

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink headband with colorful streamers and a purple sweater, is smiling as she works with a young girl. The girl, wearing a blue floral hoodie and a pink quilted vest, is focused on a large yellow circular object. They are in a brightly lit art room with other children and art supplies visible in the background.

the children's
ART SCHOOL

OUR IMPACT

2025 Report





Foreword

Creativity begins with curiosity. What happens when you turn a wiggly line into a portrait? Can a stroke of colour turn into a story?

Play is where creativity takes root and through it, children (and adults) learn that their ideas matter and that they belong.

Place matters too. In our work across Kirklees, we've seen how creative spaces can bring people together where it's needed most, right in the heart of our towns. MakerWorld has shown that high streets can become hubs not just for shopping, but for shaping a shared sense of belonging. When families gather to make, experiment, or just play, something magical happens – communities come alive, friendships form, and local spaces regain their purpose.

This report celebrates the creativity and collective spirit that have flourished through our projects this year. It also reflects the belief that creativity isn't a luxury, it's fundamental to thriving, welcoming communities.

Every cardboard den, every brushstroke, every drumbeat is part of something bigger. It's a reminder that vibrant town centres are, or should be, for everyone and that by making space for play, we make space for a real town centre.

Chloe Williams

Founder and CEO
The Children's Art School

The Children's Art School

The Children's Art School is a charitable organisation committed to promoting the value of art education for children and young people, with the aim of teaching children that through art, they can change their world.

We bring extraordinary, hands-on, creative opportunities to children and young people aged 2 -18 across Kirklees and beyond, unlocking their creativity, celebrating their individuality, building confidence and igniting their interest in the arts.

Founded in 2015 by artist Chloe Williams, The Children's Art School works with associate artists to make art and creative activities accessible to all. We create opportunities for joyful artmaking in various locations, helping children become inspired and develop self-confidence in

their own creativity and abilities and empowering them to affect and change the world they live in.

Since 2020, The Children's Art School has expanded its work. Alongside our regular art school programme in Holmfirth and the MakerWorld creative space for children and families in the centre of Huddersfield, we have delivered two Kirklees-wide arts festivals for children and young people, created thousands of activities packs, devised remote participatory projects and worked with partners including WOVEN in Kirklees and Kirklees Year of Music 2023 to expand the offering for children within existing festivals and programmes. As well as this, we have also developed a Kirklees-wide outreach programme in areas of high free school meal need for the Kirklees Schools Out programme, developed the space in Huddersfield town centre and piloted MakerWorld in Dewsbury.

We continue to invest in our crucial partnerships with Evoke (Kirklees cultural education partnership), Kirklees Youth Alliance, as well as Kirklees Councils' Play team and Culture and Tourism team to position ourselves as a strategic children's arts organisation in West Yorkshire.

Our Mission

To create extraordinary, hands-on, creative opportunities for children and young people.

To facilitate joyful and adventurous engagement in art and culture in order to develop creative thinking skills, champion individual creativity, strengthen communities and improve lives.

To be visible, in order to normalise regular engagement with creative activities for children and families and to ensure that regardless of geographical, economic or cultural background creative opportunities are accessible to all children and young people.



Our Aims

1. To deliver high-quality hands-on arts opportunities for children and young people of all ages regardless of geographical, economic or cultural background, exposing them to artists and artistic practices and developing creative thinking skills, improving self-confidence and well-being and supporting CYPs progression into creative careers. To develop projects that are as thought-provoking as they are playful.
2. To champion and celebrate the creativity of children and young people through increased visibility and by providing platforms which celebrate CYPs creative expression.
3. To contribute to the development of vibrant cultural communities in Kirklees. To devise and deliver creative and ambitious participatory place-based opportunities with local communities in order to support regeneration and place making aims of Kirklees Council.
4. To support the development of artists around community engagement skills, sharing good practice and offering training programmes which support local artists to share their skills with and inspire children and young people.
5. To be a progressive and dynamic organisation developing the way we listen to and work with our communities in order to continue to be relevant to local children and families. Prioritising collaboration and partnership working, responding to the changing needs of our community and playing our part in the wider development of a diverse children and young people's cultural sector.
6. To support the development of Kirklees and the UK as a creative and cultural place, supporting CYPs progression aims into creative careers in order to strengthen the UK's creative industry and supporting it to reflect the passion, creativity and diversity of our society.
7. To use our platform to increase awareness of the climate crisis and individual environmental responsibility through modelling good practice and storytelling.
8. To develop and access new income strands in order to become financially resilient and be able to deliver our ambitious mission to give access to all CYPs to high quality participatory cultural experiences.

