were **men**, and **2%** identified as **non-binary**.
- The largest age group was **30-49 years old (48%)**, followed by:
- **50-69 years old (24%)**,
- **Under 29 years old (23%)**.

## Thank you to our We Shine partners



### Founding Partners



### Official Accommodation Provider



### Community Partners



### Shining Stars







# We Create

The We Create Market, initiated by Portsmouth Creates, serves as a vital platform for local artisans, designers, and makers to showcase and sell their products. Established during the COVID-19 pandemic, the market addressed the need for a spacious, safe, and affordable indoor venue where local creatives could not only exhibit their products but also retail and gain profile amongst new audiences.

The inaugural market took place in September 2020 in the former Debenhams building in Southsea. Its success led to subsequent markets, providing opportunities for over 180 local exhibitors across multiple weekends. In 2024 we delivered two We Create markets, with the support from our Founding Partners, Victorious Festival. The markets took place at Victorious Festival itself and also as part of We Shine located within Pitt Street Skatepark. Through this platform, we actively supported over 70 local artists, makers, and creators, giving them exposure to a local audience of c.300,000.

This year, the We Create Market introduced a brand-new initiative created for Portsmouth's next generation of artists and makers: the **Young Creates Area!** In partnership with HSDC (Havant & South Downs College) and City of Portsmouth College, We Shine supported emerging local creatives, providing them with a unique opportunity to

develop their skills, gain hands-on experience, and showcase their work in a real-world market setting.

Students from HSDC and City of Portsmouth College were invited to participate in an extra-curricular mentorship programme titled **Young Creates**. Young people learnt the essential skills for taking a creative product from concept to the marketplace, learning the fundamentals of product research and development, design, creative mediums, packaging, marketing, event planning, sales, and risk management – skills that go beyond the traditional classroom curriculum.

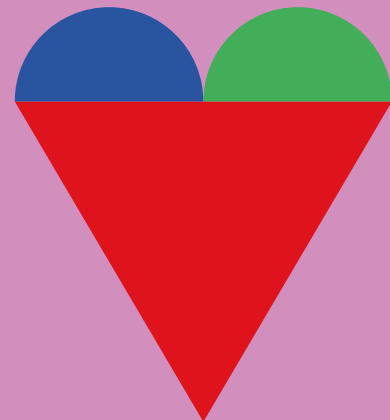
The Young Creates area at the We Create Market is a launching pad for these students, giving them a chance to apply what they've learned in a supported environment. Not only do they gain real-world trading experience, but they also have the opportunity to engage with their community and showcase their creations alongside established local artists. To make the experience even more accessible, each participating student receives a small bursary from Portsmouth Creates, covering materials and production costs, ensuring they can trade without financial risk.

The Young Creates area gives these emerging talents a platform to showcase their work, engage with the community, and be part of Portsmouth's creative scene. By nurturing the creativity of these young makers, We Shine supported

a vibrant, innovative future for the city's creative landscape.

## Outcomes:

- 70 local artists, creatives, and makers supported
- Product exposure and visibility to a local footfall of c.300,000
- 13 young people supported through the Young Creates initiative
- £650 bursary committed to young people to support their product development
- 360 hours of mentoring and advice given to young people to further support their career development



# We Connect

This year, we delivered five **We Connect events** as part of the We Connect event series. Our We Connect event series is all about connecting local artists, cultural organisations, creatives, and community groups to collaborate and build capacity.

In response to our ongoing consultation with the sector, each of our **We Connect Networking** events are themed to support sector growth. Throughout 2024, we responded to the themes of fundraising, marketing, inclusion, and wellbeing in the workplace. Our We Connect Networking welcomed over 1000 creatives over the course of the year.

**We Connect Conference 2024, Connecting Us**, was delivered to actively support peer-to-peer knowledge exchange across community engagement and co-creation. Throughout the event, we curated meaningful discussions, strengthened community connections, and explored how creative engagement, participation, and co-creation can support active and meaningful change across communities and place.

Delegates participated in panel discussions, whilst having the opportunity to hear from inspiring speakers who shared local, regional, national, and international case studies of co-creation and production. The event provided a

platform for the sector to learn, exchange ideas, and connect with the ambitions to create lasting impact through their work with communities in Portsmouth.

