



Mapping creative activity in Glasgow

Exploring volunteer and community-led
creativity in Southside Central and Canal Wards

A report from Creative Lives

August 2025





AT A GLANCE

- Creative participation in Glasgow is lower than the Scottish average, with only 64% of adults engaging in arts activities compared to 74%
- Creative groups face significant barriers, including funding processes and lack of suitable venues
- Over 90 creative groups were identified across Southside Central and Canal wards, representing a vibrant, multicultural mix of artforms and communities
- Specific communities are less likely to engage in creative activities and require more support

ABOUT CREATIVE LIVES

We champion community and volunteer-led creative activity, and work to improve opportunities for everyone to be creative. In particular, we celebrate and promote people expressing themselves creatively with others, recognising the benefits this can bring.

INTRODUCTION

Between December 2024 and May 2025, Creative Lives carried out work on behalf of Glasgow Life to research volunteer and community-led creative activity in Glasgow. Glasgow Life asked us to explore two wards in order to identify new groups and explore what support might be needed.

Overview

To deliver this work we carried out:

- Field and desk-based research to find evidence of local groups and activity
- Data capture to review local demographics
- In-person and online focus groups attended by creative groups, participants, and professionals
- Interviews with creative group leaders

Creative Lives worked with Glasgow Life to map the community and volunteer-led creative opportunities across the two Glasgow wards: Southside Central (Ward 8) and Canal (Ward 16). The aim of the work was to better understand the current assets, as well as the strengths and barriers impacting the community and volunteer-led creative sector in each ward.

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

LGBTQ+

Glasgow has the second largest percentage of LGBTQ+ people aged 16 and over relative to its population. We found many creative groups supporting LGBTQ+ communities

Multicultural

There is a multicultural and diverse creative scene in Southside Central. Areas like Govanhill and Pollokshields are highly populated with a significant percentage of people from the global majority.

64% Glasgow
74% Scottish Avg

Adult arts participation in Glasgow is lower than the Scottish average

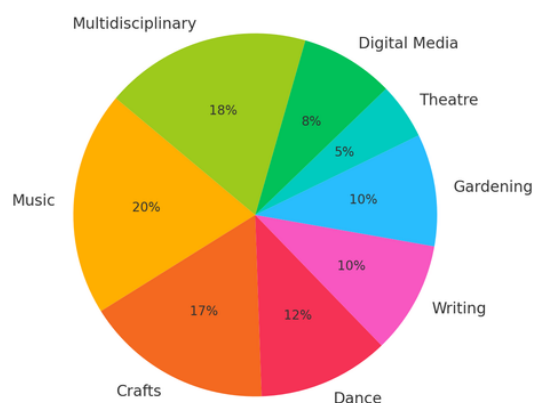
27%

Of Glaswegians with no qualifications participating in creative activity

MAPPING SNAPSHOT

The research collated a database of over 90 creative contacts. This mapping identified a diverse range of creative activities and groups

Creative Groups by Artform



FOCUS ON DEMOGRAPHICS - CREATIVE PARTICIPATION IN GLASGOW

As part of the work in Canal and Southside wards, Creative Lives explored publicly available demographic data to research cultural participation across Glasgow. Using the [Scottish Household Survey](#) produced by the Scottish Government, the findings highlight important differences in engagement across ethnicity, age, gender, deprivation, and education level.

Overall participation and attendance

Current data shows that cultural participation in Glasgow over the last 12 months is **lower than the Scottish average**. Specifically, adult arts participation in Glasgow (64%) is 10 percent lower than the Scottish average (74%) when reading is excluded. Including reading, the gap narrows slightly with Glasgow at 74% and Scotland at 83%. **This suggests that Glasgow residents are, as a whole, less likely to engage in creative activities than the average person in Scotland.**

Research shows a significant gender disparity within Glasgow, with male non-participation standing at 42% compared to female non-participation at 31%. **This suggests that men in Glasgow are less likely to participate culturally than women.**

Nearly a quarter of Glaswegians (24%) reported no attendance at cultural events or visits to cultural places in the last 12 months, compared to 27% in Scotland. Indicating a lower level of engagement with cultural visits compared to the national average.

