

KIRKLEES YEAR OF '23 MUSIC



IMPACT REPORT



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Ellie Sax performing at Kirklees Pride. Photo by Alex Beldea

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Foreword



I'm thrilled to introduce this report, which explores the huge impact of Kirklees Year of Music 2023 on our people and our communities.

Music transcends culture, religion, ethnicity. It's a language that speaks to our emotions. You don't need to understand it. You just need to feel it. Emotion is universal – and so is music. It's this universal importance that made me want to be part of Kirklees Year of Music 2023.

We started with a mapping exercise designed to help us fully understand the variety of music in Kirklees – the tapestry that exists here, from the traditional brass bands to the choirs. I was shocked and amazed at the variety. We knew then that inclusivity must be one of the drivers of the year, and we wanted to be inclusive to every single person in Kirklees.

Music is so important to people's everyday lives – especially since COVID. During the pandemic, some communities who were naturally isolated became even more isolated. Music has been the perfect vessel to bring people together again. It can be a central core element to health and wellbeing – not traditional medicine, but absolutely therapeutic. Medicine you can self-prescribe.

There was so many highlights of the year. I think of something like HERD, one of the most visible projects, and how it represented the whole history of Kirklees – musical, rural, industrial. The variety of music made across Kirklees was there as everyone came together in St George's Square. I can still hear the gospel choirs singing like angels.



I think of Prince Re:Imagined. This was music a lot of people would know, but made in new ways with instruments from cultures around the world. It showed how music can always evolve – and it can always involve everybody.

And I think of the Royal Opera House bringing opera to schoolchildren in Huddersfield Town Hall. People don't always think opera relates to them, but here we saw young people getting involved and loving it. Getting together and singing the same words in the same space – this simple act brought people together. The impact of events like this can be difficult to quantify and measure. But in reality, you can see the impact just by looking at people and the smiles on their faces.

I want to thank the Board for its dedication – the support they gave, the time they spent, the experience and skills they brought to the Year of Music. A large project like this could easily have gone off track, and it was important that the Board had a shared and joint vision for success.

I also want to thank everyone involved in the year, from workshop participants to the staff and volunteers – and, of course, the singers and musicians who gave us a glorious soundtrack for 2023. Where would we be without you?



Qaisar Mahmood
Chair
Kirklees Year of Music 2023

A YEAR TO REMEMBER: INTRODUCING KIRKLEES YEAR OF MUSIC 2023

Featuring 136 new projects and activities, in-person and online audiences of 300,000+ to date, more than 20,000 participants, and over 1,000 events promoted via the website – this is the story of Kirklees Year of Music 2023.

Eight years in the making

Kirklees Year of Music 2023 (KYOM23) has its roots in a consultation into culture, creativity and the arts carried out in 2015 by Kirklees Council. The consultation led to the publication in 2016 of *Culture Kirklees: Our Vision for Arts, Creative Industries, Heritage and Museum Services at Kirklees Council*, which set out an ambitious cultural vision for the district – including the desired outcome of a ‘World Class Music Offer’ for residents and visitors to Kirklees.

Subsequent research into the work of commercial, educational and charitable organisations in music across the district led to the creation of the *Kirklees Music Policy*, which was approved in February 2018. The policy was informed by two key pieces of research, one on music infrastructure and one on the needs of the music. And it led, later in 2018, to the idea of presenting a Year of Music across Kirklees.

The following year saw interviews conducted with key decision-makers and influencers across Kirklees; music consultation workshops in Dewsbury and Huddersfield, with the development of a new ‘Sound Space’ music venue in the latter also identified as a key priority in the *Huddersfield Blueprint*; and research into three Kirklees music festivals, Cleckheaton Folk Festival, hcmf// (Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival) and Marsden Jazz Festival, which together were found to benefit the wider Kirklees economy with a combined annual economic impact of £2.9m.

At the same time, plans for a Kirklees Year of Music were starting to come together. The year was envisioned as an ambitious 12 months of performances, festivals, learning, activities, creative engagement programmes and other special events that would take place across the district. Kirklees Council engaged stakeholders across the borough, from festival organisers and venue promoters to educators, charities and musicians. A MUSiK brand was developed and launched in 2019 to help promote music in Kirklees, and a communications plan for the Year of Music was hatched.