Speakers included Pompey in the Community, Zoieologic Dance Theatre, Culture Liverpool Eurovision 2023, The Mary Rose Museum, The Hive, and Urbond.







# Pillar 3: Place

We work in collaboration across the city to put Portsmouth on the map for its creativity, our communities, and our collective ambition.

In 2023, Portsmouth Creates was awarded Place Partnership Project grant funding from Arts Council. Place Partnership funding is a strategic place-based intervention intended to make a long-term difference to the cultural and/or creative life of the local community, creating a clear step change in provision in that place. It is informed by robust needs analysis and responds to local strategies and is led by a consortium of partners who are relevant to delivering the project.

We are pleased to be working with a diverse group of partners from across the city and beyond who are collectively striving to achieve the step changes set out within our objectives of creative sector growth. Below outlines our Place Partnership delivery partners:

- Portsmouth City Council
- University of Portsmouth
- Victorious Festival
- The Hive
- Shaping Portsmouth
- Solent Growth Partnership
- Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
- Multiple community gateway organisations

All of these partners have made a significant contribution and impact to our collective achievements to date for the Place Partnership programme.

## Founding Partners:

Portsmouth Creates is a unique cultural initiative built on the foundations of collaboration, community, and creativity. Established through a visionary partnership between Portsmouth City Council, Victorious Festival, and the University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Creates represents a bold and collective commitment to nurturing and growing the city's creative sector.

These founding partners bring together the public, private, and academic sectors in a shared mission: to unlock Portsmouth's creative potential, enrich cultural life, and drive inclusive economic growth. By aligning strategically with local priorities and regional development plans, Portsmouth Creates acts as a catalyst, supporting creative practitioners, engaging communities, and driving sustainable growth opportunities across the city.

As we reflect on our progress this year, we celebrate the power of partnership in transforming ambition into action. Together, we are building a more vibrant, resilient, and creative Portsmouth.



# Victorious Festival and Portsmouth Creates

The vital partnership and support from Victorious Festival has enabled us to deliver more for the community of Portsmouth in 2024. Once again, we proudly joined forces to celebrate and amplify local creativity, culture, and community spirit. This dynamic partnership allowed us to provide a vibrant platform for artists, makers, and performers to showcase their talents at one of the UK's most exciting and growing music and arts festivals.

The relationship between Portsmouth Creates and Victorious Festival exemplifies a strategic alliance rooted in shared values: celebrating local culture, amplifying grassroots talent, and enhancing civic pride through creativity. Victorious Festival, as one of the UK's premier coastal music festivals, provides a high-profile platform for Portsmouth Creates to deliver inclusive, community-focused cultural programming.

The partnership extends much further than Victorious Festival itself, with the whole Victorious Festival team supporting multiple areas of delivery across the city...

## 1. Portsmouth Creates Hub at Victorious Festival 2024

At the heart of this collaboration is the Portsmouth Creates Hub – a dedicated space within the festival site from 23rd–25th August, designed to showcase and elevate the city's cultural identity. By providing a professionally equipped stage with lighting, PA, and sound crew, the partnership enables a three-day grassroots music programme, directly investing in local artists through performance fees and pre-event coordination.

Complementing the music programme is the We Create Market, an entrepreneurial platform for 16 local traders housed in purpose-built cabins, with additional creative spaces supported by gazebos. Working in partnership with the concessions team from Victorious Festival, collectively we ensure seamless trader involvement through managed applications, communications, and on-site logistics. Meanwhile, the support from the site crew facilitates the installation, maintenance, and enhancement of market infrastructure, ensuring a safe and vibrant space for visitors and participants alike.

Crucially, this partnership extends beyond logistics, it amplifies local voices through strategic marketing, with the Portsmouth Creates area featured across the Victorious Festival website, app, social media,

and an interactive site map. Post-event content, including photography and a specially commissioned video for We Shine 2024, helps to document and celebrate the city's cultural footprint.

Operationally, Victorious Festival also support with managing the financial administration for artists, traders, and equipment, ensuring fair and timely payment. In addition to the We Create market, in 2024 we worked with Victorious Festival to utilise an opportunity to host guests and stakeholders as part of a City Alliance project alongside colleagues from Shaping Portsmouth, The Hive, Portsmouth Pride and Portsmouth City Council. This opportunity provided us with a platform to engage with prospective investors and cultural stakeholders to support reinforcing our roles as a catalyst for collaboration and investment in Portsmouth's creative future.

