

A Three Year Report, 2021-24



Doodle Drawing by Laura Phillips. Image credit: Seonaid Murray

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About Edenderry

Edenderry is County Offaly's second largest town, with a population that doubled between 1996-2016 to 8,000. The current population is younger than the national average and significantly more diverse. Many residents commute to the Dublin area for work.

Creative Places, Edenderry, was established in September 2021, supported by The Arts Council of Ireland / An Comhairle Ealaíon (as part of the national Creative Places programme) and led by Creative Lives, in partnership with Offaly County Council's Arts Office and the Municipal District of Edenderry.

The ambition of the project is to facilitate the emergence of a strong cultural identity for the area, and support sustainable networks and opportunities for cultural engagement and participation. Creative Places, Edenderry is working to achieve this through open, collaborative methods, engaging with the community at grassroots level.

The project builds on previous initiatives delivered in partnership by Creative Lives and Offaly County Council's Arts Office, which resulted in the creation of the Creative Edenderry community group and the Shoes of Edenderry project.



Creative Places, Edenderry

This report will reflect on the first three years of the Creative Places, Edenderry Project, the theme of which was Connect, Cultivate, Celebrate.

Creative Places, Edenderry works with people of all ages and backgrounds to create a richer, more inclusive, and more cohesive creative community in the town and surrounding areas. Over the course of the first three years of the project (2021-2024) there have been creative opportunities for professional artists, non-professional artists, community groups, and individuals.

The project is being developed collaboratively by the people of Edenderry with community ownership and sustainability at the heart of what we do together. The groundwork of this project was delivered by Dr. Sally O'Leary, Arts Officer at the Arts Office, Offaly County Council, Kevin Murphy, Damien McGlynn from Creative Lives, Project Evaluator, Conor O'Leary and Creative Edenderry. We would like to thank them all for their work and for providing such a strong platform for the current project to stem and grow from.



Mural at The Cabin, created by Co.Down-based artist, Sharon Regan in collaboration with the local community. Image credit: Mark Forde

Creative Places, Edenderry in numbers

4,204 adults and 1,640 children have attended activities

261 community workshops

62 artists and facilitators

16 community consultations, information and network sessions

10 information and support sessions on funding applications

9 steering group meetings

8 large-scale events

7 seed fund grants

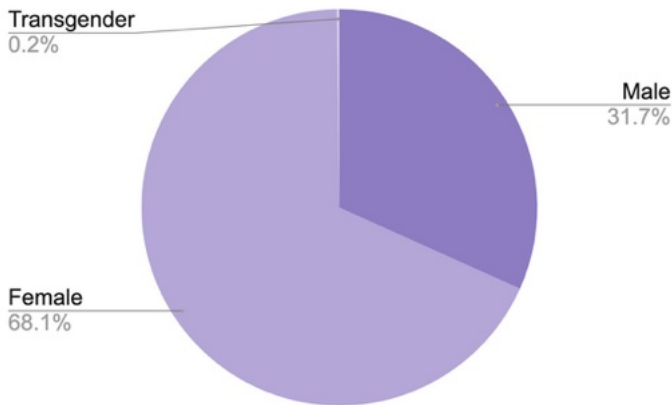
7 artist commissions

7 community forum meetings

7 community training sessions

6 creative grants

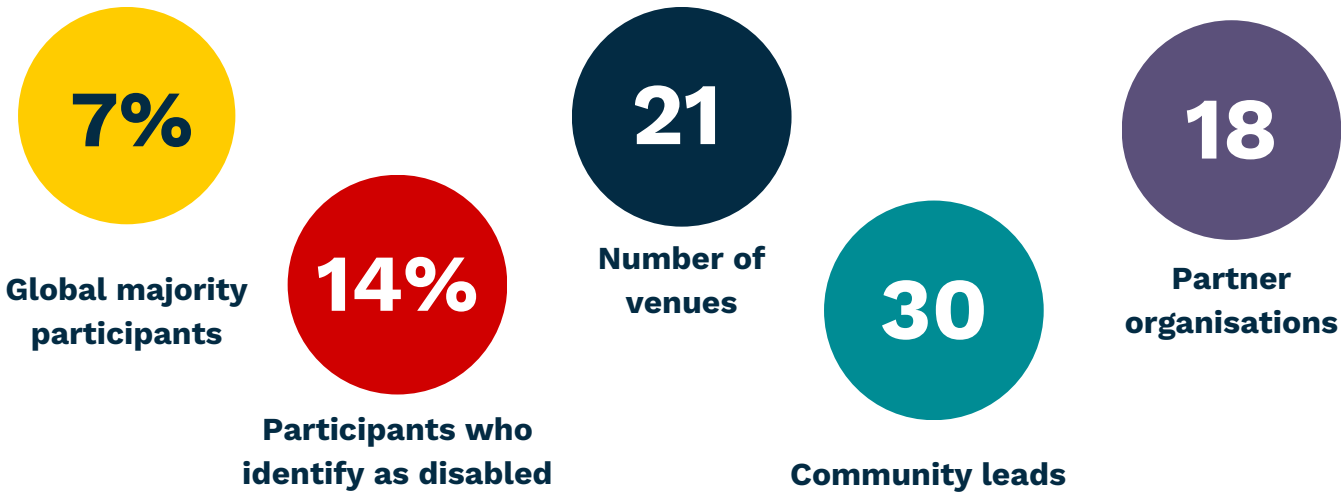
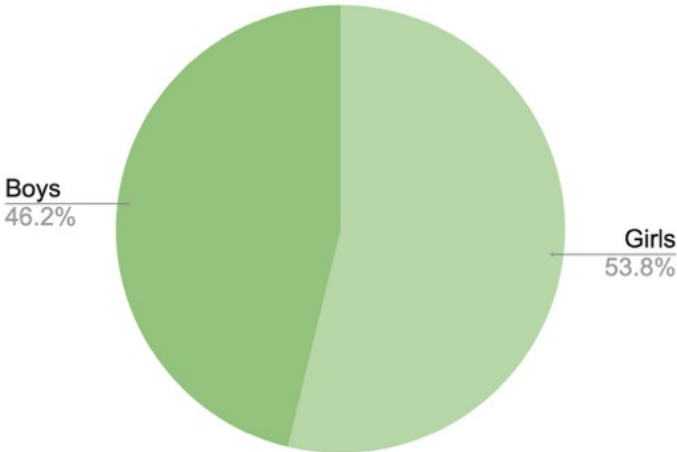
Creative Places, Edenderry in numbers



