



# Creative Lives

## Kickstart Voluntary Arts Microgrants 2021-2022



**Cheshire West and Chester  
Reopening and Recovery  
Programme for rural areas  
and local communities**

Funded and supported by:



Cheshire West  
**Voluntary Arts Network**



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# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT





As part of Cheshire West and Chester's Re-opening and Recovery Programme for rural areas and local communities, the council committed to working with Cheshire West Voluntary Arts Network and Creative Lives, to offer microgrants to kickstart creative activity happening in communities across the borough. The Reopening and Recovery Rural Programme was funded by the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant to Cheshire West and Chester Council

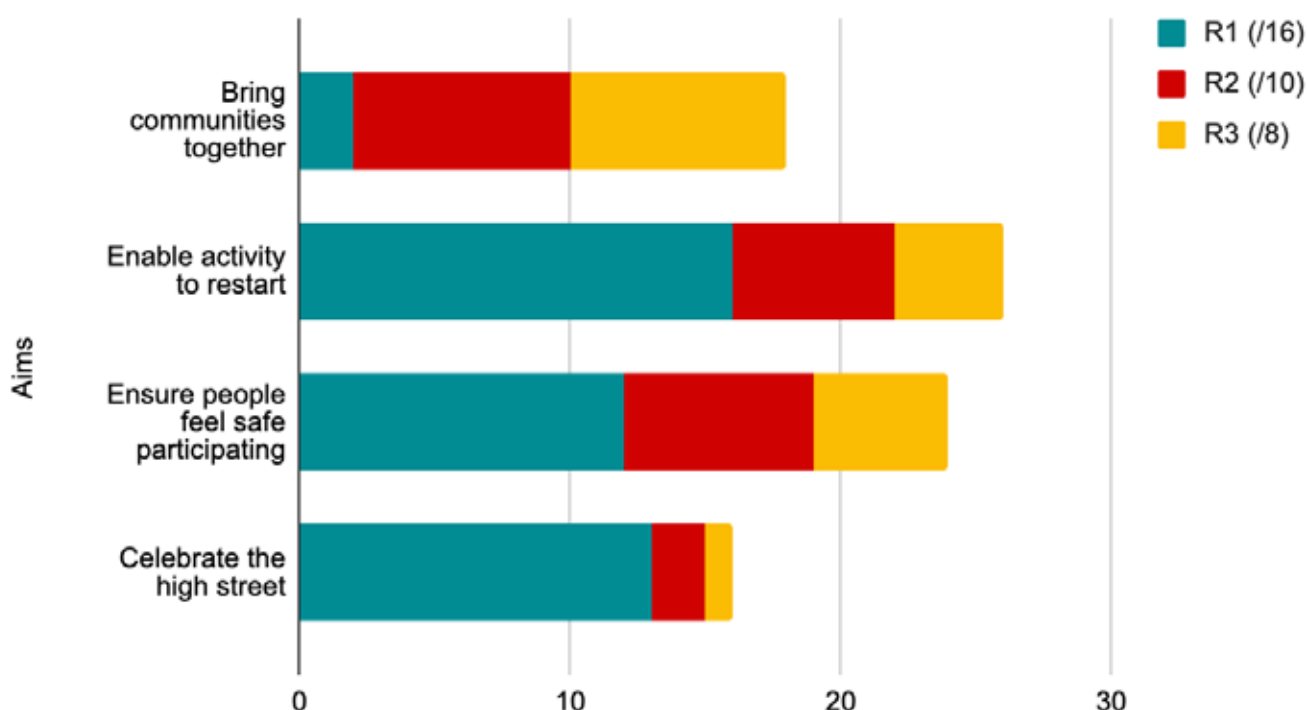
The funding was open to all creative and cultural forms, to support any costs required to meet at least one of the funding aims:

- Enabling activity to restart
- Celebrating the local high street
- Bringing communities together
- Ensure people can participate safely

£18,000 was committed to offer £200 - £500 microgrants that would help local groups start, or restart, creative activities in their communities, recognising the valuable role that these play in building community and wellbeing.

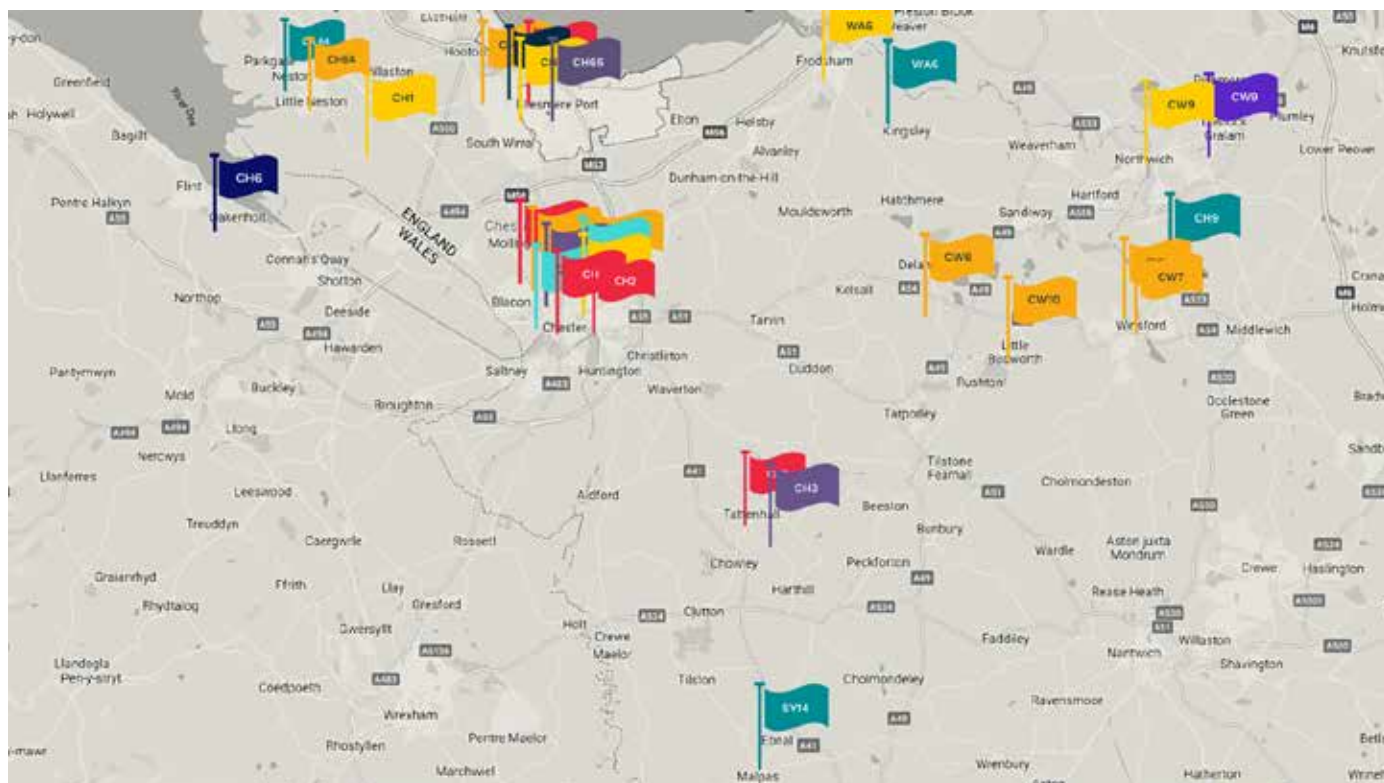
Between October 2021 and February 2022, 34 groups based across the borough were supported. These covered a varied combination of funding aims, target groups and art-forms, as illustrated in the charts below. All projects addressed at least one of the funding aims through their creativity, some met several. Some projects reached one or more target groups or characteristics, while others were public activities that did not.