Through the Portsmouth Creates hub, collectively we are building a more inclusive, dynamic, and economically resilient cultural landscape, one that places local talent and community creativity at the centre of the city's ongoing regeneration.

## 2. We Shine 2024:

The continued partnership between Portsmouth Creates and Victorious Festival is a cornerstone in the city's broader cultural strategy, driving economic opportunity, community pride, and creative growth. This





collaboration extends far beyond the festival itself and continues to showcase itself at the forefront of delivery for We Shine through event planning, operational delivery, civic and private sector engagement.

Victorious Festival plays a critical role in event management and infrastructure logistics, liaising with local authorities to ensure safe, inclusive, and professionally executed public events. Through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and working together, they have actively supported us with a dedicated team of staff and on-site Hub Managers, the help to oversee live operations and production across the festival, and provision of additional site crew during festival days to ensure a seamless experience for participants and audiences across the city.

Marketing and communication efforts are equally robust, with Victorious Festival supporting to deliver a full suite of design assets for digital and print, managing media relations, and driving audience engagement through event specific marketing. The commitment to marketing and communications extends further with the dedicated support around photography filming and content creation, enabling us to actively tell our story and that too of local artists and communities.

From a logistical standpoint, the Victorious Festival site crew supports the full end-to-end delivery of the event, from transporting and constructing installations and infrastructure to overseeing lighting,

and fencing, right through to site derig. This professional backbone enables an ambitious and safe site build, that has accessibility and safety at its core.

At the We Create Market, Victorious Festival leads the management of local traders, handling applications, invoicing, and site logistics. By supporting small businesses and creative entrepreneurs with infrastructure, coordination, and promotion, the market provides a vital platform for economic participation and cultural visibility. Accounting and financial management ensure transparency and timely payments across all operations, from trader fees to production costs, helping us to sustain trust and reliability in the sector.

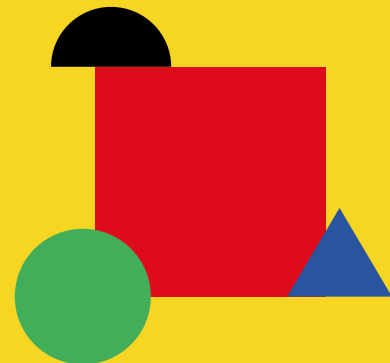
Through this comprehensive and deeply collaborative approach, Portsmouth Creates and Victorious Festival continue to shape a vibrant, connected, and creatively empowered city, demonstrating how cultural partnerships can be powerful drivers of regeneration, community cohesion, and economic resilience.

### **3. Office Infrastructure and Operational Support**

Victorious Festival has provided supported to Portsmouth Creates across several key operational areas, significantly contributing to the organisation's growth and stability. This includes the provision of office

space one day per week, offering a dedicated and professional environment for collaboration and planning.

Additionally, Victorious Festival helped to manage Portsmouth Creates' financial administration, ensuring sound financial oversight and compliance. Their support extended to IT infrastructure, equipping the organisation with the necessary digital tools and systems to operate efficiently. Furthermore, Victorious Festival played an active role in organisational development, helping to strengthen internal structures and build long-term sustainability.



# University of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Creates

The collaboration between the University of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Creates in 2024 has been instrumental in advancing the city's cultural and creative ecosystem. This strategic partnership has delivered a series of impactful initiatives that engage students, support emerging talent, and contribute to the city's cultural planning and development.

## Key Collaborative Activities in 2024

### 1. Mentoring Programme for Students – We Shine Festival

University students were paired with creative professionals as part of a structured mentoring scheme connected to the We Shine festival. This initiative provided valuable industry insight, practical based learning, creative career guidance, and networking opportunities for students while supporting local cultural programming. As part of the commitment to enable collaborative

learning and artistic development for students, a mentoring programme was initiated in parallel with Heinrich & Palmer's Once a Sea project, which was exhibited at St Mary's Church during the festival. This initiative invited students to explore and reflect on the ecologies and histories of space, considering both the built and natural environments. The mentoring process served as an open and evolving framework rather than a prescriptive model, encouraging a responsive approach to the themes emerging from the artists' work. It was conceived as a starting point for dialogue and investigation, with the potential lines of enquiry developed collaboratively between university staff, students, and the artists themselves.