Participation by Demographics

Ethnicity: The demographic composition of the target wards is relevant here; the Canal ward has a lower percentage of White residents (80.7%) than Glasgow City (82.1%) and a higher percentage of African ethnicity residents (6.6% vs. 3.6%).

Southside Central ward has a significantly lower percentage of White residents (65.0%) and much higher percentages of Asian (26.2% vs. 11.3%) and African (4.6% vs. 3.6%) ethnicities compared to Glasgow City and Scotland overall (93.9% White)

The non-participation rate for Minority Ethnic Groups in Glasgow is 44%, compared to the non-participation rate for White: Scottish which is 38%. **The high concentration of Minority Ethnic Groups in these wards means that understanding and addressing the higher non-participation rate among these groups is crucial for local creative activity planning.**

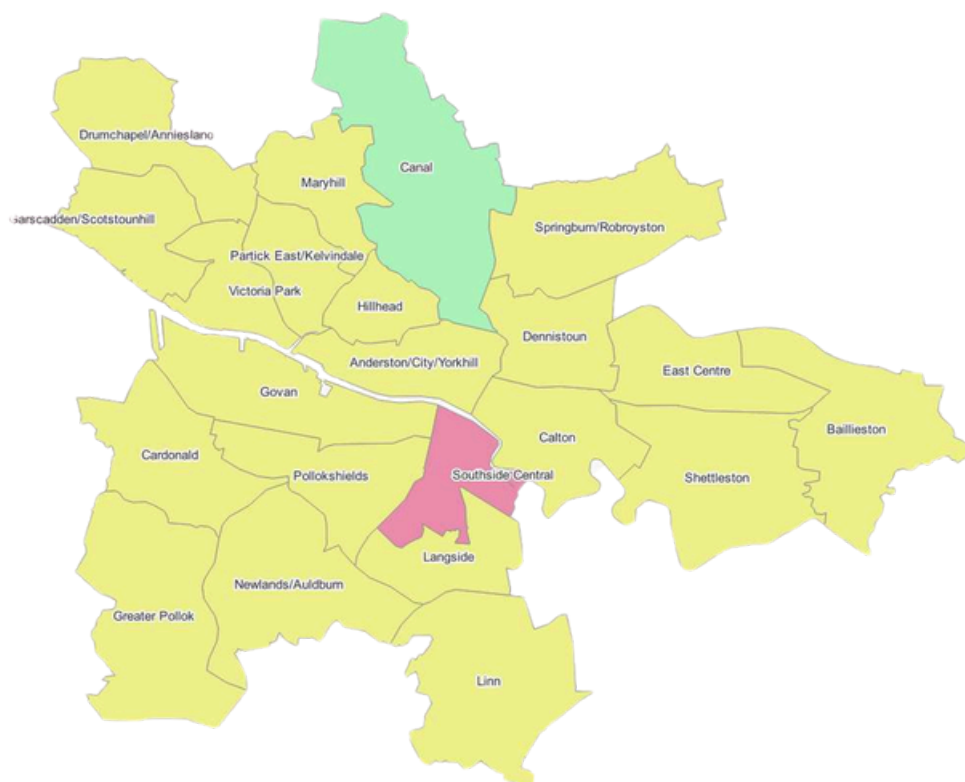
Age: The 60-74 age group in Glasgow is highlighted as being least likely to participate (59% participated, meaning 41% had no participation). **This demonstrates that older adults are a key demographic facing barriers to creative engagement.**

Qualifications: There is a strong correlation between qualification level and non-participation. The survey shows that 27% of Glaswegians with no qualifications participated, meaning a striking 73% did not participate in creative activities in the last 12 months.

Deprivation: Non-participation is highest in the most deprived areas. The data shows that 45% of residents in the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1) in Glasgow had no participation in the last 12 months. This shows a link between deprivation and lower creative engagement.



