



# **Heart of Glass Impact Report 2024–25**

Celebrating a decade of making  
and growing, together

**Large print document**

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# Foreword

This year, Heart of Glass marked ten years of dreaming, creating, and growing alongside communities, artists, and those with diverse and varied lived experience.

## What connects us?

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A shared belief in the power of art to bring people together - to ask bold questions, to nurture connection, and to imagine more just, joyful futures.

From local markets to high streets, parklands to care homes, cabarets to council buildings - across Knowsley, St Helens and beyond - we've had the privilege of being part of creative collaborations with artists and communities, supporting work rooted in care to bloom in the most unexpected places.

This report isn't just a record of activity. It's a living, breathing, growing archive of community, collaboration and creativity. It is also a response to the world we live in - a world where too often we are isolated and divided and dealing with crises on multiple fronts. It is a reminder that we can be together, challenge one another, learn from one another and rehearse and imagine a different future.

As we reflect on a year shaped by change, regenerative thinking and deep listening, we're proud to share some of the stories, milestones and collective achievements that have developed between April 2024 to March 2025 - the tenth anniversary year of our journey together!

**Foreword by Patrick Fox, CEO and Tracy Gentles, Chair**

# Highlights From Our Year

We know not all growth can be measured in numbers — but here are a few that help tell our story. Our roots run deeper, so read on...

**23** new projects

**50,000+** people reached this year

**700+** children and young people engaged in Project Parr, Book of Knowsley, Boys in the Making and Creative Class projects

**50+** partnerships from local councils, schools, and community groups to national funders, networks, and international collaborations.

**43** artists supported

**10+** years as part of Arts Council's transformative Creative People and Places programme (and six as part of Art Council England's National Portfolio)

**91%** of audiences travelled less than 10 miles to attend events (vs 63% nationally – Arts Council Illuminate)

*"It's given me a wider perspective, on all kinds of things, and I want to go out there now and learn more."*

**Participant, Gut Grief project**

# **Strengthening Our Roots / Nurturing Our Partnerships**

Over the past year, we've focused on building a more supportive and sustainable foundation for our team, while growing our work externally through new partnerships, long term projects and consultancy activity.

## **Policy updates**

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Refreshed policies and streamlined internal processes.

## **Leadership development**

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Coaching and leadership training for key staff members.

## **Board changes**

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After bidding goodbye to Joanna Rowlands after nine years of dedicated service, we welcomed Tracy Gentles as our new Chair, bringing a wealth of experience in creative industries and social justice.

## **Celebrated ten years of Arts Council support**

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We're proud of our unique position as the only National Portfolio organisation in the country that also runs a Creative People and Places programme, recognising our deep roots in community-led practice and our growing national impact.

## **Consultancy and support**

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Partnering with local authorities and the cultural sector to champion community arts, including contributing to the development of St Helens' first Public Art Strategy.

## **Part of major Knowsley-wide young people's bid**

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Setting the stage for three years of transformative work together.

*"Thanks again for all your contributions to making Knowsley a brighter place."*

**Anneliese Midgley MP**

# Valuing Diversity

We're a diversity-led team, shaped by lived experiences - including working-class backgrounds, LGBTQ+ identities, feminism, disability, and global majority heritage.

The diverse artists we collaborate with bring a rich variety of backgrounds and experiences to our work.

Our communities in Knowsley, St Helens and beyond are becoming more diverse, and we're more committed than ever to creating spaces where people can feel connected. At a time when social media and politics often highlight division - and with growing pressures on people's health and wellbeing, from the cost of living crisis to cuts in services and increasing social isolation - we've seen how powerful shared creative experiences can be.

Read on to see how our projects have helped to spark joy, learning and new connections, and grown understanding and empathy across our communities.