Adult attendees Nov 2022 - Jul 2024	
Female	2,862
Male	1,333
Transgender	9
Total	4,204



Children attendees Nov 2022 - Jul 2024	
Girls	882
Boys	758
Total	1,640



First steps

In November 2022, we facilitated a community meeting at Edenderry Library. Forty five people attended and there were lots of creative ideas! We gathered all of the ideas into a plan and began to plot the first activities. The first event was an open music workshop Edenderry Library, which then inspired musician Angi Ward to think about how she might facilitate a regular music group in the town.

Nesrin Elazaly had previously been involved with Creative Edenderry and was keen to start a group that would integrate all the different cultures in Edenderry and be a regular space to meet - and so the Community Social was born! The Community Social is a weekly arts-based project with different artists and facilitators visiting each week. There is a set time for refreshments and peer support at the start of the session, and then an opportunity to join in with a creative activity.

This group was pivotal in Creative Places, Edenderry starting to build up a network within the town, providing artists/facilitators an opportunity to try out new ideas and a regular space for people to socialise and meet. The Community Social is still meeting weekly every Friday at The Parish Centre.



Community Social group members and the Acoustic Picnic Session. Image credit: Shane Hynan

“

“I really like meeting new people and learning new skills and look forward to the classes every Friday.”

Community Social participant

“The Community Social group is similar to a set of branches on a tree. We grow in different directions yet our roots stem as one. Unity is strength, if you want to be strong, be connected.”

Nesrin Elazaly, Community Lead Volunteer



Group members and art work from our Visual Arts group for and by people who identify as disabled. Image credit: Eleanor Farrelly and Seonaid Murray

Gathering, building and maintaining momentum

We created a poster and flyers asking for creative or cultural ideas and suggestions and were soon inundated with phone calls and emails! It felt important to try out as many ideas as possible and a wide range of art forms. This quickly started to snowball and all of a sudden it felt like a game of 'Jacks' - we threw everything up into the air and it was interesting to see what would land and 'stick'.

Eleanor Farrelly came forward with a suggestion about a visual arts group run for and by people who identify as disabled. This was set up and began running every Tuesday at The Parish Centre. We also had other suggestions for a LEGO camp for children and some creative movement sessions. Angi Ward began to facilitate a weekly music session on Mondays at The Parish Centre, which is still running and has recently been awarded Ireland Runner-up at the 2024 Creative Lives Awards. Representatives from the group travelled to London for the ceremony in September.

“Hopefully the visual arts class continues as it really is so great and well supported by local people. It wouldn't have happened only for Creative Places and I know they all love coming to the class every week, and I absolutely love teaching it.”

Visual art facilitator, Eleanor Farrelly

“I have been thinking about what you have done for all of us: you gave me the confidence to sing again in front of an audience. My sisters keep asking which 'doctor' I have been attending! When they saw the video of me singing they were so happy for me. I will be forever grateful to you and those wonderful musicians.”

Group member, Monday Music Group

“It is good fun and has a great impact on the community. Another successful day - they are almost on the verge of dancing! And a lovely spin-off is going for coffee together afterwards.”

Angi Ward, music facilitator



Acoustic Hearts group members and Community Music Wales visit photographs.
Image credit: Shane Hynan and Mark Forde