FOCUS ON SOUTHSIDE CENTRAL



Southside Central

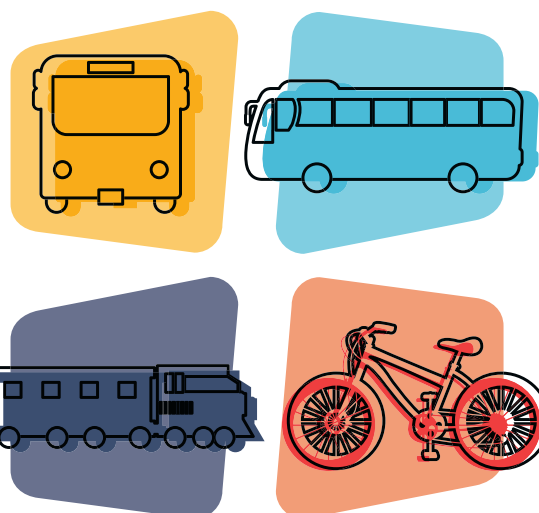
Southside Central is a culturally diverse and varied ward. Glasgow overall has slightly lower participation in arts and cultural activities than the Scottish average. However, Southside Central is full of creative potential. People here are more likely to enjoy activities like music, dance, and photography than other areas. The ward is located immediately south of Glasgow city centre, with the River Clyde forming its northern boundary. Areas within the ward include the Gorbals, Hutchesontown, Govanhill, Queen's Park, Crosshill and Oatlands.

Venues

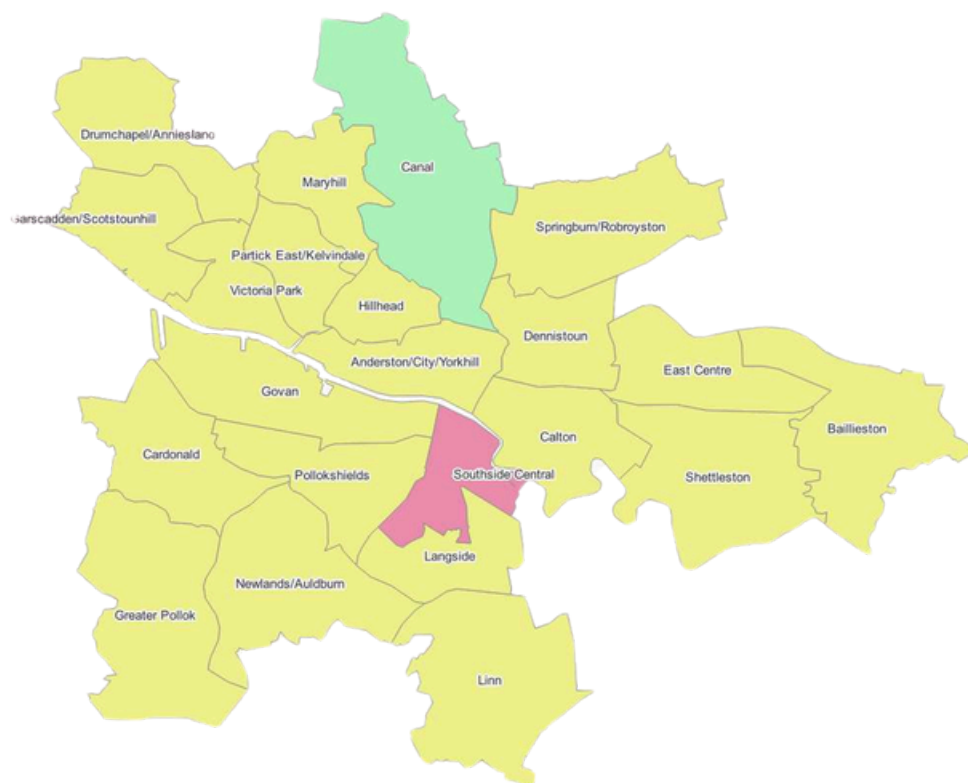
- Gorbals Library: groups such as the Writing Club, Chess Club and Craft Club gather in this welcoming space with free internet and meeting rooms
- Govanhill Baths Community Trust: hosts arts, wellbeing and community projects
- Community halls such as St Francis Community Centre, Pollockshields hall, Govanhill Neighbourhood centre
- Tramway: the iconic arts venue