### Funding aims (Rounds 1-3)

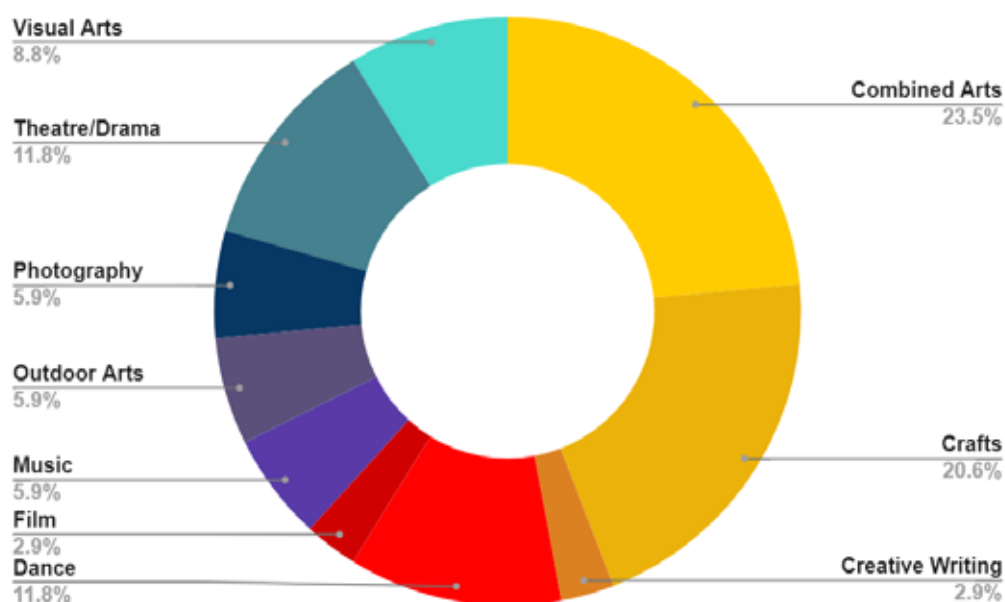


The funded projects are geographically spread across Cheshire West, representing a range of art forms and diversity of target groups:

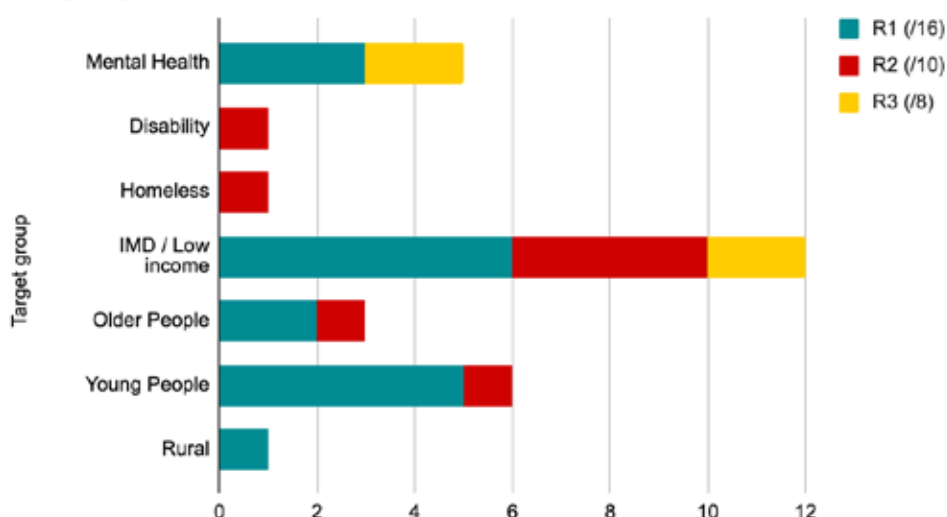
### Location of activity being supported



These groups represent a **range of art forms**



Target groups (Rounds 1-3)



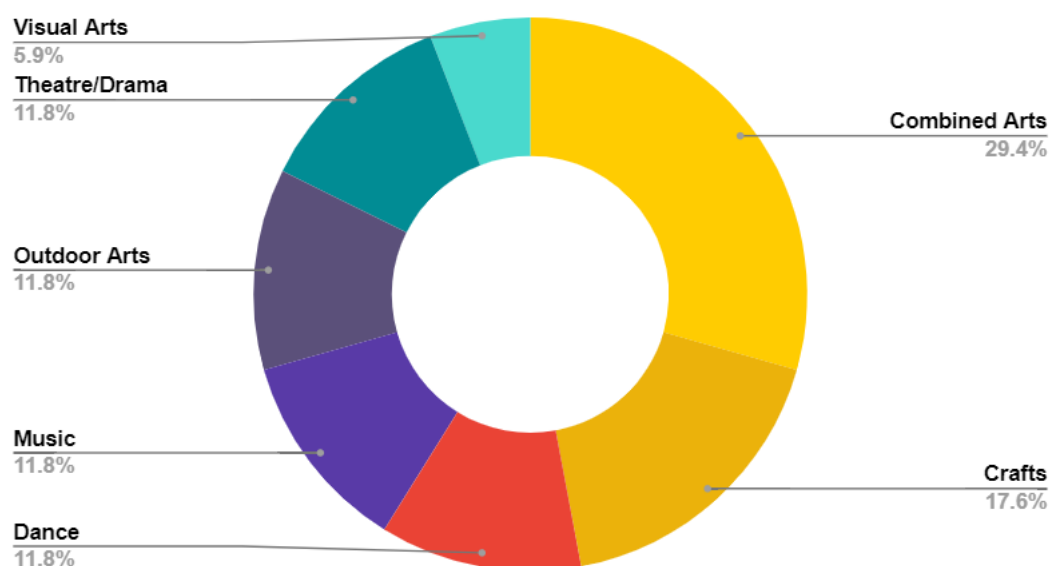
## Round one, October 2021

In round one **16 grantees** were awarded funding totalling **£7,310** (of 24 applicants)

Project/group	Art-form(s)	Postcode	Value
55 and Over Club	Crafts	CH2	£465
Arts Award And Families	Combined Arts	CH1	£500
Blacon Action Team Working with Blacon Beacon	Visual Arts	CH1	£292
Fallen Angels Dance Theatre	Dance	CH1	£500
Feel Great... Create!	Combined Arts	CH1	£500
Friends of the Countess of Chester Country Park	Outdoor Arts	CH2	£500
Friends of Wolverham Community Centre, Thursday supported learning group	Combined Arts	CH65	£435
Frodsham Christmas Festival	Combined Arts	WA6	£500
Kingsley Players and KPYT	Theatre/Drama	WA6	£500
Mid Cheshire Youth Theatre	Combined Arts	CW9	£500
Minerva Arts	Theatre/Drama	SY14	£500
New Mums of Newton and Kingsway	Crafts	CH2	£450
Passion for Learning - Share a Smile Project	Crafts	CH1 to CH66, CW6 to CW10	£448
Shadazzle school of performing arts	Dance	CH65	£480
The Old School House Community Choir	Music	CW9	£440
The Spinney Project	Outdoor Arts	CH3	£300

These groups represent a **range of art forms**

### Art forms (Round 1)



### Location of activity being supported





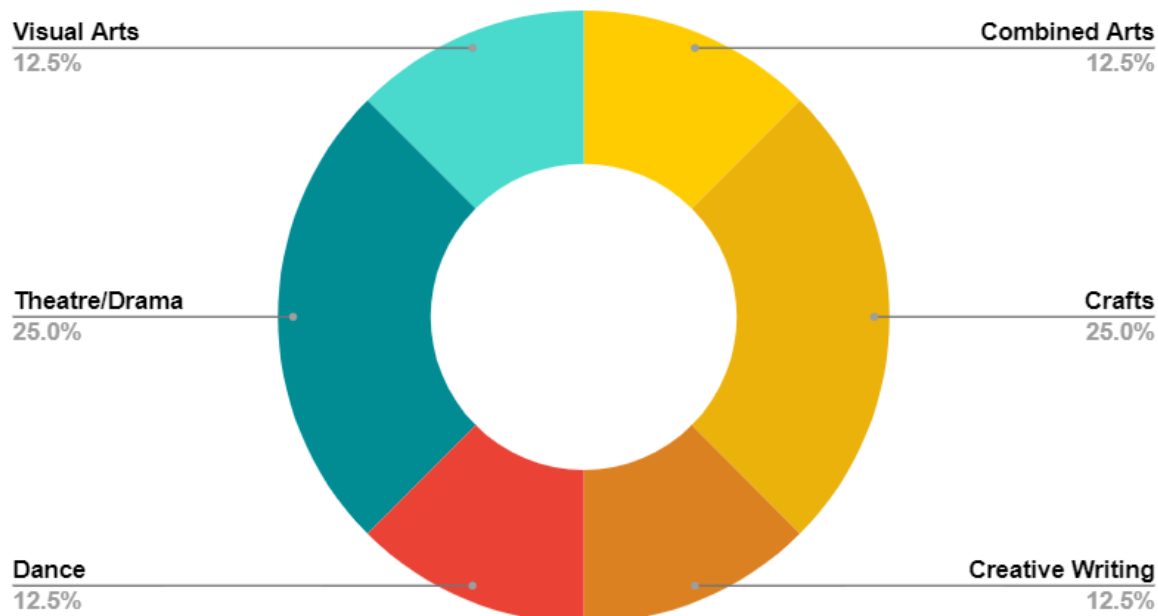
## Round two, November 2021

In round one **10 grantees** were awarded funding totalling **£4,179** (of 10 applicants)

