

OUR IMPACT

2025-2026



High Peak Community Arts

highpeakarts.org

High Peak Community Arts **Annual Report**

Copies of the accounts for 2025-2026 are available on request (mail@highpeakarts.org) or can be viewed online via the Companies House Website (companieshouse.gov.uk).

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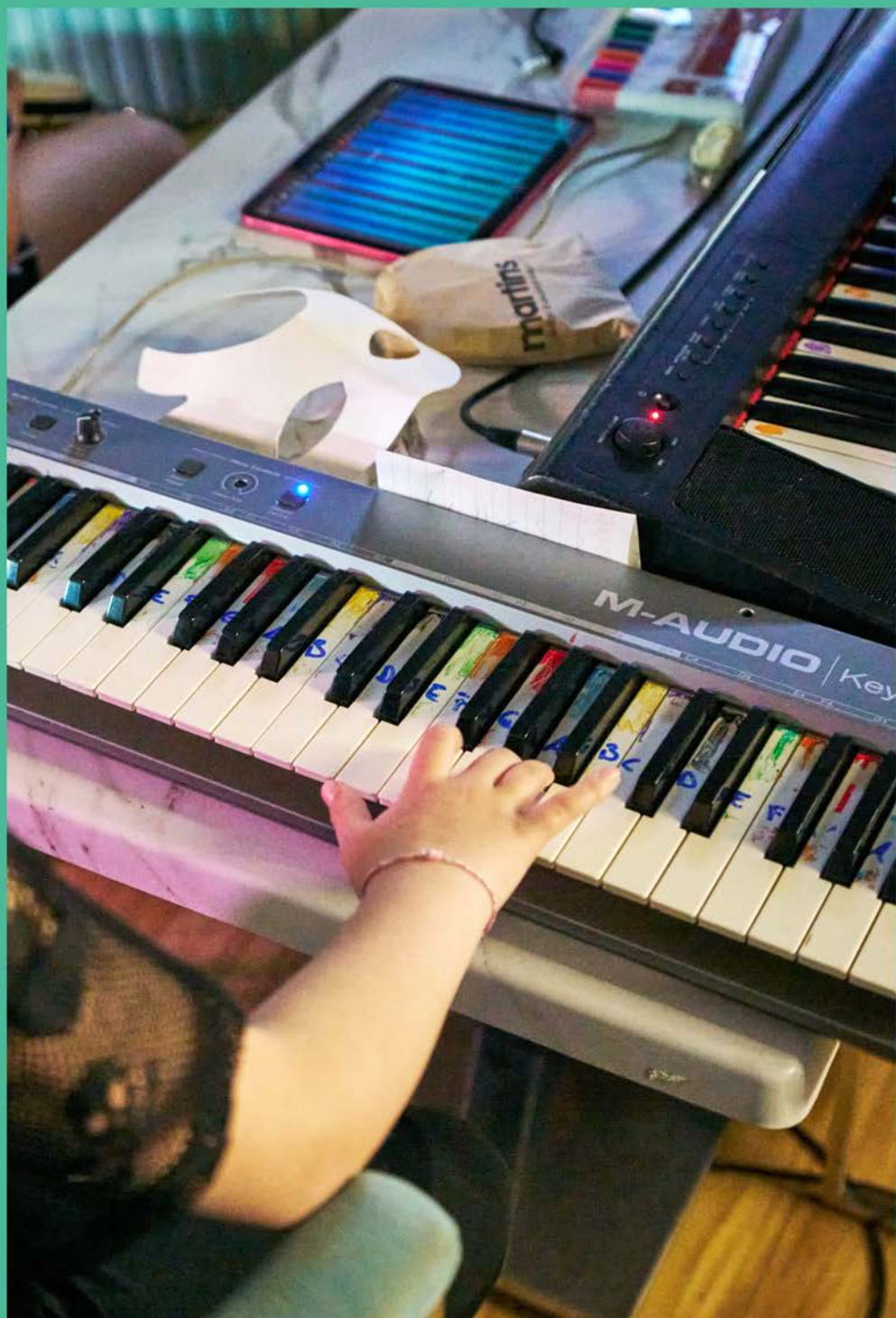
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Welcome

Creativity has continued to bring people together across the High Peak this year, offering opportunities for people to connect, learn, and discover what they can achieve through the arts.

From early years storytelling and youth theatre to wellbeing groups, festivals and community celebrations, we've worked alongside people of all ages to create experiences that build confidence, encourage self-expression and strengthen a sense of belonging. Time and time again we've seen how creativity can improve wellbeing, develop new skills and help people form meaningful connections within their communities.