Transport

Southside Central benefits from multiple train stations, including Queens Park, Pollokshields East, and Crosshill, which offer regular services to Glasgow Central Station and other key destinations. A network of First Glasgow and McGill's buses provides connections to the city centre, the West End, and neighbouring districts. The area is not very cycle-friendly but is within reach of the city's subway system via nearby stations like Bridge Street or West Street.



FOCUS ON CANAL WARD



Canal Ward

Canal Ward is cultivating a dynamic cultural scene that reflects the creativity and resilience of its communities. Investment into culture is happening in the area. The Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership is actively working to enhance the ward by promoting cultural activities, improving public spaces, and supporting community-led projects.

These efforts aim to create a vibrant, inclusive environment that celebrates the area's rich heritage and diverse population. New projects are happening in the ward such as Changing Channels, which offers free creative workshops for women. The workshops focus on exploring the Forth and Clyde Canal through art, fostering a deeper connection between participants and their local environment.

Venues such as:

- **Possilpark Library:** serves as a community hub.
- **Claypits Local Nature Reserve:** offers walking paths, wildlife habitats, and serves as a space for environmental education and community activities.

Transport

Bus services are the primary form of public transport within the ward, with First Glasgow operating several routes through Possilpark, Milton, and Ruchill. Cycling and walking routes have become more prominent due to regeneration efforts around the Forth and Clyde Canal.



FOCUS ON CREATIVE GROUP MAPPING

Creative Lives mapped the creative groups in Canal and Southside Central wards by conducting field and desk-based research of the areas. We found over 90 creative groups with a wide and vibrant range of creative activities available, run by various community groups, charities, and organisations.

Artform

Artforms range from visual arts, crafts, music and dance to writing and gardening. Examples include:

Gardening: Andalus Community Garden Club at Queens Park Orchard Garden; Learning as we grow together at TASK Childcare Centre; and Urban Roots at Peat Road Hall.

Crafts/Making: Glasgow Zine Library; Craft activities for kids at Jenny Burn Pub; Glasgow Southside Crafters at Sweet Tart Cafe; and Glasgow Southside Woodcraft Folk.

Singing/Music: Annorlunda; Glasgow Madrigals; Govanhill Voices; Voice Project Scotland; Voicebeat, Voicemale; and Voice of Hope.

Theatre/Drama: Citizens Theatre and Fair Play Productions.

Writing/Reading: Adult Book Club; Arkbound creative writing programme; Bookbug; and Crossroads Creative Writing Workshop.

Dance: Dancing at Dixon Community Centre; Dance at Corkerhill Community Hub.

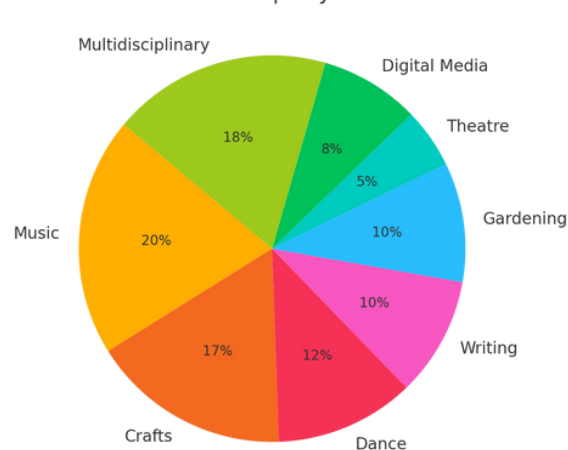
Cooking: Cook Stars South; Cooking Club at Crossroads Youth and Community Association; and Gorbals Youth Cafe.

Specific Audiences

We found a diverse range of groups targeting specific audiences, indicating a conscious effort to provide creative opportunities for children, carers, young people, older adults, women-only groups, asylum seekers and refugees, various ethnic communities (African and African diaspora, BIPOC), and the LGBT+ community.