Project/group	Art-form(s)	Postcode	Value
1st Ness Brownies	Crafts	CH64	£250
Brightlights Theatre Company (for the over 50s)	Theatre/Drama	CH64	£500
Deva Flamenco	Dance	CH2	£292
Homegrown Dance Theatre	Dance	CH3	£500
Jubilee Community Film for Cheshire	Combined Arts	CH1	£500
KMTC	Theatre/Drama	CH9	£500
Pavilion Art group	Visual Arts	CH2	£216
Poets in Paint Community Interest Company	Visual Arts	CH65	£350
The Neuromuscular Centre	Crafts	CW7	£375
Words for Wellbeing - Listen to Our Voices	Creative Writing & Storytelling for Wellbeing	CH1	£488

These groups represent a **range of art forms**

### Art forms (Round 2)



### Location of activity being supported



## Round Three, January - February 2022

In round three **8 grantees** have been awarded funding of **£3,990**:

Project/group	Art-form(s)	Postcode	Value
Better Together Chester	Crafts	CH1	£500
Chalice Productions	Combined Arts	CH65	£500
Cheshire Print Fair	Visual Arts	CH1/CH7	£500
Ellesmere Port Local and Family History Society	Photography	CH65	£500
Expanding the Dance	Dance	CH3	£500
Flicks in the sticks Flicks in the sticks	Film	CH6	£500
Messy mischief makers	Combined Arts	CH65	£500
One for Sorrow, Mind	Crafts	CW7	£490



# WHO TOOK PART



LEADERS

83

session leaders led creative activities



VOLUNTEERS

119

volunteers led or supported the delivery



PARTICIPANTS

1407

people actively took part in creative activities



AUDIENCE

8430

people experienced the projects as spectators

## Characteristics:

- **Participants ranged from 0-101 years**
- **The gender split 69% female / 29% male**  
(<1% other gender identities/prefer not to say)
- **15.5% of those that took place reported a disability**
- **93% White British, 7% other ethnic background**  
(Cheshire West 5.3%, 2011 ONS Census)




# CHESTER

## 55 and Over Club, Hoole, Chester

- **Craft**
- **67 participants / 29 spectators**
- **3 sessions (November - December 2021)**

 *Enable activity to restart*

 *Bring communities together*

 *Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

The 55 and Over Club has run for 4 years, with around 30 attendees meeting each week for coffee, an activity and lunch, helping ease social isolation within the community. Coming together regularly in a relaxed space enables members to make new friends and connect with other clubs and activities.

Microgrant funding gave the group a creative boost, supporting 3 festive craft sessions held at the community centre, making Christmas cards, decorations and wreaths.

“The grant meant that we could offer the activities for free and therefore enable more people than usual to have a go at craft making.”  
- Lead



**Hoole Community Centre**  
Published by Alan Rowlands · 6 December 2021 ·

BIG thanks to Creative Lives for their funding & support to enable our 55 clubbers to get #creative making Christmas wreaths. Thank you green fingered residents of #Hoole who helped us source enough foliage for all to create and Diane who organises us all. Great fun and some beautiful finished wreaths.

#Community Williams Family Foundation Cheshire West Voluntary Action

**55 Club**  
Wednesdays  
10:00am  
Chat, fun, activities, refreshments & friendship

764 People reached  
46 Engagements  
↑ +1.1x average Distribution score

Boost post

# Arts Award And Families, Chester (Northwich, Middlewich)



- **Combined Arts**
- **324 participants / 10 Volunteers**
- **3 Visits/ 1 AA Taster workshop / 5 online challenges sessions (December 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Working Title Artists Collective work with young people and their families, and continued connecting online throughout lockdown. Microgrant funding was used to support one Arts Award taster workshop and three visits, aiming to bring participants into Chester's art and community spaces, including:

- Chester Cathedral
- Grosvenor Museum
- Place For Art Chester (PACH)

Some of the planned in person activities were temporarily substituted for online activities due to increased COVID-19 cases affecting the groups. A series of challenge videos were created in response, encouraging people to visit Chester with family and friends, sharing via the facebook page. To 'Celebrate the High Street' challenge included a suggestion on where to get a cuppa in Chester, to help create an enjoyable experience and support local businesses.

Participants' feedback and comments:

*"I will definitely come to the Grosvenor Museum again!"*

*"I like that the activities were so interactive."*

*"I enjoyed meeting the artist and afterwards we went to Storyhouse for lunch where we listened to some poetry and I enjoyed doing some drawing."*

*"I enjoyed the mix of art in the cathedral. There was something for everybody."*

**LEGACY:** The group tested new technology in a blended way, 5 online 'Connect Communities with Art: The Chester Arts Challenges' and a facebook page which people can continue to join. New students registered to do Arts Award and new connections were developed with venues. To learn more, visit their Facebook page [@ChesterArtChallenges](#) and [Facebook group](#).



# Better Together Chester, Chester

- **Crafts**
- **18 participants / 10 Volunteers**
- **1 session (2022)**



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

A ceramic workshop run by Louise Condon was delivered with the weekly group at the United Reform Church, Blacon. Supporting the group to make new connections and gain new skills, building on the self-led activities to try more advanced crafts.

The funding also enabled the group to invest in a projector and portable screen, required for the talks on local history, health and wellbeing and other themes.

The session offered an opportunity to “talk freely and openly while making their pots. They also brought out their creative side as some of the pots were more advanced in technique than first imagined.” The leaders were pleasantly surprised to see everyone take part following the demonstration.

## Participants' feedback and comments:

*“Very enjoyable pottery session. It was fun and therapeutic. Thank you!”*

*“I really enjoyed Louise's pottery demo. It was nice that I was able to get my hands dirty and have a go so I can't wait to see how it turned out after firing.”*

*“A very enjoyable day. Never tried anything like this before. I really enjoyed it!”*



*“She was very good. Interesting and informative. Nice to see people from Blacon*

**LEGACY:** The group invested in a projector to allow them to watch and follow virtual creative sessions, accessing and enhanced and varied programme in a familiar space.

# Blacon Action Team with Blacon Beacon, Chester



- **Craft**
- **70 participants / 2 volunteers**
- **2 sessions (November - December 2021)**



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Following on from the Blacon Art Trail during 2020 Easter Holidays, two workshops were held during November and December to create window displays with children (inviting trail partners including 6 local schools, community organisations, churches, Blacon Butterflies WI, Blacon Beacon Community Supermarket, Hope Garden Support Group, Here and Now, Avenue Services. Blacon Action Team, Blacon Councillors).

Funding enabled two window display craft sessions to be held at Holy Trinity, where people could connect and create a window display to take away with them.

“It brought together the community we usually just see in the summer or who come to us for help with food into a different setting enabling us to socialise with them and it gave us time to get to know them better.” - Lead



Participants' feedback and comments:

*“Great to do an activity with the whole family.”*

*“Thank you for encouraging us to sit down and spend time together.”*


**LEGACY:** Looking to continue workshops several times a year at the church and engage regular volunteers to support. Visit their website [www.blaconbeacon.org](http://www.blaconbeacon.org) and Facebook page [@Blaconart](https://www.facebook.com/Blaconart).



# Cheshire Print Fair, Chester (Winsford/Borough-wide)



- **Visual Arts**
- **24 participants / 1 volunteer / 50 spectators**
- **3 sessions (21 February 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

Cheshire Print Fair started in 2021 to offer local printmakers and artists the opportunity to collectively share their work in the local area (having travelled to exhibit at fairs in Manchester, Liverpool and North Wales) and offer the public a chance to try printmaking.

The first event at Chester Cathedral in October had approximately 1100 visitors and the microgrant supported ongoing public engagement through free taster workshops held at Storyhouse, ahead of the next fair. The grant covered the cost of running these workshops, ensuring they were free to all. The public workshop meant that visibility and reach was extended beyond those taking part directly.



Images courtesy of Madeleine Humfries, 2022

“It was a success and exceeded our expectations regarding the number of people who wanted to be part of it and there was a large amount of people who had to be turned away due the workshops being fully booked... optional extension activities were taken up by each group, plus many questions about where people can go to screen print.”

- Cheshire Print Fair team

Comments included:

*“So fun!”*

*“Great fun and really cool prints!”*

*‘Our son is visually impaired so we weren’t sure if he’d be able to do it or want to do it but he’s loved making prints.’*

*“Are you doing it again?”*



**LEGACY:** Support growth from a fair/marketplace into a regular community event to share good practice and demonstrate printmaking methods via open workshop events. The team have been linked with other grantees to offer future public tasters.