### Key elements of the programme included:

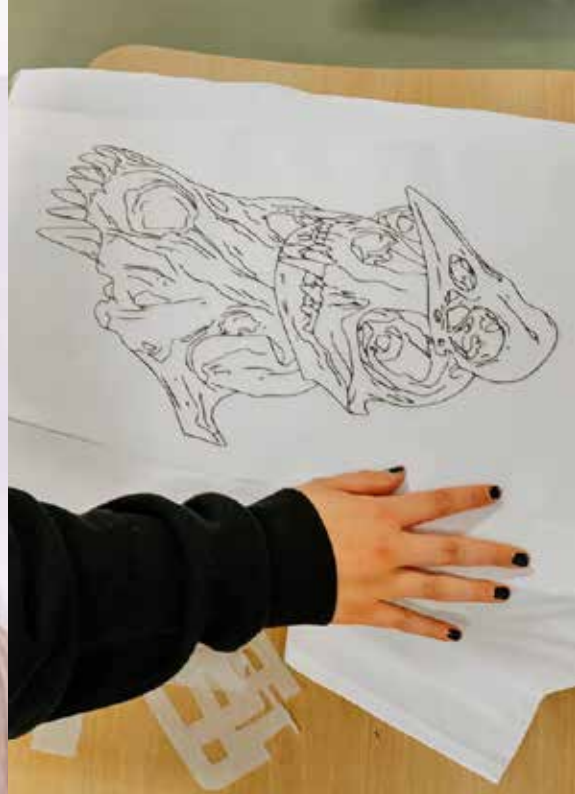
- Up to six 1.5-hour mentoring sessions with artists Anna Heinrich and Leon Palmer, delivered either online or in person.
  - Creative guidance and support tailored to each student's area of interest, helping to shape their contributions to the final event.
- This initiative not only deepened engagement with the festival's artistic programme but also generated meaningful connections between academic exploration and contemporary creative practice.

### 2. Creative Management Skills Bootcamps

Together, University of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Creates delivered a dynamic series of Skills Bootcamps designed to build entrepreneurial and leadership capabilities specifically tailored to the needs of the creative industries. Recognising that creativity alone is not enough to sustain a successful career, these intensive sessions equipped students and early-career creatives with essential tools to navigate the realities of working in the sector. Participants gained practical knowledge in project management, business planning, and financial literacy, alongside a deeper understanding of how creative economies function both locally and nationally.

Through boosting confidence and resilience, the bootcamps helped creatives to not only refine their artistic practices but also to position themselves as leaders and innovators in their field. This initiative reflects Portsmouth's wider commitment to developing a workforce that is not only creatively skilled but also commercially astute, key to sustaining long-term careers and viable enterprises within the city.

Importantly, these bootcamps also served as a platform for collaboration and networking, connecting emerging talent with mentors, industry professionals, and peers. Such connections are crucial





in a sector that often operates through informal networks and project-based work. By embedding these opportunities within the local ecosystem, Portsmouth is actively nurturing a pipeline of skilled creatives who are equipped to contribute to and shape the city's creative future, driving economic growth, fuelling cultural vibrancy, and strengthening the city's ability to retain talent and innovation within the region.

### **3. Volunteering Opportunities – We Shine Festival**

The University facilitated student involvement in volunteering roles during the We Shine festival, providing a valuable opportunity for students to gain hands on experience in a dynamic, high-profile event setting. These roles not only contributed to the successful delivery of one of the city's flagship cultural events but also created a deep sense of civic engagement and community pride among participants.

Beyond the practical experience, volunteering had a significant positive impact on students' personal development. Engaging with diverse teams and interacting with members of the public helped students build confidence in their communication and interpersonal skills. Many reported an increased sense of purpose and self-esteem as they saw their contributions make a tangible difference to the festival's

success.

Volunteering also played a meaningful role in supporting students' mental health and wellbeing. Taking part in collaborative, goal-oriented activities allowed students to feel more connected to their peers and the broader community. The experience offered a refreshing and different environment, while simultaneously equipping students with transferable skills such as problem-solving, time management, and adaptability - assets that will serve them well in future professional contexts.