We found many groups were open to all members of the community.

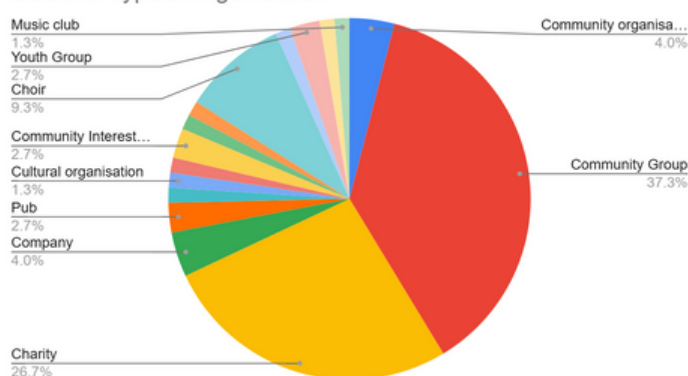
Creative Groups by Artform



Types of Group

There is a wide spread of groups running creative activity in the two wards.

Count of Type of organisation



SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY CREATIVITY: GIVIN' IT LALDIE AND GORBALS WRITING GROUP

In Glasgow's Southside Central ward, two standout creative groups – Givin' it Laldie and the Gorbals Writing Group – demonstrate the powerful impact of grassroots creativity on community wellbeing, connection, and personal development.

Givin' it Laldie offers a vibrant and inclusive range of free music activities across three streams: youth music, adult engagement, and creative ageing. Their programming includes guitar and sound production classes, community singing sessions, and regular performances at local events such as the Gorbals Fair and Winter Warmer.

The group reaches around 270 participants annually, with approximately 150 attending weekly. Many participants have been involved for over a decade, reflecting the sense of consistency and belonging the group fosters. They serve a wide range of ages, as well as those living with health challenges, carers, and residents of dementia units and sheltered housing. All instruments and equipment are provided, removing barriers to participation and encouraging continued engagement.

Behind the scenes, Givin' it Laldie is powered by a dedicated team of part-time staff, freelancers, and volunteers. They prioritise care for both participants and facilitators, ensuring session leaders are well-supported and compensated. Funding is sourced from Creative Scotland and the Glasgow Community Fund, but gaps remain and the lack of suitable, comfortable community spaces continues to limit the group's potential. Issues such as poor acoustics, cold venues, and inaccessible booking systems hamper delivery, particularly for those nervous about performing or in need of a more welcoming environment.

The Gorbals Writing Group, led by community champion John Munro, is another example of commitment to creative empowerment. The group supports writers of all backgrounds, from beginners to emerging authors, helping them move from procrastination to publication. Meeting twice a month in a local library community room, they provide feedback sessions, discussions on creative projects, and one-to-one mentoring. The group's ethos is rooted in kindness, constructive feedback, and word-of-mouth growth, with many members going on to publish their own work through platforms like Kindle Direct Publishing.