## **Non-UK national identities:**

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### **Knowsley:**

1.3% → 3.4% (2011–2021, ONS)

### **St Helens:**

1.5% → 3.2% (2011–2021, ONS)

## **Disabled residents (Limited daily activity, 2021, ONS):**

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**Knowsley:** 13%

**St Helens:** 10.7%

**National average:** 7.5%

## **People aged 65+ (2021, ONS):**

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**Knowsley:** 17.1%

**St Helens:** 20.5%

*“Heart of Glass represent the kind of lifeline that I wish I had growing up. The work that they do is unlike any other organisation, agency or institution that I’ve worked with in the arts scene. It’s the reason why I’m proud to say that I’ve worked with them for nearly a decade.”*

**Artist Larry Achiampong**



## **Strong Women**

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In Knowsley, lead artist Carrie Reichardt asked the community to help us celebrate the women who have helped shape their worlds. They responded by creating over 400 heart-shaped artworks - each one a declaration of love, solidarity, and care to overlooked women from the borough. Over 100 people gathered for the launch of Strong Women of Knowsley celebrating working class identity, place and community heritage. A sister mural to Strong Women of St Helens. **Watch our behind the scenes documentary.** (See link 1).

## **The Posh Club**

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In March 2025, we brought London's LGBTQ+ run The Posh Club to St Helens for its first outing in the Northwest. We transformed St Helens Town Hall into a glamorous tea-dance for over 60s with over 160 guests, many arriving alone but leaving with friends and the resounding request for "more Posh Clubs please" We listened! (See link 2).

## **The Book of Knowsley**

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Over 700 young people shaped our work this year as active co-creators. The Book of Knowsley, co-authored by children for adults and led by artists Andy Field and Beckie Darlington, was launched in a packed church with the Mayor of Knowsley in attendance. Young editors took the mic, reading aloud the world they want to build! (See link 3).

## **Creative Class**

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Creative Class grew with its new Youth Advisory Council, go-

sees and developing partnerships with arts organisations across the country. The programme continues to support access to creativity for young women and girls, trans and non-binary people, encouraging learning, equity of opportunity and meaningful connection. (See link 4).

## **In Every Bite of the Emperor**

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Youngsook Choi continued her work exploring ecological grief and ancestral memory across communities in Malaysia, South Korea, the UK, and Vietnam. Through shared rituals and storytelling, In Every Bite of the Emperor fosters cross-cultural dialogue, healing, and climate consciousness, and bringing together practitioners working in this field of practice. (See link 5).

## **Nature Neighbours**

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In partnership with Knowsley Council and Halewood's parks and green spaces, we launched Nature Neighbours with artist duo Juneau Projects - a vibrant sculptural trail co-created with hundreds of local residents. Since February, the trail welcomed over 5,000 visits, including hundreds of school pupils, and sparked conversations around local flora, fauna, and our shared green spaces. (See link 6).

## **The Suicide Chronicles**

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Artist Mark Storor continues his powerful work with people with lived experience of suicide, breaking the silence. Screenings of Chronicle 5 took place as part of the Liverpool Irish Festival, alongside a dedicated session delivered to health workers and council staff as part of World Suicide Prevention Day. The

project was shortlisted for a Health and Wellbeing Award at LCR Culture & Creativity Awards 2025. Plans for Chronicle 7 — a full presentation of all Chronicles to date — are well underway for 2025/26. **Listen to The Suicide Chronicles: Conversations** to hear from some of our collaborators. (See link 7).

*“Project Parr is more than a film, it is a celebration of who we are in Parr. It captures the kindness, resilience, and warmth that make Parr special. Our greatest asset has always been our people, and I’m grateful to have been part of something that showcases that so beautifully.”*

## Participant, Project Parr

### Links

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1. <https://youtu.be/iNkvCan2bOM>
2. <https://theposhclub.co.uk>
3. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-book-of-knowsley>
4. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/creative-class>
5. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/in-every-bite-of-the-emperor>
6. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/nature-neighbours>
7. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/the-suicide-chronicles-conversations>

## Claire's Story

Cultivating confidence through clay, care and collaboration.