# Deva Flamenco, Chester



- **Dance**
- **28 participants / 4 volunteers / 6 spectators**
- **5 sessions (January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



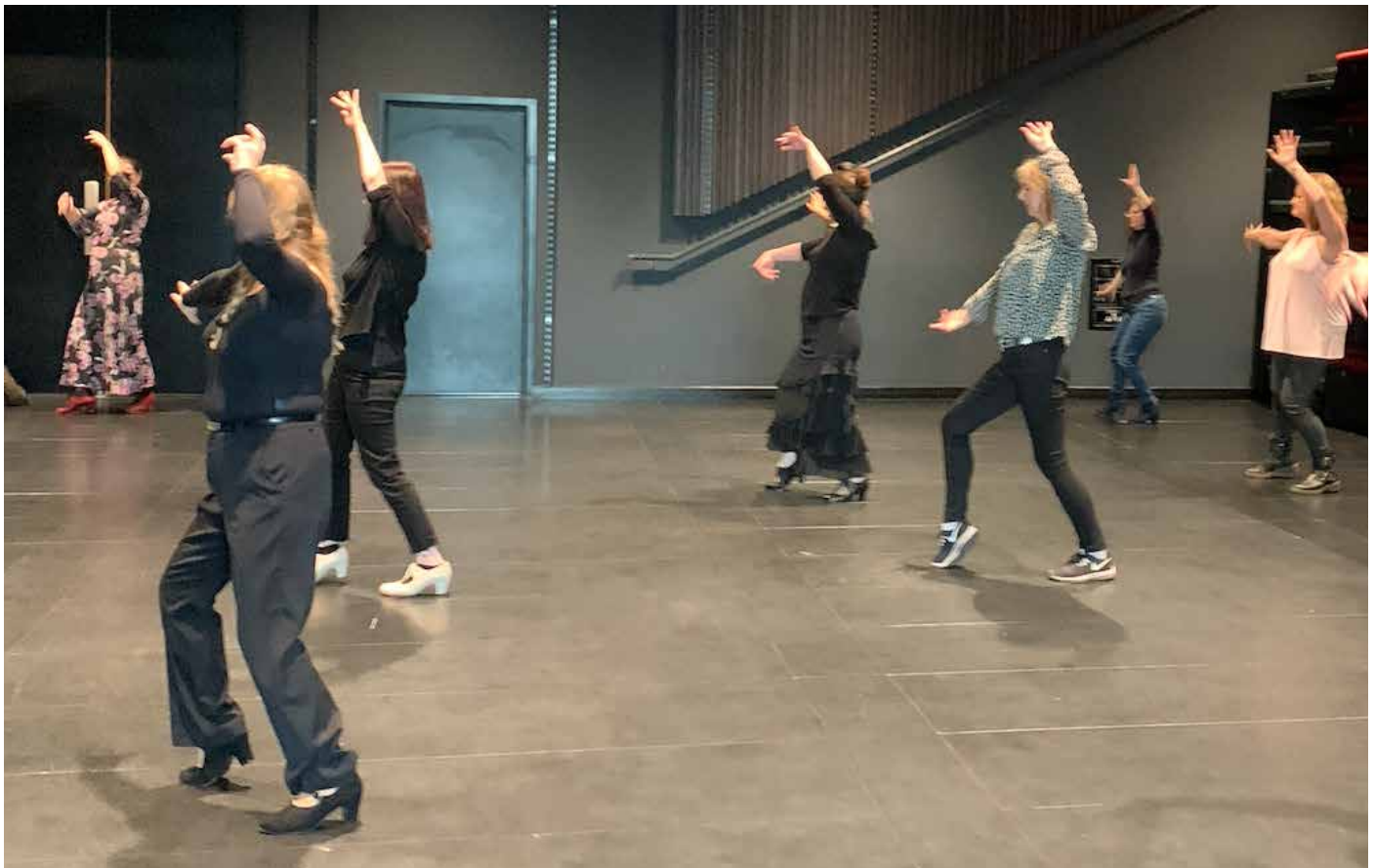
*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Deva Flamenco has been offering dance classes and flamenco performances in the Chester area for nearly 25 years, offering Zoom classes during COVID-19 restrictions. To rebuild live classes and encourage new students, the funding supported free “have a go at flamenco” tasters, accompanied by live guitar, at two venues:

- 4 Sunday sessions at Storyhouse
- 2 Monday sessions at New Scene





## Participants' comments:

*"It was fantastic. Good fun. Easy to follow it and no pressure if/when it went wrong."*

*"Excellent first session, Can't believe how many moves we learned and really felt like we were actually dancing flamenco (despite my heavy boot!) Thank you. (I could get hooked!!)"*

*"Really enjoyed the taster session... can't believe how much we covered and how hard it was to keep co-ordinated."*

*"Many thanks - Love the music and the passion of the dance."*

*"Absolutely wonderful. Really enjoyed it. First time I have been to a flamenco class. Nia has a wonderful teaching style. Very clear and fun. Feels very authentic and the rest of Deva Flamenco were welcoming and helpful too. It was so nice to be in a class with people of different ages and backgrounds. Thank you."*

*"Excellent Olé!"*



**LEGACY:** Deva Flamenco applied and were awarded a development grant to extend their local activity and link into national networks and expertise. To learn more, visit their website [www.devaflamenco.com](http://www.devaflamenco.com) and Facebook page [@DevaFlamenco](https://www.facebook.com/DevaFlamenco).



# Expanding the Dance, Chester/Borough-wide



- **Dance**
- **37 participants**
- **4 sessions (February 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

Expanding the Dance is a collaboration between Cheshire Dance & Bettina Carpi, offering a place to share practice amongst professional and amateur dance practitioners, to grow and develop as artists working in the community.

The microgrant supported four sessions of 3 hours, with half the session led by a different artist and the remaining time to share, learn and test out new ideas.



“The microgrant has helped me find and establish a community of dancers and has brought together a wonderful group of people all interested in creative, contemporary movement and choreographic practice.

“The group is made up of a wonderful mix of different ages and abilities and previous dance knowledge, ranging from people with no previous dance training to professional dancers. This mix has allowed the group to flourish, each participant supporting and learning from each other.

“All participants have met new people through this opportunity and the reigning atmosphere in all these sessions has been wonderful, people finding a community together through dance, movement and creativity!” - Lead

Participants' feedback and comments:

*"Beautiful offering, I wish I could come to all sessions!"*

*"These gave me a lot of positive energy and it was wonderful to connect with others."*

*"I felt really charged and full of energy from taking part in these sessions."*

*"We need more of this happening in Chester."*

*"Thank you so much for the opportunity to teach this group, I really enjoy to be around very nice people."*

*"Fantastic session and people- thank you so much!"*




**LEGACY:** The group aspires to collectively access affordable studio spaces in Chester and continue to grow a community to help each other develop as artists in the community, seeking further support and building a social media following.

# Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, Chester



- **Dance**
- **22 participants / 7 volunteers / 50 + 2200 spectators**
- **2 performances (November 2021 and March 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre is an inclusive Dance Theatre company, offering participation and progression opportunities for people in recovery from addiction and poor mental health. They work closely with partners, with a regular group meeting weekly at Garret Theatre, Storyhouse, where members access a structured pathway of participatory workshops, creative volunteering, artistic training, and public performance.



Microgrant funding supported two performance events at Chester's Storyhouse Theatre, complementing a wider celebration of FADT's 10th Anniversary, to showcase the achievements of two groups:

- Recovery dance group
- Empowering Women programme (delivered in partnership with Chester Sexual Abuse Survivors Service (CSASS); Chester probation service and Westminster Drug Project) EveryBODY can (scheduled for International Womens Day 2022)

One group member took on the role of Visual Arts Coordinator – she was reluctant to dance initially, but wanted to be included. Responding to her interests this has allowed us to buy props for cross art collaboration, and she worked with Artist Kaety Moon. The movement and art was used to hold a photoshoot which supported us to work with our overall aims of building confidence and celebrating women for their strengths and narratives.” - Lead

The event looks to challenge societal stigma and showcase the movement pieces created, offering a platform such as Storyhouse to breaks through barriers, challenging self-imposed limitations and societal limitations.



Participants' feedback and comments:

*“I didn't think I would join in today, I enjoyed getting involved. It was nice to be able to use other arts and crafts medium and it helped me to feel more comfortable and centered.”*

*“I am looking forward to making it to the group tomorrow. I have really enjoyed all parts of the project so far. I initially didn't think it would be for me but from attending the first session I have really enjoyed taking part and have felt encouraged and supported both by the leaders and other members. It has been a place for me to feel safe to express myself and feel included.”*

*“I loved yesterday's workshop and felt something special for the first time.”*

*“Special thank you to the workshop facilitators – what a workshop – appreciate you being so open and flexible in the moment.”*

**LEGACY:** Continuing to build links in the community and support women, who find it harder to access addiction services.



# Feel Great... Create!, Blacon, Chester



- **Craft**
- **6 participants**
- **5 sessions (November - December 2021)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

*Radiate Arts* offer community-based, participant-led creative activities that address isolation and support those recovering from trauma, mental and physical illness via partner referral. Activities grow from within the community, with suggestions and the direction each course discussed with existing members.