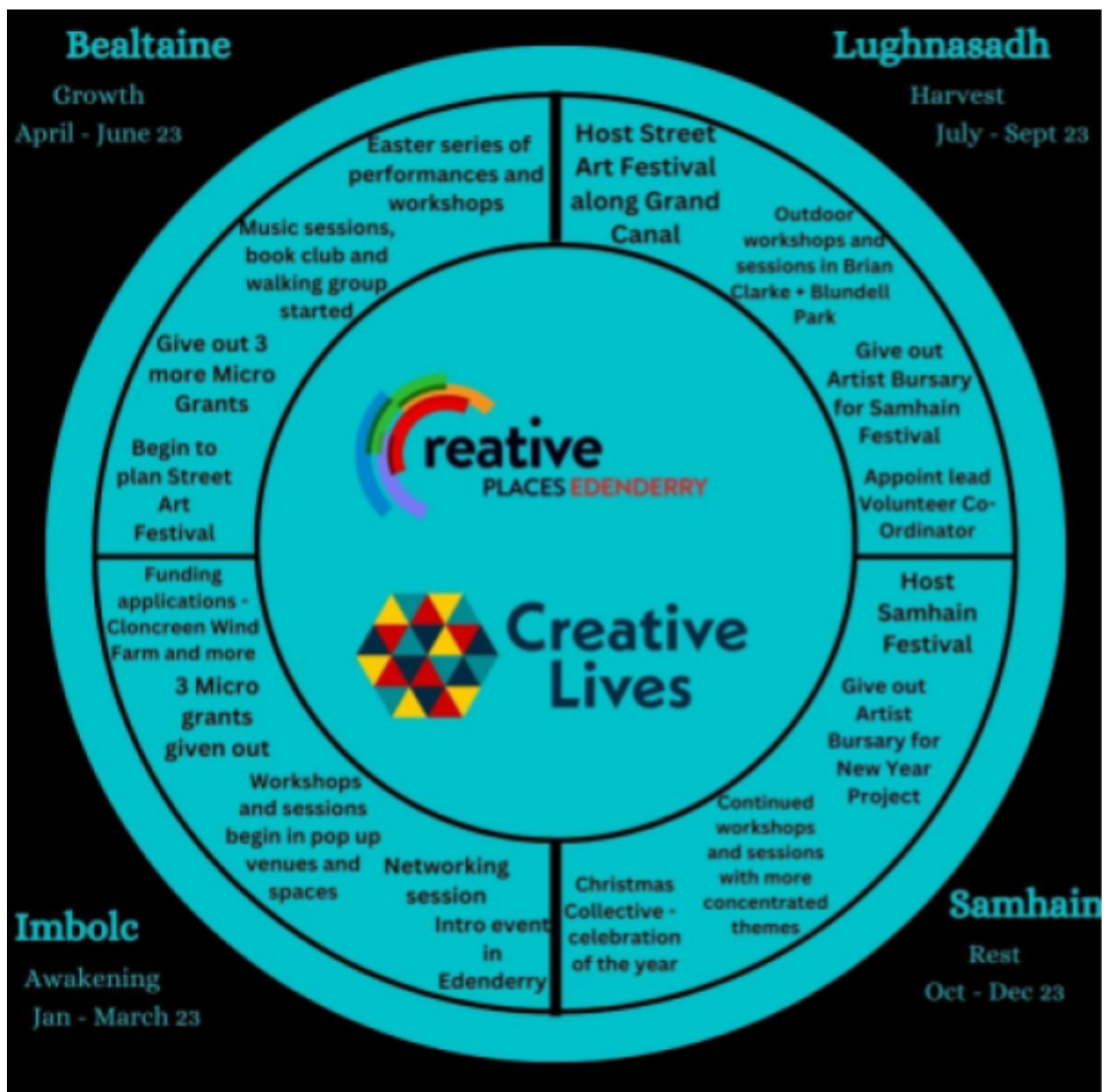


Collaborative planning for the year ahead

For Year 2 and Year 3 we put together a visual representation of the plan and what the community could expect from us as a project.

Year 2 Visual representation

This is the Celtic Wheel - we split the plan for the year up into the four quarters of the calendar: Lughnasadh, Samhain, Imbolc and Bealtaine.



Year 3 Visual representation

For Year 3 we used the image of a Tree. Explaining how the project would be delivered in terms of its 'roots', 'branches' and 'leaves'.



Governance, feedback and support

As Creative Places, Edenderry progressed it was important to establish regular meetings with our steering group, which was made up of representatives from Offaly Arts, Offaly County Council, the library service, Municipal District Edenderry, Creative Edenderry, the Creative Places, Edenderry Coordinator, Project Evaluator and Creative Lives. It has met every other month since January 2023 and supports us in good governance and decision making. The coordinator is also supported by attending the Creative Places Network monthly meeting on Zoom, in order to discuss and learn how all of the other Creative Places projects are getting on. There are regular meetings and catch-ups with the project evaluator, community meetings and updates. The coordinator receives peer support and management support from Creative Lives.

The Community Forum was established in January 2024 and meets monthly. The forum offers an opportunity for anyone in the community who would like to play an active role in supporting Creative Places, Edenderry to come along and join in the discussions, planning, learning and development.

We provide feedback forms at all workshops and events and have recently created feedback postcards. There are also opportunities for attendees, artists, facilitators and volunteers to give written and verbal feedback to the coordinator via email, phone or in person. The project evaluator has also been in contact with all artists/facilitators at regular intervals throughout the project to collate their thoughts, ideas and feedback.