When we advertised the Strong Women mentoring opportunity, St Helens based mental health worker and artist Claire Eddleston wasn't sure she had the time, confidence or capacity to apply – especially with the project requiring travel to London.

It was the encouragement of her friend, Claire Rigby, that gave her the push she needed. What followed was, in Claire's own words, "life-changing."

Working alongside artist Carrie Reichardt, Claire immersed herself in ceramics, gaining new technical skills and developing a deep love for the medium - so much so that she invested in her own kiln and began integrating ceramics into her practice. While already an experienced facilitator, Claire picked up valuable tools in planning, logistics and fundraising from Carrie and the Heart of Glass team—skills that she would go on to apply in her own independent projects.

The experience wasn't without challenges. When a mural project at St Maries Catholic Primary School in Kirkby grew larger than expected, Claire adapted by proposing and creating a second mural. The pressure to complete everything to a high standard was real, but the experience sharpened her problem-solving skills and confidence.

Mentorship opened up a new creative path for Claire: public art rooted in community. Since completing the project, she's gone on to lead mosaic and mural works in Whiston and Parr, collaborating with local refugees around the theme of birds and migration.

Claire's relationship with Carrie also became a source of lasting friendship and mutual inspiration. Carrie's open, down-to-earth approach helped build trust, while the experience also offered Carrie a chance to learn new techniques and reaffirm her own love of community-focused art. For both, this was more than a project - it was a creative turning point.

As Carrie reflected, all Claire needed was encouragement. Now, she's not only continuing her own projects but exploring the possibility of establishing a community creative space - rooted in the same values of care, collaboration and skill-sharing that the mentorship set in motion.

**Watch the Strong Women documentary** featuring Claire's story. (See link 8).

*"The mentorship definitely exceeded my expectations. I'm doing a mosaic project at Stadt Moers Park (Whiston) and a mural at Derbyshire Hill Family Centre (Parr) about birds and migration. Those ideas have come through doing this project."*

**Claire Eddleston, Artist Mentee**

## Links

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8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNkvCan2bOM>

# Regenerative Place-Making

Supporting creative community-driven place-making. We remain deeply committed to hyper-local work in St Helens and Knowsley – a focus that, backed by our own evidence and that of our partners, continues to show meaningful and lasting impact within local communities.

As Huyton town centre prepares for major regeneration, we're working with our partners Make CIC, along with developers Gener8, Kajumba and architects LUCID to champion a vision of Huyton Village as a living arts centre: a place where creativity is rooted in community, made visible through public space, and co-authored by the people who call it home.

Since 2021 we've supported powerful place-making through public art - connecting communities with women and LGBTQIA+ artists to co-create 12 artworks across St Helens and Knowsley. These works celebrate identity and resilience, turning overlooked spaces into landmarks of local pride. **Download the map on our website** (see link 9).

*"We have more than an art trail – we have pieces that have brought together neighbours, friends, partners and community to create artwork for all to share - whether you take a walk for your own wellbeing, reflect on both the therapeutic feelings of creating the artwork or connecting back to our neighbours in nature."*

**Knowsley Council lead**

## Links

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9. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/public-art>

# Radical Learning

From classrooms to national conferences, our learning projects explored radical new possibilities for arts education and those working in community arts.

**We supported artist Sarah Bailey** to deliver interactive workshops at conferences, sparking meaningful dialogue and innovative thinking around the future of inclusive and impactful arts education.

Our annual conference **With For About** saw over 150 artists and practitioners from across the UK and beyond join us at Shakespeare North Playhouse for a day of bold ideas, honest conversations, and collective reflection.

Every primary and SEN school in St Helens received the **Our Strong Women** resource, ensuring that stories of strength, creativity, and representation reached classrooms across the borough.

**350 digital downloads** of Heart of Glass learning resources extended the impact — reaching educators, artists, and practitioners across the UK.