“Through creative activities, domestic abuse survivors can make sense of and find their way out of chaos, frightful memories, and the raw emotion of their abuse to discover a sense of grounding, strength, safety, understanding, and hope. They can begin on a path towards healing and recovery free of abuse, violence, and control. Our weekly workshops have had a tremendous impact on the confidence, self-worth and inner strength of these women, and have strengthened relationships within the group.” - Lead

Funding enabled five craft sessions to be held at the wellbeing hub:

- Workshop 1: Positive steps
- Workshop 2: African/companion canvas art
- Workshop 3: Christmas cards and décor
- Workshop 4: Lantern making
- Workshop 5: Wreath making

Participants' feedback and comments:

*"I've never done paintings like this before, it's very freeing."*

*"I never would have thought to paint this way, I'm really happy with what I've made."*

*"This has been my favourite workshop so far. I'm going to do these activities at home with my son."*

*"I'm really happy with what I've made, it's so much easier than I expected".*

*"Today has been really relaxing, I'm so glad I did this."*



"It was rewarding to see the relationships develop across the 5 weeks, from a small group of people who did not know each other and were apprehensive as to their expectations, to a group of people that got along together, developed friendships, chatted, shared stories and problems." - Leader

**LEGACY:** The group has secured funding to continue sessions into March.

# Friends of the Countess of Chester Country Park, Chester



- **Outdoor Arts / Crafts**
- **130 participants / 6 volunteers**
- **3 sessions (February 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

 *Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Free mosaic workshops at the Friendly Bench in the Countess of Chester park were intended to bring the community out of isolation to a safe outdoor setting and together in participatory creative sessions.

Funding enabled three craft sessions with Aleta Doran, artist in residence at Chester Cathedral, supported by volunteers, this helped the local community see another side to what the park offers and another level of interest for those who visit, bringing people together in a calm and relaxed setting and enabled everyone to take part for free.

“It showcased the park and the benefits it offers to people who have not visited before but who will hopefully return.” - Lead



**Participant's comment:**

*“I haven't done any creative activities with my family since before the pandemic and chose to come to this activity because it is outside.”*

**LEGACY:** The final session was delayed until March due to the storms. Following this experience, the park would like to offer a wider variety of creative activities and these links have been supported. Aleta's work is on display in the Countess of Chester Park and she is curating the Constellations exhibition at Chester Cathedral in spring, offering further opportunities to participate in mosaic workshops.



# Jubilee Community Film for Cheshire, Chester



- **Combined Arts**
- **120 participants / 2 volunteers / 20 spectators**
- **4 sessions (January - February 2022)**

## *Bring communities together*

Theatre in the Quarter are commissioning and producing a multi-generational project for and with the people of Cheshire West to celebrate 70 years of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II reign. The project will connect young people with the generation who remember The Queen's accession to the throne; sharing thoughts and ideas, memories and dreams, in the production of a short film to be premiered in the borough's Platinum Jubilee Celebration Weekend in June 2022.

Microgrant funding enabled Theatre in the Quarter to run creative tasters, with groups to be invited as part of the film, bringing together generations to reflect on the changes that have taken place during the Queen's reign. [Watch a short video.](#)

"The microgrant has enabled us to carry out this crucial first stage of the Jubilee project in which we brought together people over 75 years with teenagers in very meaningful discussion groups, song and story sharing sessions - all of which will contribute towards the next stage of the film. However, the sessions were hugely impactful in their own right, making stronger connections and fostering better understanding between two distinct generations." - Lead

## Participants' feedback and comments:

*"Most polished singers and lovely young people you found for the meeting. And brilliant piano playing, as well!"*

*"Thank you for a wonderful morning. It was a privilege and joy to meet such lovely and talented young people. They are so lucky to have you to inspire them."*

*"Congratulations on a lovely, well organised and worthwhile day! You obviously do great work with those young people who are a very mature section of their age group! We had a super time and have plenty of food for thought!"*

*"Well what an absolute thrill to be there today Ursula hasn't stopped talking about her day! We've had all her Coronation books out this afternoon too ! What a wonderful bunch of people in one place! And what a place! The teenagers were magnificent and nice to chat with. Looking forward to the next instalment!"*

**LEGACY:** The stories gathered will inspire the writing of the film and a new piece of theatre written by the teenagers involved in the project.



# New Mums of Newton and Kingsway, Chester



- **Crafts**
- **20 participants / 3 volunteers**
- **4 sessions (November 2021 - January 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

The group started in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to help new mums feel supported and connected, as many were isolated. It grew as other groups began referring new parents offering volunteer support.

The Kickstart microgrant funding enabled the group to offer art and craft activities to the local mums in the group, helping to build relationships while taking the time to be creative. Four craft sessions were held at St. Michael's Church where the group meets regularly on a Thursday, including scrapbooking, sign-making, hand printing and card making.

“This has been a more multifaceted approach that I can see being helpful in the future. The group has been a real support to local parents. Especially when parenting a small child with no family support, as many of the parents coming to the group are.” - Session Lead



Participants' feedback and comments:

*“The baby group has helped me get back out socialising.”*

*“It's been so nice to do special crafts and activities we wouldn't usually get to do.”*

LEGACY: The group plans to continue and develop the creative element with a sensory/messy play area. [Facebook group](#).

# Share a Smile Project, Ellesmere Port/ Borough-wide



- **Crafts**
- **70 participants / 2 volunteers / 20 spectators**
- **4 sessions (January - February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Passion for Learning CIO work with primary schools across Cheshire West and Chester on a 1:1 basis or at enrichment clubs as children and older residents in care homes have been unable to meet due to COVID-19. This project sought to create bonds across the community.

The funding reopened the link with schools and care homes to deliver a Christmas treat of handmade Christmas cards and decorated baubles to accompany a hamper. This included:

- Creating cards at enrichment clubs;
- Creating and delivering hampers, chocolates, and cards.

Due to COVID-19 case increases, a DVD replaced some of the carol services where the children sung and shared a mince pie with the residents and some schools had to complete the artwork with remote support. “Due to covid we had to think outside the box and using funding from another grant we produced a video - [watch it online.](#)” - Lead.



*“Thank you! Everyone is delighted with the goodies. We’re thinking of the best ways to share them equally. There have been many appreciative comments on the thoughtfulness and kindness shown to us here at Naylor Court. We all love the cards the schoolchildren have made to send us. We certainly don’t feel forgotten.”* - Naylor Court resident

**LEGACY:** The group plan to run traditional afternoon tea parties to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee during May, in care homes with songs from the past, dress up, bunting and flags - and children coming to play traditional games with the residents.

# Pavilion Art group, Chester



- **Visual Arts**
- **5 participants (+3)**
- **6 sessions (December 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Pavilion Art Group was a small visual arts group led by a tutor, which moved online with COVID-19 restrictions. When the tutor stopped running the sessions at the end of lock-down, 5 members decided to restart the group at Upton Pavilion, building numbers back up slowly and safely and finding new support.

The grant and advice helped them through this phase of restarting and reorganising, covering hire costs while they regained confidence coming together in a socially distanced environment and began recruiting new members.

“The grant gave us the help we needed to cover rental costs when starting up with only a small number of people. Enabled the continuation of the group until we found a teacher. Thank you for the help, made it possible to continue!” - Lead



**LEGACY:** The group have recruited a new tutor to continue supporting their regular sessions.



# Words for Wellbeing - Listen to Our Voices, Chester



- **Creative Writing**
- **3 participants**
- **4 sessions (February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Impact CIC has worked in communities since 2010. The project was planned to build on storytelling and creative work commissioned by ForFutures in 2019 and lead facilitator (Lisa Rossetti) links, volunteering with Outside In and Soul Kitchen.

Microgrant funding supported weekly group sessions of storytelling and poetry for wellbeing, creative journaling and expressive writing, arts-based creative activities, all

The project did not engage with the numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness as hoped, but enabled Impact CIC to re-engage with existing partners and develop new relationships, considering longer term plans to provide relevant opportunities and exploring the current challenge in re-engaging groups following the pandemic restrictions.

Participants and volunteers' feedback and comments:

*"(Felt) ... a flow of spirit and inspiration."*

*"It feels like a friendship. Those stories, you can reflect on them; they have a meaning, a message ... an opening up. Sorry this came to an end."*

*"We all have our own path. My favourite word is change."*

We were treated to a 'Words for Wellbeing' session lead by @lisarossetti & @jberrypoetry - an incredibly talented Poet, Writer, Speaker & Author of 'The Great Escape'. It was a fantastic session & one of our service users didn't stop talking about it for two days! ❤️



**LEGACY:** A partnership has been developed with Share to secure more funding for longer term programmes and work with Jenny Berry (guest poet) on a story project for individuals experiencing homelessness in Chester. Website: [www.impactcic.org.uk](http://www.impactcic.org.uk)



# ELLESMERE PORT



## Chalice Productions, Ellesmere Port

- **Combined Arts (media / performance)**
- **11 participants / 2 volunteers**
- **8 sessions (February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Working with Boaty Theatre Company at The Boat Shed Creative Community Hub, Chalice Productions offered acting for camera and creative writing for vulnerable adults, to develop confidence and communication skills. Funding enabled eight Saturday sessions, connecting individuals and creative forms, relaunching community activities and collaborations and using a new creative space in the centre of the town.