Why Children & Young People?

Our activities provide a space for creativity, self-expression and skill-building, giving children and young people the chance to explore different art forms, experiment, and gain confidence in their own ideas. Unlike formal classroom settings, we prioritise hands-on, process-led learning, which is especially valuable for children who learn best by doing.

What we know about the impact of cultural participation on children and young people:

Cognitive Development

- Creative activities support problem-solving, spatial reasoning, and fine motor skills.
- Arts participation is linked to higher attainment in core subjects like literacy and maths (OECD & Arts Council England studies).

Emotional & Mental Health

- Making art is shown to reduce stress and anxiety in children, giving them tools to process emotions (World Health Organisation, 2019).
- Making art encourages resilience, patience, and the ability to cope with trial and error.

Social Skills & Inclusion

- Group arts activities build teamwork, communication, and empathy.
- Accessible entry point for children who might not thrive in traditional academic or sports-focused settings.
- Can foster inclusion across different abilities, backgrounds, and cultures.

Identity & Confidence

- The arts provide a safe space for self-expression and identity formation, especially for young people navigating adolescence.
- Opportunities to exhibit or share work build pride and self-worth.

Future Skills & Employability

- Creative industries are a major part of the UK economy. Early engagement can inspire future pathways in design, media, architecture, fashion, crafts, etc.
- Skills such as creativity, adaptability, and collaboration are increasingly valued in all careers.

Community & Environmental Awareness

- Crafting with reused/recycled materials contributes to, and promotes, environmental responsibility.
- In short, this isn't just about "making things", it's about supporting children's growth, wellbeing, learning and future opportunities.



Our Impact

In 2024/25 (6 April 2024 – 5 April 2025) we delivered:

Activity

- 6 commissions
- 97 commissioned workshops
- 195 workshops at Holmfirth Tech
- 104 sessions at MakerWorld Huddersfield
- 55 sessions at MakerWorld Dewsbury
- 8 MakerSkate sessions
- 9,170 visits from children & young people
- 1,500+ hours of contact time

Commissioned Artists and Creative Practitioners

- 16 professional artists
- 12 young helpers
- 3 performers
- 3 skateboarding coaches

Training & Development

- 3 teacher training sessions
- 57 trainees

Income

£190,000+ income raised

Where We Work



We work predominantly in Kirklees, a large and diverse metropolitan district with a varied demography. It has a younger age profile, strong South Asian communities, significant socioeconomic inequality, and a rich but under-resourced cultural and creative landscape.

Alongside our place-based programmes in Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Holmfirth, we deliver outreach sessions across the wider region, often in partnership with organisations rooted in communities.

This approach helps us engage a broad range of people, particularly in areas where access to the arts is limited by distance, cost, or high levels of child poverty.

2024/2025 marked further growth, as we expanded our delivery base to include workshops and programmes across Calderdale and Wakefield.

MakerWorld

“My children said it was the best day ever.”

MakerWorld is the Children’s Art School’s flagship programme, providing free creative opportunities for children, young people, and families. Based in Huddersfield and now expanding into Dewsbury, MakerWorld offers completely free, drop-in sessions with no need to pre-book, ensuring creativity is as accessible as possible.

Weekly term-time sessions include Saturday drop-ins in Huddersfield and Little Makers sessions for pre-schoolers every Friday. Additional workshops run during school holidays, with outreach programmes extending to nine locations across Kirklees in partnership with Chol Theatre, specifically targeting areas of high deprivation.

“My granddaughter is 4 and every week looks forward to coming to MakerWorld. She absolutely loves being creative. I think it brings the community together.”

Over the past 18 months, five new freelance artists have joined the team to enrich delivery. MakerWorld has also provided work experience and bespoke training (including first aid and customer service) for 16 young helpers aged 13–21. MakerWorld actively engages diverse and often under-served communities, supporting wellbeing and community cohesion.

- 24% of visiting children are eligible for Pupil Premium (Kirklees average = 24%).
- 41% of visitors are from ethnic minority backgrounds (Kirklees average = 26%).
- 12% of children reported having a disability or being neurodivergent.

“Amazing. What a great place for inspiring creativity, and it’s free and accessible. My boys, aged 5 and 7, have had a great time.”

Families tell us they value the welcoming, safe, and supportive environment created by MakerWorld staff. Parents frequently report improvements in children’s problem-solving and idea development, while participants themselves highlight increased social connection. In fact, 74% of regular visitors said they had met people they would not have otherwise.