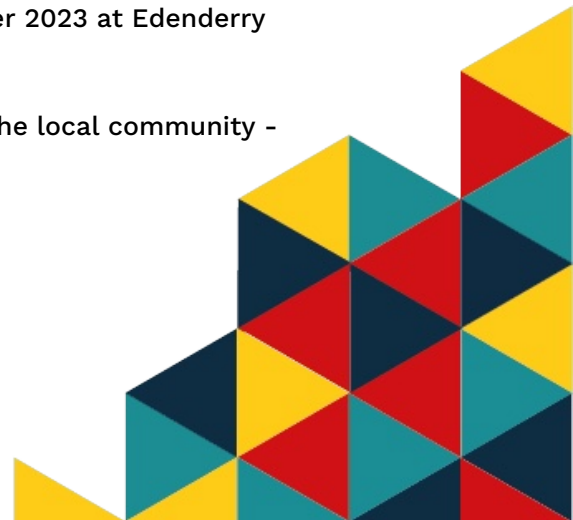
In May 2022 we appointed Shane Hynan as project photographer / videographer, which was a freelance contract until December 2023. This was really helpful in capturing the project through images and video. We are currently working with a new project photographer / videographer, Mark Forde who was appointed in February 2024 and his freelance contract runs until the end of August 2024. Again this has been really useful in terms of capturing the project through images, audio and video. Mark also joined our recent Community Panel when we were making decisions about the Artist Commissions.



1 - Voices of Edenderry, Culture Night event as part of Culture Night 2024 - Image credit: Shane Hynan

2 - Laura Phillips at the open Community Meeting in October 2023 at Edenderry Library - Image credit: Seonaid Murray

3- The mural at The Cabin, created by Sharon Reegan and the local community - Image credit: Mark Forde



Public-facing art, exhibitions, installations and events

In September 2023, we facilitated a celebration event, showcasing the work we had created during the 2nd year of the project. The event was called Muin Ogham (Muin is Vine/Blackberry in the Celtic Calendar and is representative of the month of September, and Ogham is the name of the ancient Irish language based around trees). Muin Ogham included setting up a large stage in the Town Hall square. Eden FM, the community radio station, provided sound and we invited local band RADAR to perform. Local musician Tom Nolan led some of the young people from the Youth Cafe who had been learning guitar with him through support from Creative Places, Edenderry to perform on stage. Local musicians Theodore and Ademar Stones played some traditional tunes and Dubh Lee from Tullamore headlined. There were visual art and creative craft demonstrations from Jenny Bergin and Eleanor Farrelly, and cake made by the Colourful Butterfly bakery.

The event was our first public-facing event, it was a lot of fun and we had really positive feedback. Over 50 people interacted with the event throughout the day.



Muin Ogham cake made by the Colourful Butterfly Baker, and Dubh Lee performing.
Image credit: Seonaid Murray

Our second public-facing event was a Halloween themed ‘Festival in a Van’ day at the Town Hall square in October 2023. Festival in a Van provided the stage and sound and we invited local drama facilitator and musician Danna Davis Daly to perform as a witch. Dublin-based dancer Gemma Trimble performed a circus routine, Yolanda Rodriguez and Retox dance performed as a group and local band RADAR performed a Halloween themed set. Everyone dressed up for the occasion!

Jenny Bergin facilitated arts and crafts and the Colourful Butterfly bakery made a cake. Our project photographer, Shane Hynan facilitated ‘Faces of Edenderry’, which saw him set up at Eden FM studios and offer portrait photography to anyone in fancy dress.



Gemma Trimble, Danna Davis Daly, RADAR and Retox Dance at the Halloween themed Festival in a Van event. Photo credit: Seonaid Murray

We ran two events as part of Culture Night, Cultures of Edenderry and Voices of Edenderry. Nesrin Elazaly was the community lead volunteer for Cultures of Edenderry, which took place at the GAA club. People from the local community were invited to come along to experience food, music, crafts, dancing and storytelling from all the different cultures that are currently represented in Edenderry.

Voices of Edenderry was an open mic night at St. Mary's primary school showcasing poetry, creative writing and storytelling from the various writing workshops Creative Places, Edenderry had run to date. We also launched the 'Poetry and Prose' pamphlet, which was created as part of a writing weekend facilitated by local playwright John Grogan, Belfast-based performance poet, Colin Hassard and Co. Down-based poet, Amy Louise Wyatt. Local writer Eugene O'Brien also read as part of the open mic night. Local artist Becca Thorne gave us permission to use two of her paintings on the front and back of the pamphlet. **The Poetry and Prose pamphlet can be viewed [here](#).**



'Cultures of Edenderry' participants, local playwright John Grogan and Belfast-based performance poet, Colin Hassard. Image credit: Shane Hynan



Belfast-based performance poet, Colin Hassard, cake made by the Colourful Butterfly Bakery and local writer Eugene O'Brien at the *Voices of Edenderry* event.
Image credit: Seonaid Murray

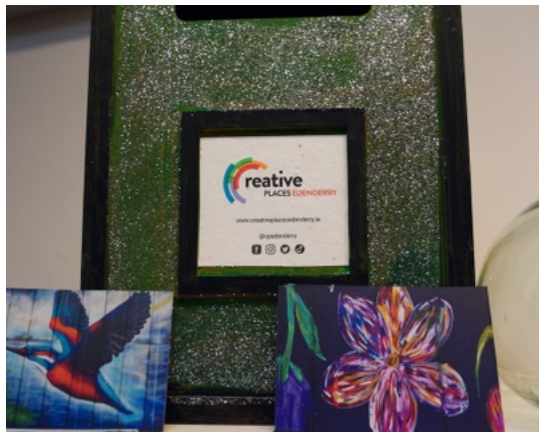


As we moved into the Celebrate phase of the project in Year 3, we began to plan and support exhibitions and showcases of local work. The first exhibition was for Becca Thorne at Edenderry Library. Creative Places, Edenderry supported the framing of her paintings and we held a launch event which was well attended, including local Councillor Mark Hackett and Minister Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.