Overall, the initiative demonstrated how volunteering can enrich students' University experience, combining skill development and career readiness with personal growth and community engagement.

### **4. Support in Developing Literature Plans for 2025**

Working with colleagues from the school of Literature from the University was pivotal in helping to shape Portsmouth Creates' literature focus for 2025, In Our Words. This collaborative planning ensured that the strands of In Our Words are inclusive, strategic, and reflective of both community needs and academic insight. Rooted in Portsmouth's rich literary heritage, a city that gave the world Charles Dickens and has long been a source of inspiration for writers and storytellers, In Our Words seeks to

harness the cultural legacy of the city whilst addressing the contemporary challenges it faces.

Portsmouth's literary history is not just a point of pride; it is a vital asset in creating cultural identity, civic engagement, and community cohesion. By drawing on this heritage, In Our Words seeks to inspire current and future generations through locally resonant narratives and accessible cultural programming. Literature has the power to connect people, illuminate shared histories, and spark imagination, and in a city so deeply steeped in literary significance, its potential is particularly profound.

However, Portsmouth also faces significant challenges. The city has persistently lower-than-average literacy levels, which contribute to broader socio-economic inequalities and can limit access to opportunities for education, employment, and civic participation. These literacy barriers often begin early and are compounded over time by issues such as poverty, limited access to books, and under-resourced educational environments. For this reason, improving access to reading is not only a cultural priority but a social imperative.

In Our Words places a strong emphasis on increasing access to reading materials, literary experiences, and educational initiatives. This includes targeted outreach in communities where literacy rates are lowest, developing inclusive reading programs, and

creating safe, welcoming spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore literature.

Working in collaboration with the University of Portsmouth, our central focus is breaking down barriers to engagement. For many residents, traditional literary spaces and programmes can feel exclusive or disconnected from lived experiences. By co-designing initiatives with communities, amplifying underrepresented voices, and using innovative formats such as spoken word, digital storytelling, and site-specific performances, through In Our Words we will ensure that literature feels relevant, relatable, and open to all.

In uniting heritage with innovation, access with empowerment, and academic expertise from our partners at the University of Portsmouth, In Our Words represents a transformative vision. It is a roadmap for how literature can act as a catalyst for equity, creativity, and community renewal in one of the UK's most culturally vibrant yet educationally challenged cities.

## **5. Evaluation of We Shine 2024**

Students from the School of the Environment, Geography, and Geoscience played a vital role in the evaluation process of the We Shine 2024 festival. Their contributions encompassed data collection, analysis, and reporting, thereby enhancing both their

academic development and the festival's capacity for continuous improvement. This hands-on experience provided students with essential practical skills, complementing their theoretical studies.

Crucially, direct, face-to-face engagement with festival attendees and community members enabled students to gain nuanced insights into the diverse perspectives and cultural contexts within specific communities that have a lack of direct cultural provision and infrastructure. Such engagement supported meaningful connections and informed a more comprehensive understanding of our community needs.

The research undertaken through this evaluation process is integral to the ongoing delivery of accessible and inclusive cultural experiences for communities. By systematically identifying participation barriers and evaluating outreach effectiveness, the festival is better positioned to tailor its programming to ensure equitable access for all community members.

The evaluation highlights the significant social impact of the We Shine festival. It underscores the role of cultural initiatives in enhancing community wellbeing, strengthening social cohesion, and reinforcing local identity. Through their involvement in this research, students contributed not only to their own academic advancement but also to reinforcing the festival's

commitment to creating positive social change.

## **6. CCI Faculty Student Artists Mentoring – Street Art Commissions**

Selected students from the Faculty of CCI were mentored by professional artists in the development of street art commissions across the city. This hands-on opportunity offered early career experience, portfolio development, and public visibility for emerging talent. Beyond simply creating art, the mentoring process played a crucial role in guiding students through the practical and professional aspects of the creative industry. Mentors shared invaluable insights on artistic techniques, project management, community engagement, and navigating the challenges of public art commissions.

By working closely with experienced artists, students gained more than just technical skills - they learned how to collaborate effectively, adapt to real-world constraints, and develop their unique creative voices in a supportive environment. These mentoring relationships helped to boost confidence and provided essential networking opportunities, opening doors to future projects and career pathways.