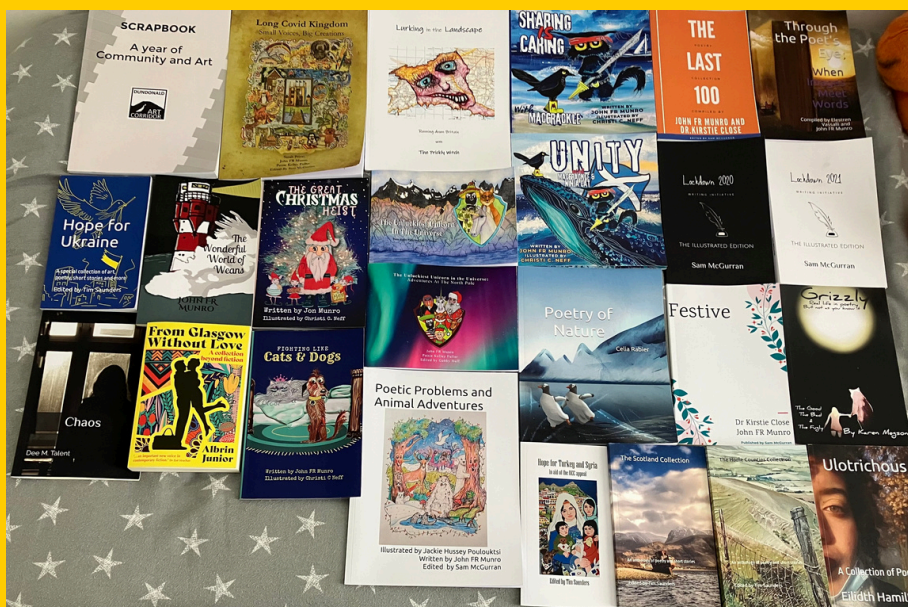
Despite lacking formal funding (largely due to the complex and time-consuming application processes) John regularly uses proceeds from his own book sales to support the group and aspiring writers. The group also runs a global Facebook community of over 1,200 members and a newer programme for children and young adults affected by Long Covid and ME.

Retaining participants remains a challenge, particularly as the rising cost of living and time constraints limit participation. Still, the group's positive impact is clear, with members citing transformational personal and creative growth through their involvement.

Both groups speak to the power of local, community-led arts in creating connection, confidence, and purpose. While challenges around funding, space, and sustainability persist, the dedication of leaders and the hunger for creative engagement show the deep value of these initiatives. Together, Givin' it Laldie and the Gorbals Writing Group are not just running sessions, they're building community resilience and tackling isolation through creativity.

GIVIN' IT LALDIE!

Music in the Gorbals



WHAT WE LEARNT FROM THE GROUPS

Alongside desk-based research and interviews, we held two events (one in person and one online) to hear from creative groups in the area. We explored the challenges and opportunities of running a creative group, welcoming new members and connecting with other organisations. Staff from Creative Glasgow, Glasgow Life and Creative Lives attended, alongside two writing groups and two artists working with a group on the Beithir Sculpture Project.

Quotes from participants

- It feels like a reset is happening in Glasgow.
- We are all fighting individual battles.
- Creative groups are suffering from burnout. There is no opportunity to take time out as it is too scary that the project will die.
- Groups are doing brilliant things and it should be about unlocking creativity and seeing these groups as an asset – making the case for funding and infrastructure.
- I feel that we're all watching the next generation make the same mistakes as we did, there needs to be mentoring and infrastructure.
- Guidance and support, mentoring is needed. Free resources, sharing of creative groups of how to do/not to do things, funding, and help with applications.
- The writing group has a very active Facebook page and gets member referrals mostly through word of mouth, through the hospital, from college students and other groups.
- My life has changed through the writing group and I've helped change others lives too.

Challenges

Funding
Transport
Venues
Fear
Time
Applications
Paperwork
Lack of support
Class perception
Social Media

Opportunities

Community
Collaboration
Generosity
Commitment from key
individuals

The second session focused on practical support, covering goal setting, time-saving tools, funding opportunities, and strategies for growing a group through social media and marketing. To ensure greater accessibility, particularly for those who find in-person events challenging, the session was held online.

Attendance at both events was low, which reinforces the lack of capacity small groups are facing. Groups we had hoped to engage told us that, given current pressures, they simply couldn't spare the time. The ongoing cost of living crisis means many individuals are juggling multiple jobs or evening work, making it difficult to attend. Additionally, groups expressed feelings of being over-consulted without seeing tangible outcomes, leading some to deprioritise participation in these sessions.

CONCLUSION

This report highlights the rich yet challenged landscape of community and volunteer-led creative activity in Glasgow's Southside Central and Canal wards. Our research revealed a passionate network of over 80 creative groups operating across a wide range of artforms, serving diverse communities. However, significant barriers continue to limit participation, sustainability, and growth. These groups are already making a significant difference, often with little support. With targeted investment, accessible funding, and inclusive engagement, they can become even more resilient, enhancing wellbeing and strengthening the communities.