Some of Becca Thorne's paintings. L to R: Minister Pippa Hackett, Becca Thorne, Seonaid Murray, Sandra Lewis, Councillor Mark Hackett. Image credit: Seonaid Murray and Tom Thorne

The second exhibition was an Alternative Evaluation Exhibition at Edenderry Library in which we invited artists / facilitators, volunteers and group members to submit pieces of work in response to their interaction with Creative Places, Edenderry over the last three years. Each individual reaction was so interesting, thoughtful and different. We had a launch event and an evaluation event co-facilitated by our project evaluator and coordinator.



The 'Evaluation Postbox' postcards, some of the pieces in the exhibition and Angi Ward. Image credit: Mark Forde

The groups that utilise the Edenderry Community Cabin had requested that we might support having it painted. It was an interesting process and after a consultation period, Co. Down-based artist Sharon Regan collaborated with the local community on a biodiversity themed mural. We also asked Sharon to consider an installation at the Grand Canal wall to connect the two sides of the town. A shoal of wooden fish were created as part of a community art day, local artist Jenny Bergin worked on creating more shoals of wooden fish, and they have all now been attached to the Grand Canal wall in consultation with the Blundell Wood Residents Association.



Images from the community art day at The Cabin. Image credit: Mark Forde and Sharon Regan

Feedback

There was some amazing feedback about the above projects and events:



“Thank you for the opportunity to paint the Cabin. Everyone was so lovely about the artwork but one comment from a young man made me sad. He said ‘It’s amazing, but too nice for this area’, as if they don’t deserve beautiful things. So thank you for giving them something beautiful, even if they don’t think they deserve it.” Artist, Sharon Regan

“I cannot thank you and Creative Places, Edenderry enough. You have given me so many wonderful opportunities to do what I feel is so very important to our community.” Artist/facilitator, Festival in a Van event

“There was such a wide range of music last Saturday. We were singing along here in the shop and people were dancing up and down the street!” - Local shop owner commenting on our Muin Ogham event

“Well done on a great event. It was great to get to experience it first-hand. Well done, it must have been a huge amount of work!” Angela, Assistant Arts Officer, Offaly County Council on the Muin Ogham event

Linking Creative Places, Edenderry to the wider cultural community

It has been important to link Creative Places, Edenderry to wider initiatives, and we have done this in a variety of ways:

- We have brought artists to Edenderry from across Ireland, including Belfast-based performance poet, Colin Hassard; Co. Down-based poet Amy Lousie Wyatt; and Co. Down-based artist Sharon Regan. We have also had visiting artists from Dublin (Gemma Trimble) and Tullamore (Dubh Lee). We have invited guest facilitators from Cork (Volunteer Ireland) and Charmaine McMeekin, a dance facilitator from Belfast as part of the Healthy Offaly 'Step it Up!' creative movement project.
- We have been on site visits to The Black Box in Belfast, for a workshop in which we shared creative ideas. Three artists from Edenderry visited Belfast as part of the Aethereal Material project, a piece of work funded by the British Science Association in collaboration with Dr. Trevor Agus at the Sonic Arts Research Centre at Queen's University, Belfast. As part of this project, voices from Edenderry were recorded and included in a series of original music compositions based on the 'speech to song auditory illusion' and an LP was produced. [You can hear the sound recordings here.](#)
- Community Music Wales contacted us about a collaboration on their Dau Enaid, Un Taith (Two Souls, One Journey) project. It was an exchange programme and professional development opportunity for project development staff and freelance musicians, to learn how different countries use music to engage with their communities. The project was about sharing ideas, best practice and to build a cohesive network of community

music organisations. It was funded through the Welsh Government funding scheme Taith, which was primarily designed as a replacement for the Erasmus programme in Wales. It took place in four locations in Europe and one in Australia. The Community Music Wales team came to visit Edenderry in April and worked for two days with the musicians and music groups we have been working with so far. Here are some images from the visit:

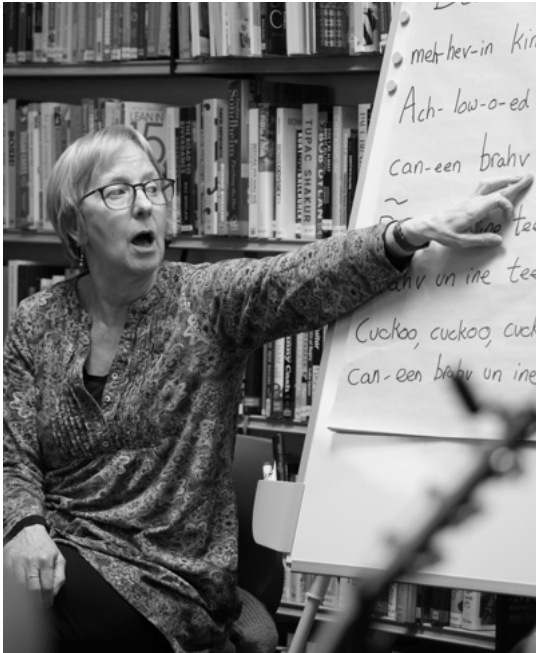


Image credit: Mark Forde

Key Needs Identified

Throughout the first 3 years of Creative Places, Edenderry we have identified several key needs that should be explored, developed and workshopped through Community Training sessions and events:

1. Funding and support with applying for funding applications
2. Safeguarding
3. Planning, designing and delivering an arts based workshop
4. Gathering a map of local Community Networks

While facilitating Community Focus groups and training sessions we have also identified 3 Key areas that we feel the Community require more training and support in:

1. Inclusion - supporting Equality, Monitoring and Inclusion Policies to be written for grassroots group
2. Health and Safety - including what paperwork is required to effectively run a workshop - such as risk assessments etc
3. Advocacy - there is a need for Creative Places, Edenderry to advocate on the Communities behalf to ensure that infrastructure such as funding, transport and communication with local authorities are all fully up and running before the end of June 2025

We have decided that we will work on all of the above in 3 stages:

Stage 1: Training sessions and events

Stage 2: A Series of Community Toolkits

Stage 3: Advocacy



Grants and commissions

Creative Grants 2022 - 2023

- Eden FM Community Radio Station - €500 to make the studio more accessible.
- Yolanda Rodriguez - Retox Dance - €500 for a dance project and to create a video piece.
- Jenny Bergin - Creative Crafts - €500 to facilitate a series of air drying clay workshops.
- St. Patrick's Primary School - €500 to create a recycled bottle cap mural.
- Edenderry Women's Shed - €500 to purchase and facilitate cricut craft cutting workshops.

Artist Commissions 2023

- Jenny Bergin - €6,000 for a reminiscence project with the residents of Ofalia House called 'Now and Then'.
- John Grogan - €4,200 for a writing project which facilitated a group of local Edenderry writers to devise new plays exploring community, character, and place.
- Michelle O'Donnell - €12,000 for the 'Wings of our Community' glass sculpture project.

Seed Funding Grants 2024

- Yelyzaveta Marchenko - €500 for a group singing project.
- Laura Phillips - €1,000 for a Mindful Doodle Journal project.
- Lorraine and Cormac Reilly - €1,000 for photography/videography as part of the original musical play, CROÍ.
- Helen Keenan - €1,000 for an Easter dance camp project.
- Caoimhín Ó Súilleabháin - Gaelscoil Éadan Doire - €1,000 for a biodiversity themed sensory school garden project.
- Edenderry Men's Shed - €500 for a donkey cart making project.
- The Youth Cafe - €1,000 for a series of creative workshops at the senior youth club group, including drama, dance, music and crafting.

Artist Commissions 2024

- Eden FM - €3,000 for the 'Echoes of Edenderry' project.
- John Maguire - €6,000 for 'The Witch had it Coming' Halloween pantomime.
- Laura Phillips - €3,000 for the large Doodle Mural project at the Youth Cafe.
- Sara Walmsley and Elizabeth Drwal - €12,000 for the intergenerational sound and performance-making project, 'Reflections and Resonance'.



Developments and off-shoots

Many different connections have been made and fostered through Creative Places, Edenderry and new groups/networks are starting to form. For example:

- The Monday Music group with Angi Ward now go out for coffee after the group. They have a separate group called Acoustic Hearts which performs at concerts and events, and a third group called Rambling House in which they have sessions and get-togethers in living rooms and pubs.
- A group of carers met through different workshops and events run by Creative Places, Edenderry and are now meeting regularly for peer support.
- A group attendee expressed interest in putting together some visual art for an exhibition in the library. Several of the artists have been working together with the individual to support them with this work.
- Jenny Bergin noted that the Community Social was very popular on a Friday but that the day and time did not suit all of those who wished to attend. With support from Creative Places, Edenderry Jenny started to run ActiviTEA, which is a weekly arts-based workshop that meets at The Cabin.



Reflection from Steering Group member

‘It’s wonderful to hear about the positive impact the cabin mural has had on the community. Collaboration between Creative Places, Edenderry and the Offaly Local Development Company has brought people together and enhanced the local area in a meaningful way.

The fact that the mural has deterred graffiti is a testament to the community’s connection to the artwork and the pride they take in their surroundings. The successful Community Art Day further highlights this, with locals coming together to contribute to the mural, creating a sense of ownership and unity.

It’s also great that the Offaly Local Development Company has supported Creative Places by making the cabin available for activities like Jenny’s Activ-tea and Angi’s music group, which no doubt contribute to the community’s well-being and social cohesion.

This initiative is a shining example of how art and collaboration can transform public spaces and foster community spirit.’ Derek Coyne, Community Development worker at Offaly Local Development Company and member of the Steering Group

Testimonials from across the project

“Just WOW!!!!!! Thank you guys soooooo much. I'm over the moon. I'm speechless. Thank you. Thank you for believing in me.” - Artist Commission recipient

“Creative Places, Edenderry has given me fantastic belief in myself. And I can now call myself an artist.” Artist

“I so enjoyed last night and left feeling so inspired!” Attendee at Creative Grant Networking and Information session

“Delighted with the writing weekend and the singing session. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” Workshop participant

“The lady was fantastic today, everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a lovely morning.” Storytelling participant

“I really enjoyed it all. The three facilitators were excellent and the coordinator is a very kind and caring person and brilliant at her job.” Writing weekend participant

“It was an absolute pleasure to be a part of this and see how much is going on in Edenderry and the amazing talents as well. Thanks so much again, we really appreciate it.” Parkview Residents Association