Building hands-on experience through active participation in city-wide commissions allowed students to transform theoretical knowledge



into tangible accomplishments. The ability to contribute to public art not only enriched their portfolios but also demonstrated their capability to prospective clients, galleries, and future employers.

## **7. Creative Sector Mapping for Portsmouth**

This cultural mapping exercise is a strategic initiative designed to understand and enhance Portsmouth's cultural landscape. By integrating rigorous data analysis with extensive community engagement, the project seeks to create a comprehensive picture of the city's creative sector. Its primary aim is to inform policies and guide investments that will create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable cultural ecosystem.

The University has played a pivotal role in this effort by contributing its academic expertise and research capacity to develop a detailed creative sector mapping project for Portsmouth. This mapping exercise is critical in identifying the scope, challenges, and opportunities within the city's creative industries, providing a solid evidence base to guide future investment and policy decisions. Currently in its initial stages, the project will continue to be developed and expanded throughout 2025, ensuring that its insights remain relevant and responsive to the evolving cultural landscape.

By offering this robust foundation, the exercise supports informed decision-making and helps stakeholders - from policymakers to local artists and businesses navigate the creative sector. It will lay the groundwork for strategic investments and initiatives that will strengthen Portsmouth's cultural vitality and ensure its creative industries thrive in the years ahead.

## **8. Partnership Working – LUCIA Funding and CPP Application**

Portsmouth Creates and the University of Portsmouth strategically joined up funding applications to Arts Council England and AHRC, including the LUCIA initiative and the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme. These applications aim to secure resources for long-term cultural development, with a strong focus on community engagement and cultural inclusion.

During 2024, Portsmouth Creates worked across the following Schools and Faculties of the University of Portsmouth:

- Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries
- Faculty of Business and Law
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The partnership between Portsmouth Creates and the University of Portsmouth is vital for the sustainable growth of the city's

cultural and creative industries. By combining academic expertise, student talent, and sector knowledge, this collaboration nurtures a vibrant, inclusive cultural environment that benefits the whole community. Specifically, the partnership:

- Provides transformational opportunities for students through practical based hands-on learning experiences, diverse mentorships, and professional development.
- Strengthens the city's creative infrastructure through research, strategic planning, and capacity building.
- Positions Portsmouth as a nationally recognised hub for culture-led regeneration and creative innovation.
- Supports local talent pipelines, helping retain young creative talent in the city and encouraging them to thrive within Portsmouth's growing creative economy.

With a shared commitment to inclusive cultural growth, the University of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Creates will continue to align their strengths in education, creativity, and civic engagement. Future plans across the delivery of the Place Partnership project will build on this year's successes, ensuring that young people and the wider communities are at the heart of Portsmouth's cultural journey.





# Portsmouth City Council

The strategic partnership between Portsmouth City Council and Portsmouth Creates is a collaboration designed to strengthen the city's cultural and creative economy. Rooted in the shared ambition to position Portsmouth as a vibrant, nationally recognised hub for creativity, this partnership plays a vital role in ***"putting Portsmouth on the map."*** By aligning with the Portsmouth City Vision 2040 and other key citywide strategies, the partnership supports the delivery of long-term goals, including economic resilience, community wellbeing, and place-making.

Together, Portsmouth City Council and Portsmouth Creates are working to raise the city's cultural profile with major national funders, unlock new inward investment, and drive inclusive growth through creativity, ensuring that culture is not only an expression of identity but a cornerstone of Portsmouth's future.

Our partnership is underpinned by an annual Service Level Agreement to support a focused delivery against Portsmouth City Council objectives.

## 1. Annual Programme

Over the past year, we successfully delivered a vibrant and inclusive annual programme of events that celebrated creativity and community engagement. Central to this was

a dedicated skills development programme for local communities, providing tailored workshops, mentorship, and professional opportunities to nurture talent and support career progression.

As part of our commitment and Service Level Agreement with Portsmouth City Council, we delivered three significant programmes of activity with communities:

- **Charles Dickens Mentoring:**

In collaboration with Limbic Cinema, young people participated in a groundbreaking 25-metre water screen projection, an immersive audio-visual installation that explored the synthetic reconstruction of coral reef environments. As the first installation of its kind in the city, the project also provided a valuable mentorship opportunity for young people. This included a hands-on projection masterclass and remote guidance in the creation of visual content. The commission also worked with one young person in partnership with Rant Studios, to produce an electronic music audio in collaboration with an international musician.