To achieve this, we recommend the introduction of a dedicated micro grant scheme to directly support grassroots creative groups. Small scale, flexible funding would enable groups to respond to local needs, trial new ideas, welcome new members and gain confidence and skills to apply for further funding from diverse sources. This investment would recognise their value, build capacity, and unlock further opportunities for growth and collaboration.

We've highlighted some of the top challenges in the wards and made recommendations below:

Issue: Creative participation in Glasgow is lower than the Scottish average, with only 64% of adults engaging in arts activities compared to 74%.

Recommendation: Support for the groups, to recognise and celebrate existing creative activity and boost participation is needed. Funding through micro grants could boost creative participation for example funding for showcases, networking events, and social media/traditional media campaigns can encourage new members and build confidence.

Issue: Creative groups face significant barriers, including funding processes and lack of suitable venues.

Recommendation: Simplify funding application processes through easy-to-use forms, clearer eligibility criteria, and goals that are achievable by grassroots, volunteer-led groups. Investment into dedicated support to help groups apply for funding, and mentorship for funding and group resilience. Investment is urgently needed in community infrastructure – spaces that are easy to access, easy to book, affordable, and designed to meet the practical needs of creative groups.

Issue: Specific communities are less likely to engage in creative activities and require more support.

Recommendation: Targeted campaigns and engagement strategies should be implemented to promote creative participation for these groups, in partnership with key organisations in the area such as the Men's Shed. These should highlight the benefits of creative involvement and signpost accessible opportunities that cater to all experience levels and backgrounds.

The community creative sector in Glasgow's Canal and Southside wards is full of potential, energy, and creativity. With extra support, accessible funding, and engagement, these groups will become more resilient, grow and improve.



Creative Lives is a registered charity established in 1991, that champions community and volunteer-led creative activity. We work to improve opportunities for everyone to be creative and, in particular, celebrate and promote people expressing themselves creatively with others, recognising the benefits this brings to both individuals and communities.

Creative Lives Charity Limited is registered in Scotland as Company No. 139147 and Charity No. SC 020345.

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Group name	Artform	Area
Andalas Community Garden Club	Gardening	Various wards
Adult Book Club	Reading	Various wards
Africa Future	Various	Govan
Al-Meezan	Various	Glasgow South West
Annorlunda	Singing	Various wards
Arkbound creative writing programme	Creative writing	Gorbals
Bookbug	Book club	Various wards
Braw Wee Craft Club	Craft various	North/Central
Chess Club	Chess	Gorbals
Childrens Disco	Dance	Oatlands
Childrens Picnic Club	Craft	Oatlands
Citizens Theatre	Theatre/Drama	Gorbals
CoderDojo Coding Clubs	Coding	Gorbals
Connecting Stories	Storytelling	Pollok
Cook Stars South	Cooking	Various

Group name	Artform	Area
Cooking Club	Cooking	Gorbals
Creative Glasgow (previously Glasgow Connected Arts Network)	Various	Hillhead/City
Crossroads Creative Writing Workshop	creative writing	Gorbals
Diaspora African Women Support Group - Dawsun	Various - sewing, clothing repair, craft	Gorbals
Eden Project Communities Network Scotland	Gardening	Various Wards
Fair Play Productions	Music, theatre, comedy	Glasgow South West/ Govan
FOSN - Friends of Southern Necropolis	Gardening, tours, community events	Gorbals
GAS Garden - planter building club	Gardening, nature based crafts	Southside Central/ Glasgow East
Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens guided tours	Guided tours	Partick East/Kelvindale/North
Gathering South Sessions	Folk and Traditional Music/ Instrumental music	Govan/ South West
Giggle and Grow	Dance	Gorbals
Gilded Lily	Various	Govan
Givin' It Laldie - Making Music in the Gorbals, Beginners Guitar Group	Musical instruments	Gorbals
Givin' It Laldie - Making Music in the Gorbals, Creative Ageing+Sing for Life	Singing	Gorbals
Glad Community Choir	Singing	Pollockshaws