“Because of the nature of the classes and the way in which everyone engaged, there were so many personal journeys. People shared stories, embarked on new friendships, discovered hidden talents and skills.... Another member of the group had a job interview, which they were dreading. Following the classes they said they were ‘buzzing’.... they were offered the job.” - Lead

Group feedback included the following comments:

*“The sessions are really well-crafted. We’re constantly busy, but without it being overwhelming. Suddenly, we’re watching ourselves on-screen and it feels incredible.”*

*“I’ve really struggled with self image and with feeling comfortable in my own skin, so I didn’t know how I would react at first, but getting into performing scenes as a male opposite a scene partner who doesn’t question that has been such a positive experience. Better than any kind of therapy or counselling! I’ve loved the classes and would love to continue.”*

*“The classes have really boosted my confidence and improved my mood. I’ve also made some great friends.”*

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

# Ellesmere Port Local and Family History Society, Ellesmere Port



- **Combined Arts**
- **20 participants**
- **2 sessions (February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Ellesmere Port Local and Family History Society are looking to provide a heritage centre to collect and store their local story for future generations, bring more people into the area and make more sense of political history through local and family histories. They hope to engage with local people using creativity, art and art practices, set up a 'Pop-Up' shop in The Port Arcades to identify what is important to local people using digital media to capture these stories and perspectives.

Funding enabled a professional photographer to work with the group over 2 days to capture video and create a timelapse promoting local history for the community.

"We managed to get their stories from a couple of well-known residents also some great ideas for future improvements." - Lead

**LEGACY:** The group is building support and engagement around the development of a local heritage centre in the town.

# Friends of Wolverham Community Centre, Ellesmere Port



- **Combined Arts**
- **16 participants / 9 volunteers**
- **7 sessions (November 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

The group uses creativity to produce art and craft work, with participants in home and supported living, meeting socially to create work alongside parents and support workers.

Funding enabled creative sessions to restart in person and open up to new members to join 7 sessions, covering:

- Using different painting techniques;
- Self portrait pictures using different materials;
- Work in art books with different colours;
- Work on canvas, choosing and using background canvas for self portraits and other designs;
- Creating stories and poems linked to the project;
- Sharing, discussing and celebrating their work.

**Participant feedback poem:**

*Thursday Crazy Creators  
Here I am  
Happy to be back.  
Meeting friends.  
Talking, Singing, Laughing.  
Always Jolly and Joking.  
Making a mess.  
Painting, Drawing and Gluing.  
Here We are.  
Enjoying creating.  
Good to be back.  
We have missed each other.  
We now have a new name.  
The Thursday Crazy Creators.*



“Everyone- learners, volunteers, assisted living supporters and tutor who took part have enjoyed the sessions and want to continue.” - Leader



**LEGACY:** The tutors and volunteers plan to continue live sessions with the group, bringing in additional funding to support this.



# Poets in Paint Community Interest Company, Ellesmere Port



- **Crafts**
- **30 participants**
- **1 session (December 2021)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

The Trinity Methodist Church in the town centre offered a community café before COVID-19. The event was part of the reopening of the community daily café, reconnecting people, introducing them to other events and activities and support (including food bank and mental health support) and welcoming them back through the doors.

Funding supported Poets in Paint to offer a free public craft session at a festive morning creating Christmas decorations on log slices:



The activity definitely connected communities, As well as our art and craft session, Trinity church volunteers ran a community café, gift stall and had Christmas carols sing-a-long. The whole atmosphere was very festive and there must have been up to 80 plus people attending the whole event. This was lovely, as we were unsure how Covid would effect the numbers of people attending.

Participants' feedback and comments:

*"We couldn't wait to get here today. We would definitely do this again if it was offered."*

*"This is great. We love doing crafts."*

*"This is so good being able to bring the children to do this. Get them away from their screens!"*



**LEGACY:** Plans to hold regular workshops four times a year at the Saturday café will offer art and craft sessions in collaboration with the café volunteers.

# Messy Mischief Makers, Ellesmere Port



- **Combined Arts**
- **35 participants / 6 volunteers**
- **10 sessions (on-going, January - February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*

Messy Mischief Makers open on a Monday and Friday and provides a safe space where children and parents can play and get messy. With over 1000 members on Facebook, the group brings the community together and offers affordable activities for families as a non profit group, offering support to help mums dealing with social isolation and depression.

The funding supported the group to purchase new kit to start creative activities and open the group up after Christmas, with arts and crafts and sensory play for babies and toddlers, which will be an ongoing resource for those that attend.

“The grant has helped us freshen up our group and reach out to more families needing sensory play. We have stocked up on art supplies to keep kids’ minds stimulated. Everything we brought has been really appreciated by the children.” - Lead

Participant’s feedback:

*“Amazing group and a wide range of toys.”*




# Shadazzle School of Performing Arts, Ellesmere Port



- **Dance**
- **14 participants / 29 spectators**
- **1 session (January 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

 *Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Shadazzle is a dance school offering singing, dancing, acting, circus skills, cheerleading & gymnastics to young people. The microgrants supported teen students to complete a “junior coach” qualification in lyrical/jazz dance and cheerleading

The new skills will offer those involved a greater sense of achievement, confidence and pride and enable them to share their skills with other members of the community, as volunteers assisting classes with younger children to continue building these skills.

“The course allowed the children to gain a qualification that no school offers. We had such fun, a wonderful day bonding and learning.” - Lead

Participant’s feedback:

*“I learned so many new skills.”*



LEGACY: The children have already put their skills to use helping with free taster sessions. Website: [www.shadazzleschool.co.uk](http://www.shadazzleschool.co.uk)



# FRODSHAM AND KINGSLEY

## Frodsham Christmas Festival, Frodsham



- **Combined Arts**
- **76 participants / 5000 visitors**
- **1 event (27 November 2021)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Funding will celebrate the highstreet*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Frodsham Christmas Festival is community-led and run entirely by volunteers and community groups. An annual event, restarting after pandemic restrictions, looked to boost collective morale in the town, encouraging local creativity, wellbeing, pride and community.

Microgrant funding supported the creative production of this one day festival as an accessible, safe event, bringing together all community groups, including choirs, singers and performing art groups, enabling the organisers to purchase costumes and materials.

The event brought people together to celebrate in the local high street, despite COVID-19 cancellations and Storm Arwen forecast and offered members of the community hands-on opportunities for bringing together talents and creative expression in a large event.



“The micro grant enabled us to create a magical and Covid safe grotto for all of our visitors & character costumes to enable us to keep the crowds entertained whilst they waited to see Father Christmas.” - Lead

#### Participants' feedback and comments:

*“I loved the Frozen themed Meet & Greet balloon arch funded from the micro grant. It was invaluable in the end & used as our emergency stage area – having to respond on the day to the impacts of Storm Arwen - cancellation of the main stage and having to find an alternative covid safe location.”*

*“The highlight for me was seeing the youth volunteers in their costumes during the festival parade. They certainly brought an air of magic & sparkle to the event. The micro grant gave us the ability to purchase the outfits which can be used for many years to come!”*



**LEGACY:** After almost two years of covid restrictions, the community of Frodsham and surrounding areas gathered to experience festive joy - and plan to make 2022 the biggest and best festival yet. Website: [www.christmasinfrodsham.com](http://www.christmasinfrodsham.com)

# Kingsley Players and Youth Theatre, Kingsley



- **Drama/Theatre**
- **25 participants / 27 volunteers / 300 spectators**
- **20 sessions (November 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*

Kingsley Players and Kingsley Players Youth Theatre's January 2022 production of Peter Pan brought a large cast, both young and old, together again after 18 months.

Funding enabled twelve weeks of rehearsals for their first pantomime since January 2020, linking the adult group and youth section in their first co-production, to bring the community back together for performances to a mixed age community audience.

"The microgrant has helped the group in terms of covering our rehearsal costs, especially with producing our first pantomime since 2020. It allowed young people and adults to come together and produce a pantomime for our local community. It really helped, especially when coming out of a period of inactivity due to the pandemic." - Lead

Participants' feedback and comments:

*"You've inspired and changed the lives of people like you wouldn't believe."*

*"Our children are so lucky to have these amazing opportunities on their doorstep."*

*"Thank you for giving the girls such a wonderful experience and amazing time. I never thought they would achieve so much."*

*"Thank you so much for a brilliant opportunity."*

**LEGACY:** KPYT are participating in National Theatre Connections and are currently in rehearsals for their production. They have just cast their May production, 'Funny Money', and will be starting rehearsals for that soon. Website: <https://kingsleyplayers.co.uk/>



# MALPAS



## Minerva Arts, Malpas

- **Drama/Theatre**
- **25 participants / 35 spectators**
- **12+ sessions (January - February 2022)**

£ *Funding will celebrate the highstreet*

👥 *Bring communities together*

‘Street through time’ brought Malpas Youth Theatre and Young Actors groups together with their families and local community with historical stories about the Malpas High Street, bringing the high street’s characters and buildings to life. Funding supported the development of the project and its culmination in a ‘scratch’ performance to share with parents, friends and the local community.