Alongside delivering this work, we've taken important steps to strengthen High Peak Community Arts for the future. A refreshed brand and website, renewed vision and values, stronger governance, and continued investment in our staff and trustees have all helped ensure we're better equipped to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve, whilst remaining true to the grassroots values that have shaped the organisation for almost fifty years.



Our achievements this year have only been possible because of the dedication, creativity and generosity of our staff, volunteers, artists, trustees, partners and funders. Together we have continued to demonstrate that the arts have the power to inspire, bring people together and create lasting positive change.

As we look ahead, we're excited to build on this momentum. With new partnerships, ambitious projects and our 50th anniversary on the horizon we will continue working to ensure that creativity remains at the heart of our communities, enriching lives and helping the High Peak thrive for generations to come.

Barbara Walmsley

Chair of Trustees

Our Story

Since 1979, High Peak Community Arts has been sparking creativity and connection in the High Peak. We believe everyone should have the chance to make, share, and enjoy art, no matter their circumstances. From hands-on workshops to vibrant exhibitions and performances, we've spent nearly fifty years bringing people together, nurturing wellbeing, and celebrating the power of creativity to change lives.



1985 Performance, Hayfield

OUR VISION

A community where the arts are accessible and inspirational, belonging to everyone.

OUR MISSION

We provide opportunities that inspire people to make arts and creativity their own. We promote the social and educational benefits of the arts, challenge barriers to taking part and celebrate the voice of our community and local area.

Staff & Trustees

We have a small and dedicated staff team that work part-time across multiple roles. They are supported by a wider team of amazing volunteers, freelancers and practitioners.



Trustees

Barbara Walmsley - Chair
Caroline Storr
Lorna Young
Maia Preston
Melody Slinn - Treasurer (Appointed 24 April 2025)
Catherine Bellis
Victoria Richardson
Susan Nathan
James Mathews-Hiskett (Appointed 21 January 2026)

Andrew Worrall (Resigned 6 October 2025)
Dawn Bryan (Resigned 7 July 2025)
Dr Lidija McKnight (Resigned 8 September 2025)

Staff

Sophie Mackreth - Co-Leader - Creative Programme Manager
Lucy Dean-Moore - Co-Leader - Operations, Fundraising and Communications
Elinor Coakley - Project Assistant
Georgia Tyler - Project Assistant
Helen Brook - Freelance Project and Event Manager

Volunteers



We're proud to be supported by over 10 regular volunteers.

This year, our volunteers helped us provide:

608 HOURS OF SUPPORT

Thank you for all you do.

Lifelong Journeys

Young people who have attended our workshops, often become volunteers and take on further work experience with our team.

Thank you to our young volunteers for their dedication.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

We supported:

871

Individual
Participants

We provided:

3,131

Engagement
Sessions

In

223

Creative
Workshops

73%

of these
supported children
and young people
under 25

77%

of participants
reported living with a
disability or other
additional need

295

Sessions
of freelance
employment

5000+

People attended
our events and
showcases

Feedback from an end-of-year survey* revealed:

90%

reported improved overall
well-being because of their
involvement in a project

80%

said participation improved
their communication with
others

73%

noted an increase in
their confidence thanks
to their participation

93%

of participants reported
learning a new skill during a
project

* survey of 30 participants.

WELLBEING PROJECTS



- SPACE TO EXPLORE
- FILM CUTS CLUB

Wellbeing Projects

While all our initiatives contribute to overall wellbeing, these particular projects were created with a focused mission to support mental health and personal wellness.

In today's increasingly digital world, where people often feel disconnected, creating opportunities for genuine human connection has become more important than ever.

By creating spaces for authentic connection and creative self-expression, we've witnessed remarkable transformations - participants discovering newfound confidence, forming meaningful friendships, and cultivating a stronger sense of wellbeing through their workshop experiences.

"IN A SETTING LIKE THIS, BEING PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND BEING ABLE TO USE POWER TOOLS, MAKES ME FEEL NORMAL AND INCLUDED"

- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



Space to Explore

This programme brings together neurodivergent adults in a small-group setting where creativity becomes a powerful tool for self-discovery and community connection.

Throughout the year, the group explored a range of visual arts with several projects incorporating recycled materials.

Their work was showcased at public events and turned into printed resources, helping to raise awareness and understanding of neurodivergence while giving residents a sense of pride in their local area.

Several participants and volunteers achieved personal goals set with the support team at the beginning of their time with the group, building the confidence needed to move into a paid or volunteer position, and eventually progressing on to other employment.

The programme also delivered neurodivergence training to staff, trustees and to local community groups and partnered with the Derbyshire Community of Practice Autism Network and local partner Zink, to run out-of-school sessions for young people experiencing emotionally based school non-attendance.