- **Hilsea Moat Projection Installation:**

A series of interactive projections were displayed on custom-built screens spanning Hilsea Moat Bridge, forming an immersive installation responsive to audience engagement. The project was

led by artist Thomas Buckley in collaboration with children and young people from the area through digital workshops hosted by The Base and Motiv-8. As part of the programme, young people participated in a series of creative technology workshops, gaining hands-on experience in animation and 3D modelling.

- **We Connect Conference, Connecting Us:**

This event was created as an inclusive, accessible space for communities across Portsmouth to come together, share knowledge, and collaborate. By centring diverse voices and experiences, it supported meaningful conversations around community engagement, creativity, and co-creation.

From grassroots groups to cultural leaders, speakers reflected the rich diversity of the city, showcasing how inclusive practices can empower and connect communities. The day highlighted the importance of ensuring that opportunities for participation and change are open to everyone, regardless of background or circumstance.

## 2. Young People, Skills Development, Social Value

Portsmouth Creates has supported skills development for young people through creative workshops, mentoring, and practical-based learning projects. Our work helps

build confidence, develop practical skills, and open pathways into the cultural and creative industries across the city. In 2024, we have delivered several projects that have supported young people locally - two of which are highlighted below in line with our Service Level Agreement:

- **Young Creates:**

This year at the We Create Market, We Shine launched Young Creates - a space dedicated to the next generation of Portsmouth creatives! In partnership with HSDC and City of Portsmouth College, the initiative gave young artists and makers the chance to turn their ideas into real products, gain hands-on experience, and sell their work at a live event.

Through a mentorship programme, students learned how to design, package, and market their creations - which included everything from concept to sale. Each student also received a small bursary to cover materials, breaking down barriers to engagement. The event took place as part of We Shine and was in the Charles Dickens ward of the city.

- **Playland Creative Hub:**

At the end of 2024, we acquired Playland - a former amusement arcade at the heart of Charles Dickens Ward - in partnership with Artswork, to create Playland Creative Hub. A dynamic and inclusive space in the heart of Portsmouth. This transformative meanwhile use project is designed to open pathways into the creative industries

for young people, especially those not currently engaged in traditional education.

Playland Creative Hub is more than just a venue; it's a youth-led, purpose-driven space that offers access to creative facilities, hands-on opportunities, and enterprise support. By focusing on underrepresented and disengaged communities, the hub aims to reduce youth unemployment, inspire future careers in the creative sector, and support the next generation of artists, makers, and entrepreneurs.

### 3. Economic Development

As part of our ongoing commitment to developing the creative sector, and in addition to our Service Level Agreement, we have worked closely with colleagues across Portsmouth City Council to attract significant investment into the city's cultural and creative industries through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the development of a match funding initiative.

The growth of the creative sector is not only vital for cultural enrichment but also plays a key role in driving local economic development. A thriving creative economy generates employment, attracts talent, and enhances the city's appeal as a vibrant place to live, work, and visit. Building on the success of the 23/24 funding allocation, which secured £373,713 and supported the creation of over 80 sector jobs,

we have continued to champion and support investment efforts. As a result, we successfully leveraged a further £718,193 for 24/25, enabling the creation of more than 300 jobs in Portsmouth's creative industries.

This strategic investment not only strengthens the city's creative infrastructure but also demonstrates the powerful role that strategic partnerships can play within cultural growth, economic resilience and place-making.







## Playland Creative Hub:

Rooted in the city's Playland initiative, the project has established a youth-led venue that brings together disengaged and underrepresented communities, emerging creative talent, and local micro-businesses. Over its first months, the hub has become a vibrant platform for collaboration, skill-building, and entrepreneurship, laying the foundation for a sustainable, inclusive creative economy and testing a replicable model for youth-led urban regeneration.

This project proposes a dynamic, youth-led creative venue in the heart of Portsmouth, designed to serve as an inclusive and accessible space for young people and emerging creative entrepreneurs. Create at Playland will provide affordable studios/offices, collaborative workspaces, and event areas, connecting directly to the Playland initiative to amplify youth engagement and providing tangible accessible pathways into the creative industries.