“Eleanor is a fantastic teacher and not only did I enjoy the social aspect of this class, I benefited tremendously from the gentle stretching. I suffer with back and hip issues and found a noticeable improvement every week.” Creative movement participant

“I observed so many people who now call Edenderry home from different towns around Ireland, countries, cultures and all ages and genders came together with local people to help themselves and their individual health by participating in Eleanor's class. This is a terrific opportunity to help

other people settle into their new home in Edenderry and feel more integrated into the community.” Creative movement participant

“I suffer with back and joint pain and have found Eleanor’s classes have been instrumental in helping me over the last few weeks. The pains in my feet in particular have decreased considerably and I find myself able to walk more because of this.” Creative movement participant

“As we become an ageing population, programmes such as this one can be considered hugely significant in keeping us all out of hospital waiting rooms with bone breakages and off waiting lists for physiotherapy. Gentle exercise is so important for the mind and body and therefore I respectfully ask that you consider the continuation of this programme.” Creative movement participant

“What a terrific organisation and I think it would be devastating for some if it didn’t become long-term. I know how it feels to be isolated and to make yourself become part of something like this (I’m thinking of the adults and children who are joining your groups) and to then lose that, is really hard.” Local artist

“You have done amazing work for the local community and all involved in delivering your projects. I would love to work with you again in the future. Congratulations on all your great work and the help and support you have given so many people.” Local artist and facilitator

“I would love to be of help to this initiative and if there’s anything I can do I would love to get involved. I work in events and communications, but I would put chairs out and sweep floors if that’s what’s needed!” Prospective Community Forum member

“I met great people and the organisation was excellent. Run it more often, please!” Dance workshop participant

“I really enjoyed the creativity, discussion, openness and trust - please run it again!” Arts Collective Day participant

“That was amazing. It was lovely and relaxed and most people got their pieces finished.” Community lead volunteer at the ActiviTEA sessions

“Ecstatic is an understatement for how excited I am to join the journey of documenting this project. Capturing the essence of art, community and togetherness of Edenderry is something I’ve been doing through my own work, so to join the Creative Places, Edenderry team is a huge privilege.”
Project photographer/videographer, Mark Forde

“Just had my first session with the residents and what a special time we had. We listened to music, chatted, did crafting. They’re all getting great fun from the project - and these workshops benefit me as much as they do the residents.” Artist and facilitator, Artist Commission

“My family had a great day. I thought my partner and son would head off after the first class but to my amazement they stayed in the music class for all four sessions and had a great time. Yolanda was an amazing dance teacher and even though my mobility is bad she included me. We also did crafts with Jenny, which we really enjoyed and I would definitely repeat the experience. A fab day all round, thanks!” Arts Collective Day attendee

“Thanks so much for all the advice and guidance, it is very much appreciated. I found the session really useful and informative.”
Participant from Guidance on Fundraising training session

“Thank you for all of the work you are doing in Edenderry - there is so much going on!” B&B owner

“Thank you so much for all your help! We’re absolutely over the moon we got the funding! Go raibh míle maith agat” - Seed Funding recipient - Gaelscoil Éadan Doire

“I couldn’t possibly have done it without your support. Creativity is about the essence of who we are, it’s not an intellectual thing although people do intellectualise it. It’s about emotions, it’s about being in touch with things that are perhaps difficult. It’s about putting something of yourself out there isn’t it? You do feel a bit of a fraud - what does everyone see? But it is so exciting! I have to credit the confidence that you’ve given me for the stuff that’s happening to me now with the gallery and all sorts of things. So it’s just amazing! And it’s never too late is it? I was 50 when I picked up a pencil and started doodling and you know two years later, here we are!” Becca Thorne, Edenderry-based artist



Perturbation by Becca Thorne - this was used as the LP front cover for our Aethereal Material Project



Across Wastwater by Becca Thorne, used as the LP back cover for our Aethereal Material Project

Evaluation

“Through evaluatory conversations and the collection of quantitative data from Creative Places, Edenderry events and activities, it is apparent that the programme has been particularly effective in reaching disadvantaged groups in the community, including those experiencing challenges with mental health, disability, and at-risk young people. It has also fostered a community of artistic leaders, facilitators and practitioners who have been supported to develop an amazingly diverse range of projects and now see themselves differently. Using intention setting to evaluate their work and vision individually and collectively for Creative Places, Edenderry has emerged as a priority for all future work.

“The evaluative process to date has been broad but it is notable that it has been particularly effective in capturing the scale of activity through event monitoring. This has been done in close collaboration with the co-ordinator and identified hugely positive outcomes and impacts on individual artists and disadvantaged target groups in the community. The detail of these outcomes and impacts have been profoundly captured through direct dialogue with artists, facilitators, group leaders and individual participants.

“It is evident that this process of dialogue is essential both as a means of capturing this important data but also as an experiential learning experience for all who participate in that dialogue, to reinforce the value of the arts activities in achieving these outcomes and helping all participants understand how and why these activities have a real social impact. In light of these experiences and looking to 2024 and beyond, it will be important to support community leaders, artists and activists to use evaluation as a means of guiding their actions through the setting of 'Key Intentions' for their endeavours, which can give them purpose, encourage a self-reflective practice, and lead to long-term sustainable outcomes and impacts.”