MakerWorld: A Case Study

Chanelle and her six-year-old daughter, Renesmee, have been visiting MakerWorld regularly for over two and a half years. The space provides Renesmee with freedom and resources to explore creativity independently or with guidance. She has engaged in a variety of projects, from handprint tree displays and pirate-themed crafts to puppet shows. Chanelle values the environment for allowing her daughter to experiment and develop her ideas freely.

Chanelle has noticed significant growth in Renesmee's focus, confidence, and independence. MakerWorld has encouraged her to persist with projects and extend creative activities at home, including sewing and play-crafting, providing an extra outlet for her creativity and building her resilience.

“It gives her [Renesmee] the resources and the opportunity to be able to get as creative as she can be. She'll definitely sit for a lot longer while we're here.”

Chanelle

MakerWorld is described by Chanelle as an inclusive, welcoming space where families from diverse backgrounds feel accepted, and both Chanelle and her daughter have formed friendships through the sessions. This contrasts with other venues they have visited, where the atmosphere felt less inviting.

“It's just so welcoming to everyone. Not everywhere is like that - we've been places where we've been treated quite differently. Whereas here, everybody's treated with respect, which is what I love about it.”

Chanelle





MakerWorld Documentary

In 2024, filmmaker Máire Tracey created a documentary capturing the story and impact of MakerWorld, exploring how creativity, community, and place-making intersect through the project.

The film has since reached wide audiences across both academic and public platforms. In 2025, it was presented at three academic conferences: the MeCCSA Conference at Edinburgh Napier University, the Journal of Regional Studies Conference at Porto University, and the British Popular Culture(s) Conference at Falmouth University.

The film has also received recognition within the independent film circuit, being screened at five national film festivals:

- Official Winner at the Children's International Film Festival of Wales
- Received a Special Mention Award at the Big Syn International Film Festival in London
- Winner of the Social Impact Award at Activists Without Borders
- In 2025, the film continued its success, being shown at the Liverpool Indie Awards (LIA) and the Folkestone Film Festival.

Through these screenings and accolades, the MakerWorld film has helped share the project's story and social impact with new audiences across the UK and beyond.

Broadening Our Offer

In 2024, we acquired the former Toyland shop next door to MakerWorld to develop new ideas, test different uses of the space, and respond to the growing need for youth-friendly spaces in Huddersfield town centre, as well as the broader UK Play agenda. Insights from Our Biennale 2022 had shown that skateboarding attracted a new demographic who came for the skate experience but were naturally exposed to artists, musicians, and other creative practices within the shared space. Using this approach, we aimed to combine a skate park with creative activities to engage 11+ year-olds, enhancing their cultural capital and broadening engagement with the arts.

MakerSkate was launched in partnership with Skate It Yourself, transforming the former Toyland unit into a temporary skatepark and creative hub for older children and teenagers. The pilot offered a safe and welcoming space for young people to connect, be active, and explore new forms of creativity.

MakerSkate combined weekly skateboarding sessions with creative workshops such as T-shirt printing, skate-ramp artwork, and open sessions blending music, fashion, and visual art with skate culture. It proved popular with families (see comments below) and encouraged active lifestyles, confidence, and creative expression.

The project also helped us refine our ideas about how the space could best be used. It paved the way for the creation of MakerWorld Gallery - a new hub designed to share and celebrate work created by young people across all our activity strands.

Launched in April 2025 with The Colourful World of Bacteria exhibition, developed in collaboration with Kirklees Libraries, the Gallery now hosts a regular programme of guest exhibitions alongside artworks produced by children through our ongoing workshops and projects.

“Amazing skateboarding lesson. Didn't know about MakerWorld or any associated activities. Will come again!”

“Took three children for skateboard lessons, the helpers were amazing friendly and supportive. We also made skateboard print T shirts. All round a wonderful experience!”

“What a brilliant idea. My daughter has had fun, learnt new tricks and gone home smiling and full of confidence. The guys were great with the kids.”

Comments from MakerSkate participants and their families

Outreach

We work with arts organisations, community hub leaders, libraries, schools, and youth groups across Kirklees to develop outreach programmes that respond to local needs and bring arts and culture directly into communities. Our aim is to ensure that children from all parts of Kirklees - whatever their cultural or economic background - can access creative opportunities.