Group name	Artform	Area
Glasgow Madrigirls	Singing	Various wards
Glasgow Southside Crafters	Craft	Pollokshields
Glasgow Southside Woodcraft Folk	Wood craft	Various
Glasgow Zine Library	Arts, crafts, heritage	Govanhill
Glasgow's Empowering Community Consortium (GECCO)	Various	Gorbals
Gorbals Daytime Disco 50+ Group	Dance	Gorbals
Gorbals Ideas fund	Various	Gorbals
Gorbals Youth Cafe	Various - craft, cooking	Gorbals
Govan Community Project-Women's Group	Various	Govan
Govanhill Baths Ceramics	Ceramics	Govanhill
Govanhill Voices	Singing	City
Govanhill: Heritage Learning Programme	Arts, Crafts, Cultural, Heritage	Govanhill
Govanhill: Rags to Riches/ Deep End Home/ GBCT's Govanhill Art and Environment Network (GAEN)/ Community Action	Arts, Crafts, Cultural, Heritage	Govanhill
Govanhill: Wellbeing Project	Various	Govanhill
Greater Govanhill magazine	Various	Govanhill

Group name	Artform	Area
Jambo Radio	Various	Various wards
Jhankar Beats	Indian Music and Dance	Various wards
Ladies Shed Govan	Arts, crafts, dance and meditative martial arts	Govan
Lego Club	Lego	South city libraries
Men's Shed Govan	Traditional crafts with DIY tools	Govan
Multicultural Day Opportunities Project	Dancing and various	Southside Central
MusicALL (The Fridays)	Music	Partick East/Kelvindale/West
Paragon	Inclusive art, dance and music organisation	Gorbals
Parenting Gardening Group Adelphi Nursery	Gardening	Gorbals
Pollock United Soccer Academy - Free BMX club	BMX, mountain biking indoor group	Pollok
Reilly Dance Group	Dance	Pollok
Repair Cafe	Repair	Gorbals
Scottish Refugee Council	Various	Glasgow City/Anderston/City/Yorkhill
Second Life Club	New skills - knitting, crochet, knotting, mending	Canal
Sewing Group Sewing Pollok	Sewing	Pollock

Group name	Artform	Area
Shapenote Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh groups) *	Singing	Various
Sharpen Her: the African Women's Network	Various	Various
Sou`side Shufflers	Northern Dance	Gorbals
Southside Folk Session	Scottish folk music	Langside/South
Southside Fringe/ On The Fringe	Platform for performers and artists	Shawlands/ Pollokshields/ South
Southside Strummer	Ukelele jam group	Shawlands/ Pollokshields/ South
St Mary's Cathedral Choir	Singing	Hillhead/ North
St Mary's Cathedral, Bellringing	Bellringing	Hillhead/ North
St Mary's Cathedral, Needlework	Needlework/ Sewing	Hillhead/ North
Stitches Southside	Needlework/ Sewing	
Sunny Govan Radio	Radio Broadcasting	Govan/ South West
SWAMP Glasgow -	Various	Pollok
Task: Learning as we grow together	Gardening	Gorbals
Turf Youth Community Group - beauty group	Nail art/ beauty	Cardonald
U Belong Glasgow	Various	Various

Group name	Artform	Area
Unity Sisters	Craft	Govan / City
Urban Roots	Gardening, nature based crafts	Gorbals
Voice of Hope (Waverley Care African Health Project)	Singing	
Voicebeat	Singing	Hillhead/ North
Voicemale	Singing	Langside/ South
Voice Project Scotland	Singing	Various
Tron Theatre Community Choir	Singing	
Scottish Opera Community Choir, led by Katy Cooper	Singing	Yorkhill
Voicebeat, Kelvinbridge-based choir led by Harry Campbell	Singing	Canal
New Gorbals Housing Association - Various Creative Groups	Craft - various	New Gorbals
Boom Community Arts	Various	Possilpark
Blankets for Glasgow	Sewing	Canal
The Village Storytelling Centre	Storytelling	Pollok
Bubble Fun	Craft	Canal