## Key Objectives:

- Offer affordable, centrally located space for young creatives and micro-SMEs to collaborate, grow, and innovate.
- Establish a sustainable, youth-led community venue, particularly targeting disengaged and underserved communities in Portsmouth.
- Deliver a structured business support programme to nurture entrepreneurship and facilitate the growth of local creative startups.
- Connect young people to real opportunities in active and emerging creative industries through exposure, mentorship, and training.
- Develop a model of social enterprise that can sustain the venue's operations beyond the life of initial funding or intervention.
- Quantitatively and qualitatively measure the project's social and economic impact to encourage continued investment and replication.
- Serve as a blueprint for similar initiatives regionally and nationally, showcasing best practices in inclusive, community-driven urban regeneration.



## Who we reached:

Our universal communications approach remains rooted in people, place, and community - sharing stories, showcasing the incredible creativity across the city, and spotlighting opportunities that bring people together. Our focus is on building connections and making creative work visible, accessible, inspiring and inclusive.

Although these are numbers, they represent residents, artists, creatives, and communities. The reach and impact behind these figures are important to us, as we continue to amplify voices and celebrate the vibrant culture of Portsmouth. Through our evolution over the last 12 months, we have become a window into cultural and creative experiences for the city.

In 2024, our digital presence continued to grow steadily:

### Website Performance



**45,000** total visits

Average visit duration:

**1 minute 11 seconds**

**11,000** active users

# Social Media Reach

**1.1M** views

**11.6k** content interactions

**274.3k** reach

**795** new followers

**19.6k** profile visits

**8,000** link clicks



**347k** views

**548** link clicks

**52.2k** reach

**9,000** profile visits

**9.8k** content interactions

**1,300** new followers





# Looking ahead:

As we look ahead to the coming year, Portsmouth Creates remains committed to building on the strong foundations laid through our work during 2024. With renewed energy and a shared vision, we are excited to deliver an ambitious programme that continues to champion creativity, inclusivity, and cultural growth across the city.

In 2025 Portsmouth Creates will be delivering:

- **In Our Words**, a year long focus of literature that will support to increase literacy levels locally
- **We Connect Conference 25**, Inclusion in the Arts, in partnership with This New Ground
- **Playland Creative Hub**, a unique place-based initiative in partnership with Artswork, facilitating a new creative ecosystem for SME, microbusinesses and emerging creative talent
- **We Thrive**, a localised mentoring programme that will equip emerging and mid-career creatives with the skills development, network expansion, and confidence to thrive and grow in their practice and industry.
- **We Connect Networking**, bi-monthly industry specific networking
- **Business Support Programme**, a tailored programme of activities to support the growth of the cultural and creative sector
- **Portsmouth and South Coast Business Week**, curation of the Creative Industries inclusion
- **Creative Youth Board**
- **We Create & Young Create Markets**, a unique retail platform for local artists and creatives



**Thank  
you!**

**Thanks!**

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Throughout the delivery of our Place Partnership, Portsmouth Creates has deeply valued the dedication shown by our creative community, organisations and individuals across the city and beyond.

With this we express our deepest gratitude to...

**Our Founding Partners and Funders**, whose support has been instrumental in making Portsmouth Creates a reality.

To our **Board Members**, who generously contribute their time, expertise, guidance, and unwavering support.

To our Place Partnership Partners, whose support enables us to deliver a diverse, cross-disciplinary programme.

To our **Creative Community** - thank you for sharing your needs with us and allowing us to support your growth and development.

To the **Pompey community**, whose curiosity for cultural and creative experiences inspires us to champion accessibility and meaningful change.

To **everyone who has been part of our journey**, those we've worked with, those who have inspired us, and those who will continue to do so - thank you.





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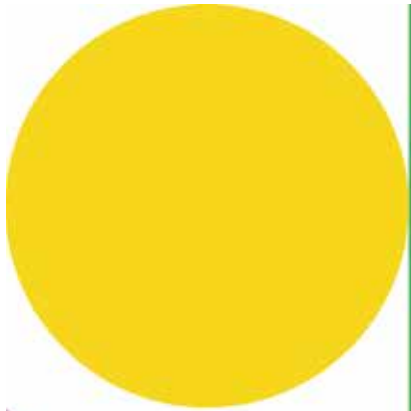
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