The project ran during six weeks of regular Youth Theatre and Young Actors workshops, with research and development activity alongside, providing a focus to kickstart their work as a group as lockdown restrictions ended.

Emilie Lawson, Group Leader on bringing together Malpas past, present and future: “To work on our pieces from the past, we used old Malpas newsletters and personal World War 2 accounts from the people of Malpas as stimuli. The present was based on their own knowledge of their local town and the future is where they became the most creative. They were able to use their imagination and creativity to become futuristic. We had ideas from a teleportation system to a cinema with a 47,000 foot screen. I mean, why not? We look forward to seeing what these groups come up with after the half term break”

### Members’ comments:

*“We’ve had lots of fun this term thinking up cool ideas for the future of Malpas.”*

*“It has been really interesting so far looking into the history of Malpas and how some of our families and friends and people we know have been living here for a long time. I’m really looking forward to writing the play.”*

**LEGACY:** This project has provided the starting point for a longer piece of work to create a new play with the young people. The show will be a promenade piece performed in Malpas in May 2022 bringing people physically out onto the high street.





## Brightlights Theatre Company, Neston

- **Drama/Theatre**
- **25 participants / 35 spectators**
- **12+ sessions (January - February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Little Actors worked with Neston Town Council and the market co-ordinator to deliver this project and provide festive entertainment in the community. The small, open group of participants (aged over 50) performed their 'Scrooge' adaptation for the public audience, presenting local creative activities and enhancing festive celebrations in this rural community.

"The micro grant helped ensure the activity was delivered free for both participants and audience. It ensured that the group was able to participate in a community Christmas event by contributing to facilitator and venue hire costs required to prepare." - Lead

"My thanks to everyone involved today, they are absolutely fantastic!" - Market & Town Hall Manager

### Participants' feedback and comments:

*"It was a fun experience. Plenty of laughs and getting to meet up with old Colleagues. I think I achieved a good performance and interacting with the general public is always a good experience. Entertaining the audience and getting a good reaction in return."*

*"As this production was a little less serious than I'm used to I didn't feel under pressure and just enjoyed the whole process. I thought this was a great idea for Christmas and was only disappointed that we couldn't do more performances. Again, performing and interacting with the general public is always a joy!"*

*"It was a great experience in a totally new environment for me. I was very impressed how my fellow-actors really got creative in lines and in costumes they found. I got over a lot of nerves about appearing in public pop-up style, and I learned it's about trusting myself on the day, not just learning lines."*

*"I liked the fact that the play did not have a strict script and we were encouraged to be creative. The challenge was to appear pop-up style in front of random people."*



**LEGACY:** The group took the activity into the community for a wider audience reach. From February 2022 the group will be preparing to present a play at the Leverhulme Drama Festival, in April 2022, which was cancelled in 2020 a few weeks before the performance was due and working on Jubilee and other community projects.

# 1st Ness Brownies, Neston



- **Crafts**
- **24 participants / 18 spectators**
- **8 sessions (December 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

After lockdown, the brownies needed to replenish their dried craft supplies to create Christmas cards for care homes locally.

The microgrant was used to purchase new materials and make cards and decorations for a local care home and valentines packs in February, enabling the Brownies to return to new materials following lockdown restrictions and keep doing creative community service.

“We were able to restart brownies face to face with new equipment which had dried up during lock down.” - Lead

“All residents were so delighted it made their day. Please pass on our sincere gratitude and thanks to all the brownies and let them know they put a huge smile on the residents faces.”



**LEGACY:** The brownies plan to meet with the older people in summer and are looking for creative support to prepare a display for Queens Jubilee.

# Flicks in the Sticks, Neston



- **Film**
- **9 volunteers / 75 spectators**
- **2 sessions (ongoing, February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*

Arts Alive / Flicks in the Sticks have been supporting the Cheshire West Rural Film Scheme since 2015, with regular film clubs across the borough. Six film clubs meet monthly with over 40 films a year (CW8 2LB, WA4 4QH, CW6 9XE, CW6 0QS, CH64 9PQ, CH3 7QT).

Funding enabled the purchase of new film equipment to be used for the film clubs and by community groups, enabling new film clubs to be recruited to pilot and run cinema nights without having to invest in equipment first. The projector and screen was used for screenings of Summerland and Little Women during February 2022.

“The equipment will be fantastic – a more modern projector, with a great image, will help keep our audiences and even gain new audiences.” - Lead

Community member's comment:

*“What a great resource to have locally! It is simple to set up and operate and allows us to do so much more.”*

**LEGACY:** The projector and screen will be offered to community groups to support other creative activities including performances, talks, etc. via Cheshire West Voluntary Arts Network.



# NORTHWICH



## KMTC, Northwich and Winchem

- **Drama/Theatre**
- **52 participants**
- **8 sessions (December 2021 - January 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Knutsford Musical Theatre Company restarted rehearsals after COVID-19 with 36 new people looking to participate. Microgrant funding supported the weekly Wednesday rehearsals, ensuring upkeep of the rehearsal space to make it a safe environment for over 50 people to use, with the provision of appropriate PPE.

This aided the regular group to restart and ensure members felt safe in the rehearsal setting after over 18 months and two missed productions.

“The Microgrant has enabled us to get back to rehearsing for our next production which is Shrek The Musical, after months of not being able to use the facilities at Wincham Community Centre. The impact on our theatre group has been immense, and has improved everyone’s mental health and wellbeing, as we feel we have got a purpose back and are enjoying being part of a project again, once lockdown started to ease.” - Lead

**LEGACY:** Feedback from people in the community is really positive, with a huge increase in people wanting to book tickets for May 22 and the licence for the October 2022 production purchased.

# Mid Cheshire Youth Theatre, Northwich



- **Drama / Theatre**
- **75 participants / 200 spectators**
- **1 session (December 2021)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Mid Cheshire Youth Theatre planned a one-off public event with the Youth Orchestra to bring the community and both creative groups together at the Plaza in Northwich and help raise the profile of performing arts groups in the area.

The microgrant supported the venue hire, giving members the chance to be back performing on the stage and our new members that had joined during the pandemic to have their first opportunity to be on the stage.

**LEGACY:** Money from ticket sales could be fully reinvested in the continued running of Mid Cheshire Youth Theatre. Visit [www.mcyt.co.uk](http://www.mcyt.co.uk) and follow them on Facebook @MidCheshireYT.



# The Old School House Community Choir, Northwich



- **Music**
- **15 participants / 100 spectators**
- **5 sessions (October 2021 - January 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

The choir is open to everyone, regardless of singing ability or location, providing a friendly sociable experience for those in the local area. The Old School House offers a community shop and foodbank and links with other services such as Citizens Advice, Mind, Workzone and New Leaf. The choir raises awareness of these services as well as enabling people to meet and reduce feelings of isolation following lockdowns.

The microgrant supported Christmas carol concerts to enable the wider community to enjoy the choir, find out about the other community projects and boost food donations for the community shop. An adapted version of the 12 days of Christmas helped to share the most important items to donate.

The microgrant covered song sheets, refreshments and venue costs.

**LEGACY:** Bringing in more members after the supermarket Flash Mob on the 11th November - the choir was paused while the team leader offered Christmas support, due to increasing infection rates and a local response to Ukraine.

Follow them on Facebook [@cheshirefoodhub](#).

## Homegrown Dance Theatre, Tattenhall



- **Dance**
- **38 participants / 400 spectators**
- **8 sessions + 1 performance (January - February 2022)**



*Enable activity to restart*



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

Homegrown are a collective supporting youth led dance initiatives. Following lockdown they developed a piece of dance based on the local high street to be performed at the national U Dance festival, hosted by The Lowry, Salford and performances across Cheshire West and Chester including St Mary's Centre and several schools.

The microgrant supported the group to devise the dance over 8 sessions and the January launch, fully subsidising participation for some of the groups members.



Participants' feedback and comments:

*"I loved the opportunity to work with PJ Hurst who has danced with Mathew Bourne."*

*"I was so excited about performing at The Lowry"*

*"I made lots of new friends at the U dance event"*

LEGACY: The fund enabled all young dancers to take part and the group hope to get through to the national festival and perform in London. [Visit their website.](#)



# The Spinney Project, Tattenhall

- **Outdoor Arts**
- **24 participants / 3 volunteers**
- **2 sessions (12 February 2022)**



*Bring communities together*



*Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*



The public workshop supported local investment in the woodland area known as the Spinney, to encourage young people to get involved with art and wildlife, and use the Spinney area for their health and wellbeing.