Some highlights from the past year:

- We collaborated with Chol Theatre to deliver outreach projects in nine locations identified as areas of high deprivation, offering activities such as den-building with cardboard and Make-do tools, drumming, and drama games.
- Through our school art clubs, children created giant fish puppets for Holmfirth Arts Festival and took part in the parade.
- At community events, we offered playful, hands-on activities including den-building at Yorkshire Day (Oakwell Hall) and National Play Day (Beaumont Park).
- For Batley Festival, we ran a Biscuit Town workshop and created a collaborative group mural on fabric.
- Working with Kirklees Libraries, we delivered free family craft sessions, drop-in makerspace sculpture projects, and worked with them on the first exhibition in MakerWorld Gallery: The Colourful World of Bacteria.

- In partnership with the Creative Piazza Collective, we contributed to the Winter Worlds event at the Piazza Centre, featuring lantern-making, drumming, screen printing, storytelling, and a community parade promoting arts and cultural activity in the town centre.



Sound & Rhythm

Music became a major theme of our work in 2024/25 through a growing partnership with Musica Kirklees. We have woven music into our established MakerWorld and Little Makers programmes, piloting the MakerNoise Choir and offering regular drumming workshops for children and young people.

We see every week how the arts can transform lives – especially for children and young people with disabilities or neurodivergence – and we are now beginning to see how music can amplify this impact.

“My daughter joined in with singing and really enjoyed it with lots of confidence. Usually she struggles with musical activities because she’s autistic – she has to leave school assemblies - but she thrived in the MakerWorld choir.”

Parent of MakerWorld Choir participant

“The drumming workshops attracted such a diverse group of people. I particularly loved seeing the groups with special needs getting fully involved. One young non-verbal child surprised her family members by dancing and engaging in a way they had never seen before. I think the fact that it is so loud meant that joining in a workshop immediately feels like a performance, giving participants confidence to make that noise and allowing them to be part of something bigger.”

Jake Milburn, Drumming Workshop Lead

Nurturing Creativity

We are committed to supporting the next generation of creative practitioners, educators, and community leaders through hands-on opportunities, mentoring, and targeted training. Our programmes provide young people and teachers with practical skills, confidence, and experience in delivering arts and cultural activities.

Opportunities for Young People

We employ young people aged 13–20 to support our sessions, offering them a chance to develop valuable skills while contributing to our projects. Roles include:

- Supporting workshops and creative sessions for children
- Assisting artists and facilitators
- Preparing materials and creating examples for activities
- Stewarding exhibitions and helping maintain the space
- Contributing to evaluation through data collection and submission
- Supporting children with practical tasks such as stapling or hot-gluing
- Helping develop children's independent thinking and creative problem-solving

Through these roles, young people gain confidence in working with the community, communicating with adults and children, using initiative, planning safe and engaging activities, and working effectively as part of a team. All young helpers receive training in Disability Awareness, ensuring inclusive practice across all sessions.

Teacher Training

We also work with schools to broaden teachers' skills and confidence in delivering the art curriculum in engaging and meaningful ways. This includes in-school development for teaching teams, enhancing creative delivery and classroom confidence

Training for SCITT trainee teachers, introducing them to the art curriculum and Ofsted requirements, teaching basic art and design skills, and encouraging a child-centred approach that fosters independent and creative thinking.

These initiatives ensure that both young people and teachers are supported to develop their talents, enhance their professional skills, and inspire creativity in the communities we serve.

Nurturing Creativity: A Case Study

Hannah Bendon is an architectural assistant at Ellis Williams Architects in London, working on public projects including libraries, community centres, museums, and schools. Having recently completed her architecture degree at the University of Edinburgh, Hannah attributes much of her professional approach to her long-standing involvement with The Children's Art School.

Hannah began volunteering at MakerWorld in 2019 and returned during university holidays to run sessions. She describes it as “so much like the heart of the community” in Huddersfield Town Centre. Her experiences there – engaging diverse participants in creative, collaborative projects – have directly informed her architectural practice, particularly in community engagement and co-design.

“I definitely would say I see a lot of what I've done with Chloe and Issy in what I'm doing right now,” she notes.

At MakerWorld, Hannah honed skills that are now essential to her work: meeting people where they are, empowering creativity, understanding needs quickly, and using physical outputs as engagement tools. She reflects that her MakerWorld experience “significantly influenced” her career, balancing technical skills with

inventive ideas and building confidence in participatory design.

Hannah's passion for community engagement inspired her master's dissertation on participatory design and continues to shape her work. She emphasises that architecture has much to learn from other disciplines in engaging communities, praising MakerWorld for its “open and collaborative environment” and low barriers to participation.