Here are a few examples of the activities explored throughout the year:

Recycled Sculpture

Inspired by the bold ideas of 20th-century art and design, the group used everyday household items to transform ordinary objects into extraordinary creations.

Cyanotype Textiles

The group loved exploring this fun photographic printing process, using natural materials, fabrics and photographs.

Trips

The group attended an art exhibition in Manchester designed to inspire, empower, and encourage them to try new experiences. The artwork on display, created by Loveartpix, reflected his personal journey as a neurodivergent individual, helping to raise awareness of the conditions that shape his life and the lives of many others.

“I liked that he wasn’t a ‘fancy pants’ and felt like art galleries really could be somewhere for someone like me.”

- Participant Feedback



Film Cuts Club

Futures Through Film

Our film club supports young people with additional needs, co-led by young volunteers and professional filmmakers, who once took part in the group themselves. Their experiences make them powerful role models while also giving them the chance to explore their own growth and development.



Movie Highlights

This year's films included a historical piece called Gruesome Glossop, commissioned by and featured as part of Derbyshire Makes; a festive film titled Invasion of Christmas; and other projects covering virtual reality and animation.



ON LOCATION FILMING

**“IT’S HELPED ME THROUGH SOME DARK DAYS.
IT’S BEEN VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE HERE I’VE
FELT LIKE I’VE BEEN LISTENED TO.**

**I CAN EXPRESS MY CREATIVITY. THEY BRING OUT
THE BEST IN YOU”**

- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

CREATIVE GROWTH PROJECTS



- **EARLY YEARS**
- **TALL TALES**
- **LEVEL UP**
- **ARTS AWARDS**

Creative Growth Projects

Our creative growth initiatives serve young people from infancy through young adulthood, addressing the unique developmental needs at each life stage.

Recognising that rural communities often face constraints in youth programming and educational resources, our projects are specifically designed to bridge these gaps through comprehensive support.

We focus on four core objectives: developing creative skills, enhancing education, supporting wellbeing, and creating pathways to employment and further education.

Our youth-centred approach ensures all programmes are developed through direct consultation with participants, keeping our offerings relevant and responsive to community needs.

**"I COMMUNICATE MORE CLEARLY,
ENGAGE MORE POSITIVELY WITH
OTHERS, AND ADAPT MORE EASILY
IN DIVERSE, CREATIVE TEAMS."**

- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participant Case Study

"I've been with the organisation for quite some time now.

I started as a young participant in a music programme and over time became increasingly involved. Volunteering felt like a natural next step. I've had lots of opportunities for training and paid work along the way, picking up skills like event management and leadership.

A creative training programme let me explore things I hadn't tried before. Working alongside others and hearing different perspectives broadened my understanding, gave me new skills and tools, and taught me how to share those skills with others. Most significantly, I worked across different teams in a leadership role, while learning when to step back and let others lead, a balance I hadn't understood before.

I've drawn on that experience constantly since, in team settings, management, and understanding group dynamics. When I completed an online course in team leading principles, everything from my time at the organisation gave me the grounding to make sense of it and apply it well.

More recently, I reflected on those experiences in a job interview. I was successful, and the interviewer specifically praised the quality of my answers, most of them rooted in what I'd learned at High Peak Community Arts.

My confidence has grown enormously since that first day. Specific programmes helped me apply it more intentionally."

- 2026 INTERVIEW, EDITED FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY

Early Years

The 'For the Love of Books' programme brings together young children and their parents through a format that combines storytelling with hands-on creative activities.

This year we re-launched our partnerships with nursery schools in Gamesley and Fairfield.



The materials used were natural with plenty of sensory appeal, well suited to a wide range of ages and needs. Using natural materials gave families simple, low-cost ideas they could recreate at home.

A highlight this year was the Stay & Play workshop, held for Gamesley parents at the end of the programme. Lots of parents and grandparents joined in. It also gave us insight into the impact of recent cuts to early years provision, with many telling us there was little else available locally.

In the weeks that followed, nursery staff began running similar activities themselves, a clear sign of the programme's lasting impact.

Tall Tales

The Tall Tales project is a theatrical production that allows young participants from economically disadvantaged areas to get involved at all stages of production. This includes writing, script, music, dance, animation, costume, props and stage management.

Young people have total ownership of creating the production, from start to finish. This approach helps to create an immersive experience where every creative element contributes to the larger story and young people learn new skills, find community connection and learn leadership skills.

More than 50 young people took part this year from Easter workshops to create characters and story to evening sessions on Gamesley and Fairfield. The groups then met at a 7-day summer school in August. Everything built towards the final show, 'Strings of Power'.