**56 Year 4 pupils in St Helens and Knowsley** co-created school resources with Interference Art, taking part in hands-on workshops and shaping two important resources for their peers.

*“The children absolutely loved it. It was great to see them so engaged in the artwork. I’m planning on using the ideas for my art lessons in the future, you got so much out of them.”*

**Teacher, Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, St Helens**

# **Advocacy in Action**

How can culture meaningfully engage communities?

This year, we asked this question across local, national and international platforms. From Ireland to Malaysia, our collaborative work travelled far – but it remained firmly rooted here in Knowsley and St Helens.

## **Leading the call for more equitable arts funding**

In an open letter to Dame Mary Archer.

## **Shaping our region's cultural future**

Through our active membership and strategic leadership of Culture Network LCR - a membership-based CIC of over 60 cultural organisations across Liverpool City Region.

## **Chairing national conversations**

Including Arts Council England's Engaging Communities conferences (March 2023 & April 2024).

## **Championing new ideas and voices**

Through partnerships including a content collaboration with Arts Professional exploring the value of community arts through thought articles by artists, practitioners and Heart of Glass staff.



## **Holding space for empathy and complexity**

Through long term projects exploring grief, suicide, masculinity and more.

## **Amplifying marginalised voices**

In a time of great division, our work continues to platform lived experience and stories that are too often left out.

*“Working with HoG has been a pleasure, their trauma informed response to art is excellent, a breath of fresh air. I can not wait for further projects and collaboration!”*

**Jayne Hoarty, Social Prescribing Team Leader, CMCA  
Social Action Lead Knowsley**

## New Futures / What's Next?

We're looking ahead with excitement to another busy year of diverse and meaningful work. More broadly, we're committed to continuing to support artists and communities in the best way we can — especially during these critical times.

Our ambitions for the future are set out in our forward strategy, **Building Blocks** (published in 2023, see link 10). Our focus remains on the role that art, artists, and collaboration with communities can play in imagining and shaping a more equitable future.

In the strategy, we talk about the importance of care, challenge, and openness — values that continue to guide everything we do. We also know that our work is always evolving, and we're committed to staying open, adaptable, and ready to learn!

Our work has been — and can keep being — a driver for change and a way of opening up new ways of thinking. More than ever, we know how important it is to be a responsive and active partner. So we're setting out to explore and deepen our partnerships and collaborations — locally, nationally, and internationally — and see what we can build together.

*“Fantastic, I’m 74 and I’ve never been to a cabaret! Absolutely loved the event today! The organisers couldn’t do enough for us and the entertainment was amazing! Never stopped dancing!”*

**The Posh Club guest**

## Links

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10. <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/about>

# Our Funders and Supporters

To our funders, partners, artists and communities, thank you for believing in us and joining us on this journey.

- Arts Council England
- Creative People and Places
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- British Council Vietnam
- Knowsley Council
- St Helens Council
- ForHousing
- Make CIC
- Torus Foundation
- Raymond Williams Foundation
- Incredible Edible Network
- Wonder Arts
- Arts in Libraries
- St Helens College
- Carmel College
- Gerimis Art
- The Book Stop St Helens
- One Knowsley
- Short Supply
- Tallaght Community Arts
- Create Ireland
- Creative Lives
- Chrysalis Centre for Change
- The Mersey Forest

# Thank You

A huge and heartfelt thank you to all the incredible artists who are on this journey with us - this work wouldn't be possible without you!

To all the brilliant participants, schools and grassroots community groups that we've had the joy of working with this year - your commitment to your communities, your passion, and your imagination inspire us every single day.

We're also deeply thankful to our wonderful staff, our dedicated board of trustees, and the Creative People and Places consortium for their constant support, care, and belief in the power of community art!

**Find out more about us:**  
**[heartofglass.org.uk](https://heartofglass.org.uk)**

**Instagram:** @ourheartofglass

**Facebook:** @ourheartofglass

**Threads:** @ourheartofglass

**Linkedin:** Heart of Glass