Looking ahead, Hannah remains “cautiously optimistic” about regeneration in Huddersfield and actively contributes by running work experience programmes for architecture students at Greenhead College, potentially involving MakerWorld. Her involvement highlights a commitment to nurturing the next generation of architects with a strong community focus.



Our Role in Urban Regeneration



We're proud of how we're making the case for culture to be at the heart of urban regeneration.

Since taking residence in the Huddersfield Piazza, we've realised that, for many families, MakerWorld is the primary catalyst for visiting the town centre: 74% of families told us that it's the main reason they come into town (rising to 85% among regular visitors). Many anecdotal comments suggest that without MakerWorld, families would not visit the town centre at all.

“Such a good enticement to get families into Huddersfield . The town centre isn't appealing anymore with the lack of shops and events. This needs to be promoted more and supported more by the council. We also love the skateboarding - a great activity to get kids away from screens.”

MakerWorld Participant

In October 2024, we hosted the Children's Art School Symposium, a landmark event celebrating and advocating for the role of culture in shaping vibrant, inclusive towns and cities. The day brought together artists, educators, community leaders, and policymakers to explore how creativity can drive regeneration, strengthen wellbeing, and widen opportunity for children and young people.

Through keynote talks, panels, and workshops, the symposium showcased inspiring practice and sparked vital conversations about placing culture at the heart of urban renewal. It reinforced the Children's Art School's role as both a champion for children's creativity and a voice for culture-led regeneration in our region and beyond. The Children's Art School continues to work with Kirklees Council as part of a consortium aiming to transform the Piazza into a cultural hub.

“It was a great experience to join you and the Children's Art School at the symposium. Thank you for bringing people together. It was inspiring to hear more about your project work and to hear how passionate you are. Your film was lovely and heartwarming, wonderful to have the Q&A with the parents participating, really valuable. As a Piazza neighbour it's also really good to hear more about your incredible work.”

Symposium Delegate

Our Environmental Commitment

Sustainability underpins our ethos. We use our platform to raise awareness of the climate crisis and promote individual responsibility by modelling good practice. Wherever possible, we source scrap from Scrap Leeds, along with found, donated, and repurposed materials.

We know people are more motivated to act when they see climate efforts shared fairly and widely. That's why we take a leading role in showing how our own practice is changing in response to environmental concerns. We continually seek new ways to provide information that acknowledges the climate emergency, builds awareness, and promotes sustainable approaches to creativity. Last year, more than half of our workshops focused specifically on environmental themes.



What Our Partners Say

“MakerWorld is such an asset to Dewsbury. They support every event I organise in the town providing a free related activity. They have worked on 2 food festivals, Dewsbury on Sea and our latest Wellness Day as well as providing much needed free activities every day. As a shop owner in the town you can always tell when it is a MakerWorld day with the amount of families in town and children showing off their makes. We often will get kids come into our craft shop to show us what they have made. Dewsbury loves MakerWorld!”

Jenny Holden-Stokes -
Event Manager, The Arcade

“HuddLitFest has worked with The Children’s Art School on many occasions, usually commissioning them to provide craft activities such as mask making to tie in with a Festival theme or character costume. They are a fantastic organisation, creative, dynamic and well-organised, in short a pleasure to work with. I would definitely recommend The Children’s Art School to others and I look forward to working with them again at future Festivals.”

Michelle Hodgson - Festival
Director of Huddersfield
Literature Festival

“I’ve worked alongside The Children’s Art School via the creative piazza and through a few textile focused workshops. I’ve absolutely loved working with them and seeing the huge and impactful difference they make to children and families in the area. I love seeing how creative and free the families are and how they’ve fostered a spirit of collaboration and exploration that many children lack (due to a lack of access.) I felt supported in delivering workshops and found the sense of empowerment they’ve given to their volunteers and younger staff really admirable. As a much newer organisation who’s new to the piazza, having to find premises and write bids, I’ve found their support and advice invaluable.”

Kim Searle -
Studio Manager, Thread Republic

“The Children’s Art School is a fine example of improving opportunities for young people in Kirklees. We have collaborated on several projects over the years, and the staff and volunteers are essential to the cultural wellbeing of Kirklees.

As a music education organisation, we have been working with pre-school children using the art of song, rhymes and musical games to supplement the creative arts provided by the Children’s Art School.

We look forward to this partnership continuing for many years to come.”

Nick Dolling -
Principal, Musica Kirklees

the children's ART SCHOOL

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