**“WE GET TO SAY WHAT WE'RE DOING
INSTEAD OF IT ALREADY BEING WRITTEN
AND US BEING GIVEN A PART.”**

- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



THE LEAD UP

Over 50 young people had the freedom to choose what they wanted to create within a particular art form. Workshops began with writing classes, followed by script writing, music, props, drama, costume, dance, and film-making.

THE SHOW

Participants performed 'Strings of Power', a tale of a divided future Earth, evil puppeteers and a hidden resistance. The show featured their own original songs, dance and drama, with pre-filmed clips and animations.

Level Up

The Level Up programme supports young people up to age 25 to build confidence, creativity, and skills for the future, giving them a platform to shape and deliver their own projects.

Highlights this year included a creative training programme culminating in 'The AI Debate', designed and delivered by young participants and showcased at New Mills Festival.

The AI Debate

Participants developed skills in project and budget planning, critical thinking, organising workshops and events, public speaking, along with a better understanding of AI's role in creative and everyday life.

This work has now been shortlisted as a finalist at the Children & Young People Now Awards, in the Arts & Culture category.



Arts Awards

Arts Award recognises the creativity, communication, planning and problem-solving skills that young people develop through arts participation, focusing on personal journeys in the arts rather than an artform-specific curriculum.

Participants from all our youth projects joined the programme to further their development. Using the wide range of creative opportunities such as music, visual arts, and filmmaking to build a portfolio at Explore (entry level), Bronze (level 1), Silver (level 2) and Gold (level 3).

Levels 1-3, also developed leadership skills by sharing their knowledge with others, while building confidence and independence in a supportive community setting.

- **14 Bronze Awards**
- **1 Silver Award**
- **9 Explore Awards**



PLACE PROJECTS



- **DERBYSHIRE MAKES**
- **PUBLIC EVENTS**

Place Projects

Our place-based creative initiatives encourage people to explore, understand, and celebrate the unique character of where they live, fostering connections to their local environment and community.

Rural communities possess rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and distinctive stories that often go uncelebrated; our projects help to illuminate these unique qualities through creative exploration and expression.

We focus on engaging with place through creative practice, building intergenerational connections, developing environmental awareness, and fostering community pride and belonging.

“WHEN I’M GOING AROUND THE HIGH PEAK, SOMETIMES I GO TO PLACES WHERE OUR ART IS DISPLAYED AND IT FEELS REALLY SPECIAL TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF THAT.”

- PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Derbyshire Makes

Glossop



Derbyshire Makes is a three-year programme bringing together makers from across the county for vibrant festival days, each rooted in the distinct character, history and stories of its location. High Peak Community Arts is proud to lead the Glossop Hub.

Year one culminated in the first festival in April 25, showcasing a range of local talent, art forms and new art projects.

The 2025 festival brought together **13 community groups** and **16 artists** and reached almost **1,500 people** through audience & participant experiences



Photo Credits: Richard Tymon

We continue to build on the way this programme brings people together, offering high-quality events and experiences that play a real part in the regeneration of the High Peak.

A HUGE THANK YOU to the many local businesses, organisations and charities that took part, and attended steering groups throughout the year.

PUBLIC EVENTS

Alongside larger events, the charity partnered with local festivals and seasonal community events to make creative workshops accessible across the High Peak, reaching people where they live and work.

Throughout the year, more than **700 people** took part in our creative workshops, with our events engaging audiences of **over 1,000**.

These events included council-funded Festive Sessions in Glossop and New Mills, Buxton Pride Picnic, One World Festival, and a Community Film Screening.



Thank You

Thank you to all the dedicated supporters, artists, freelancers and funders who have helped to make it a great year!

Our Partners & Supporters

Arts Council England
BBC Children in Need
Derbyshire County Council
Foundation Derbyshire
Friends of High Peak Community Arts
High Peak Borough Council
High Peak Comps
High Peak Lottery
The Bingham Trust
The Big Give Trust
The Garfield Weston Foundation
The National Foundation for Youth Music
The National Lottery Community Fund
UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Swizzels Matlow Ltd

Artists & Practitioners

Joanna Allen	Karl Harris	Rizzy Stephenson
Toby Barnes	Matt Hill	Jason Taylor
Fenn Bartels	Mark Hornsey	Benn Turton
Kevin Boardman	Lucy Jackson	Mark Turton
Trixi Bold	Carys Kaiser	Frances Walker
Jo Brewerton	Gordon MacLellan	Andrew Worrall
Gareth Carbery	Deb Pitman	
Michelle Collier	Saima Rasheed	
Charlie Collins	Liz Richardson	
Joseph Doubtfire	Bob Rushton	
Lisa Edwards	Clare Savory	
Lucian Emmett	Charlotte Singleton	

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