The microgrant funded environmental artist Tim Pugh to facilitate two workshops with families and older children (8+) to create art using and reflecting the natural environment, encouraging the community to take part in art and look at their environment through different eyes.

“Tim Pugh highlighted art which has been made with waste he has collected, the young people were horrified by the plastics he has collected and the tyres he found on a beach.” - Lead



Participants' feedback and comments:

*“Great to be outside instead of in front of a screen”*

*“Lovely way to spend a morning.”*

*“I liked looking through his books and I liked building my tree fort!”*

*“A fab time! A real eye opener!”*

*“Thank you for making this happen we had a lovely time”*

*“Looks amazing, what a little imagination can do.”*

**LEGACY:** Further workshops have been planned in March and further funding is being sought for more to continue encouraging people to spend time in the Spinney area.

Websites: [www.tattenhallpc.co.uk/the-spinney-project](http://www.tattenhallpc.co.uk/the-spinney-project) and [www.timpugh.co.uk](http://www.timpugh.co.uk)


# WINSFORD



## One for Sorrow, Mind, Winsford

- **Crafts**
- **16 participants / 1 volunteer / 100+ audience**
- **4 sessions (February 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

 *Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

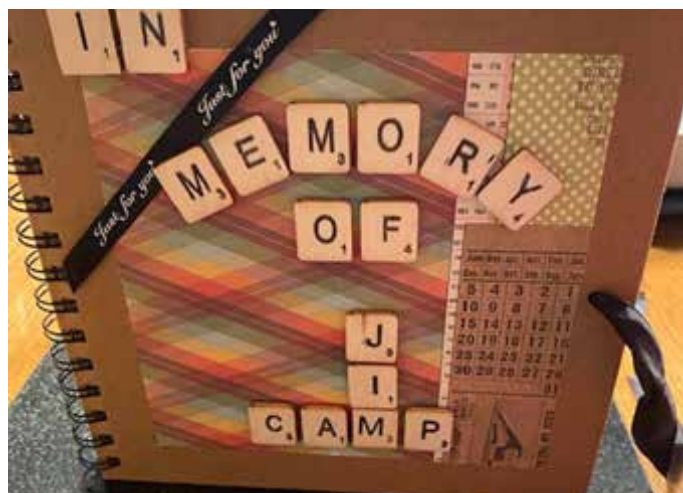
Mid Cheshire Mind lead an existing bereavement service called 'One for Sorrow' that provides counselling and links to community activities for both bereaved individuals and those who have experienced a significant loss in their life.

Funding enabled craft sessions to be delivered for individuals to benefit from cathartic creative expression: offering a space to express grief, encourage better connection to memories and find support with others - particularly for those that have struggled to connect during physical distancing, making it difficult to say goodbye and share experiences.

Crosshatch Gallery offered space to hold the 4 (once a week) sessions with 16 bereaved individuals to make one of the following:

- A sand jar with coloured sand, with each colour representing an emotion
- A memory box
- A scrapbook
- A memory blanket/ cushion

Each participant could take home their finished product as a lasting memory of their loved one or display it at Crosshatch.





## Participants' feedback and comments:

*"Can't wait to find more memories to put in – I'm asking friends and family to give me more photographs and keepsakes!"*

*"I'd recommend this craft to anyone who has had a bereavement, it's just such a nice way to remember the good times and keep those memories safe"*

*"My mum and dad have both died recently. I've really enjoyed making the boxes and figuring out what to put in it. I've added things like my mums old knitting needles and her favourite pattern, my dad's driving licence and pen knife and a language translator that they used when on holiday abroad"*

*"It's reminded me of all the good times that we had together. I'd recommend this to anyone who has lost a loved family member"*

*"I made the cushion out of my husband's favourite pyjama top. I'm not very good at sewing but am so pleased with the way it has turned out. I'm going to add his gold chain and a little verse –I wanted it embroidered and I was quoted £25. I don't have that sort of money, but the team has found me a volunteer who is going to embroider it for me. That means a lot. I can't wait to give it as a keepsake to my daughter".*

*"I lost my Mum last year due to Covid. It was very distressing as she was in a care home, and we didn't get to see her before she died. This has been such a good way to remember her and the therapy on the second day was really helpful."*



**LEGACY:** Posters of the finished crafts for display in the library and funding is being sought for more sessions. The project was shared with the national Mind team.

# The Neuromuscular Centre, Winsford



- **Crafts**
- **46 participants / 4 volunteers**
- **8 sessions (November 2021 - January 2022)**

 *Bring communities together*

 *Funding will ensure people feel safe participating*

NMC supports individuals with neuromuscular conditions (who are clinically vulnerable) and work to re-engage these individuals and overcome compromised physical functioning, after prolonged periods of shielding.

The microgrants supported a series of craft and arts based activities delivered by skilled volunteers, offering social connectivity in a trusted, accessible and COVID-safe environment, to regain physical dexterity, social connection and confidence.

“The grant covered some of the delivery costs including materials, volunteer costs and a proportion of care provision to support and enable participants and brought small cohorts of vulnerable adults together who after prolonged periods of shielding were anxious about re-engaging in social settings and had become or were at risk of becoming very isolated.” - Lead

## Participants' feedback and comments:

*“I really enjoyed the wreath making as its something I'd really wanted to do but was unable to access my local garden centre, it was such a lovely thing to be able to show my family I done.”*

*“It's amazing what you talk about when you are crafting, we had such a laugh and also got to hear about other people's lockdown experiences.”*

LEGACY: After positive feedback the centre is looking to fund further sessions in 2022.





## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The funding was advertised via all partners websites, social media and newsletters, shared via parish council and councillor links and local press coverage including:

- [Silk 1069](#)
- [Northwich Guardian](#)
- [Chester Standard](#)
- [About my area](#)


As a result, distribution of the funding reached across the borough. There was microgrant supported activity in rural and more socio-economically deprived communities and the funding was used to support creative interventions with vulnerable groups and create safe, socially distanced opportunities to re-engage with group activities.

Leaving applicants to define use of the small funding pots resulted in a wide range of art forms, groups/organisations and activities being supported.

Grant recipients were invited to connect with one another, CWVAN, CWAC, CWVA and Creative Lives during the process and supported by the Creative Producer, who was recruited with the Reopening and Recovery Rural Programme funding to support groups working towards larger development grants, as part of the same scheme.

The timescales meant that those more confident and ready to deliver were more likely to apply, however the three rounds allowed for ongoing dialogue with early enquirers, with support and guidance offered by the partners to support those with viable ideas to develop these, some of whom submitted proposals later in the process. This support also helped grant recipients proceed with planned activity when hurdles were encountered due to the pandemic and other factors affecting their groups. Applicants were asked what support needs they had before, during and after the projects. The priority areas are consistent with other requests from those active in the voluntary, amateur and participatory creative sector:

- Promotion and communication
- Connections and network development
- Funding - both short-term extension and longer term investment that would allow planning and development time.
- Volunteers



Most of the projects proceeded according to the original plan (with some rescheduling due to external factors, including the impact of the pandemic and outdoor events being affected by storms).

The timescales prevented extended development opportunities during the process, however remaining funding was used to extend work and encourage greater connection between groups. Remaining funds totalling just over £2,500 were distributed to support the legacy ambitions of 12 groups who identified specific uses during their reporting and developed short proposals for these activities. This included a partnership between Cheshire Print Fair and Countess of Chester Park for an outdoor public screenprinting session, continued intergenerational connections of the Brightlights Theatre Company, Brownies, Share a Smile projects and extended support for networks and targeted community based projects, to enable sustained activity into Spring and early Summer.

It is important to highlight that the help of Creative Lives and the Creative Producer supported a number of grantees to apply, reprofile, reach etc. Some of the funded projects wouldn't have started or come to fruition without this valuable support. Going forward, community project would benefit from similar capacity.

Overall, the funding offered a boost to creative community activities, allowing new activity to be piloted and helping to rejuvenate and sustain activity while groups were rebuilding numbers, mitigating some of the financial risk involved for the individuals re-establishing these groups.

This additional support was particularly significant with increased COVID-19 numbers and restrictions during winter 2021/22. The ongoing disruption meant that this was an incredibly busy period for many. Despite this, those that applied and were awarded grants created interventions that achieved and surpassed the funding aims:

- Enabling activity to restart
- Celebrating the local high street
- Bringing communities together
- Ensure people can participate safely

*“It was great to play this role in supporting small groups at a time when many needed the additional encouragement as they continued to deal with so much uncertainty. It’s wonderful that Cheshire West and Chester Council saw the value in supporting this activity in communities across the region and it was a pleasure to work with all those involved in setting up the variety of inspiring creative and cultural initiatives.”*

- Claire Sharples, Creative Lives



# Creative Lives

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