Conor O’Leary, Project Evaluator

Summary

At a recent Community Forum meeting we asked the group ‘If Creative Places, Edenderry was an animal what would it be?’ and the most popular reply was an Octopus. Creative Places, Edenderry is in the centre with all of the tentacles of the project reaching out from there. Creative Lives’ Chief Executive, Robin Simpson and Creative Places, Edenderry Co-ordinator, Seonaid Murray discussed this analogy in [a recent interview with Eden FM](#).

Creative Places, Edenderry is at a very interesting stage and we have highlighted the theme for Year 4 as Empower and Embed. By the end of July 2025 we would like to have created a community toolkit for moving forward with the project, and to have connected all of the different creative groups in Edenderry, ensuring that it is clear who to contact with regards to particular art forms, and signposting to organisations who can provide further training and support.

It has been a privilege to witness the community growing in confidence, creativity and participation in events, workshops, meetings and training sessions. Of particular note are those who three years ago would not have felt comfortable describing themselves as artists but now feel they can freely express themselves and that their creative contributions are valued. [On a recent podcast](#), Audrey Rossa discussed this with Seonaid Murray, pointing out that last year they did not feel that Eden FM ‘qualified’ to apply for an Artists Commission but this year they applied and were successful for their upcoming project; Echoes of Edenderry.

Creative Places, Edenderry has also begun to collaborate more officially with different organisations and local authorities. We applied successfully to Healthy Offaly to deliver the ‘Step it Up!’ creative movement project which is a dance-based project working with three local dance facilitators and one from Belfast. This project is currently running and has received very positive feedback so far. We have highlighted this as one possible strand for further development, particularly around arts and health.

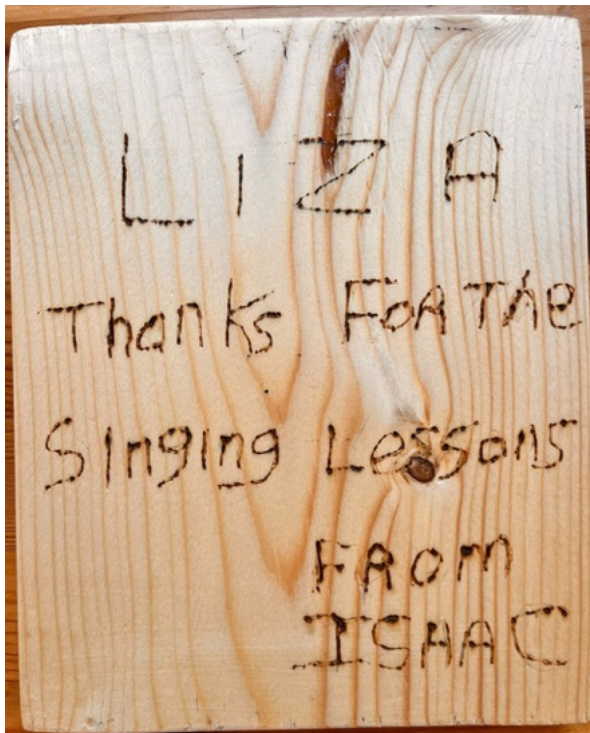
Other organisations we are currently working with are: Offaly Local Development Company on an Offaly Pride project, Offaly County Council through Culture Night and the Hullabaloo! Festival and Music Generation Offaly through a recent Artist Commission awarded to Sara Walmsley and Elizabeth Drwal.

Seonaid Murray wrote an article for the UK-based Engage Journal in which she underlined the importance of hyperlocal and grassroots work (see page 56).

Creative Places, Edenderry is now starting to be recognised both locally and nationally. We have noticed a shift from us 'reaching out' to others to us being contacted directly for support from groups and organisations. We are also being asked for advice and guidance in planning events and contacting freelance artists through the networks and contacts we have built up.

We have worked hard to include a wider range of community voices in decision making. So far we have had eight different community members involved in the panels for deciding on the micro-grants and artist commissions. We have also been facilitating monthly Community Forum meetings which have engaged twelve community members so far. Referring to the '**Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership**' model, which is scored from 0-5, we are at level 4, 'Collaborate'.

By the end of July 2025, we would like to have progressed to level 5 which is the 'Defer' to point, and for the community in Edenderry to be working fully independently from Creative Places, Edenderry and utilising Creative Lives for training and further mentorship and development.



Feedback from, and an image of, group participants who took part in singing lessons with Liza Marchenko

Thank you to The Arts Council of Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaíon, the Offaly Arts Office at Offaly County Council, the Municipal District Edenderry and all of the other project partners that we have worked with so far.

Links, social media and website

Facebook and Instagram:

<https://www.facebook.com/cpedenderry>

<https://www.instagram.com/cpedenderry/>

<https://creativeplacesedenderry.ie/>

SoundCloud links:

<https://soundcloud.com/aetherealmaterial>

<https://soundcloud.com/creative-places-edenderry>

Shane Hynan Videos:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1dKW2SzPGNAKYoy4BG-QABYJ2LQfyS0HM>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1dKW2SzPGNAKYoy4BG-QABYJ2LQfyS0HM>

Mark Forde Video:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1qPy-rKS9a5BmSD0y7jElYerZJkVPT9Tz>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1MfN0Fb6reaCgZbrgANodu-f745zhFED5>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1MfN0Fb6reaCgZbrgANodu-f745zhFED5>



Creative Lives

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