A Project Initiation Document set out the vision for a future Kirklees Year of Music:

‘Kirklees is a district of world-class music that stands proud on its rich and diverse musical heritage. [...] Kirklees is a place where everyone can hear world-class music through our festivals and programming; where children and young people have access to world-class musical experiences and education; and where the next generation of musicians and music professionals can build and sustain a high-quality career, with access to the very best industry advice, career opportunities and performance routes.

‘2023 will be a year where this vision comes to life, where residents are able to enjoy the richness and diversity of music today, inclusive of all genres, all communities and in all forms. Our Year of Music will give opportunity and space to encounter new and traditional music, where you will be invited to be part of a community that lives and loves music.’

And then came COVID-19.



Hardeep Sahota at HERD 2023, devised by Orlando Gough, produced by Artichoke, part of Kirklees Year of Music. Photo by Matthew Andrews

Reshaping the year

The pandemic, of course, changed everything for everyone, including the shape and direction of what became KYOM23. However, it wasn't the only factor that fed into the creation of a new plan for the 12-month celebration. Economic uncertainties, including soaring inflation and rising interest rates, also played their part – as did the funding crisis across local government in England, a crisis from which Kirklees Council was far from insulated.

As the country showed its first signs of emerging from COVID-19 in 2022, Kirklees Council began to reimagine KYOM23 for a post-pandemic world. What had originally been planned as a big-bang festival, packed with high-profile events and spectaculars, was reconceived as a celebration of Kirklees' thriving music sector – businesses and charities, educators and musicians, adults with years of experience and children just taking their first musical steps. Its organisation became less of a top-down process and much more organic, with a groundswell of people bringing their own ideas to the mix. And it became responsive to the unique context of 2023 and reactive to the opportunities it provided – a year of music sensitive to the state of a much-changed world that felt full of unresolved challenges.

Kirklees Year of Music 2023

The KYOM23 programme that was ultimately developed was a celebratory blend of existing activities and new initiatives. Indeed, some projects on the programme ended up being both things at once, as KYOM23 funding and support allowed several long-standing initiatives and activities to expand in new areas and new directions.

The research carried out in the years before COVID-19 had already identified several key strengths that could help to support and deliver a successful KYOM23:

- **A strong musical heritage** – much of it rooted in the industrialisation of the 19th and early 20th centuries, which helped to give birth to such notable groups and events as the Huddersfield Choral Society (founded 1836), the Huddersfield Philharmonic Orchestra (c.1862), the Huddersfield Mrs Sunderland Festival (1889), the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra (1891) and the Holme Valley Brass Band Contest (1921). All remain in operation today.
- **An unusually diverse culture of music festivals and seasons** – from the Kirklees Concert Season (now delivered in partnership with Opera North) to the ever-pioneering hcmf// and from Cleckheaton Folk Festival to Marsden Jazz Festival.
- **A thriving volunteer culture** – as much as 30% of the voluntary arts sector in Kirklees is music based.
- **A solid and popular live music scene** – not least through a healthy circuit of small venues operating at grassroots level in Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Holmfirth and other parts of Kirklees, such as Parish, Small Seeds and Holmfirth Picturedrome.
- **A rich diversity of musical cultures** – from the University of Huddersfield, which has a hugely diverse and forward-thinking music department, to Radio Sangam, the country's first and most followed Asian radio network.
- **Strong political commitment strategic support** – with Kirklees Council committed to amplifying the role played by the arts in placemaking, tourism and social change.



Organic Doom at Huddersfield Town Hall with Arð, Pantheist and David Pipe. Photo by Abbie Jennings



Dewsbury Community Choir performing at the Dewsbury Musical Moment. Photo by Robling Photography

Even more than originally envisaged, the emphasis for KYOM23 was on supporting and promoting this thriving music sector – from businesses to non-profit organisations, from those making music professionally to those creating opportunities for others to make music on a purely amateur level. Newly commissioned public events would play their part – drawing new audiences from within and beyond Kirklees while also making dedicated local music fans aware of the year-long programme. But the already-thriving musical activities in the district were very much at the core of the celebration.

Led by Kirklees Council, the KYOM23 programme was grouped into five strands, each with a clear purpose and ambition:

- **Major Chords** – Special commissions created especially for KYOM23, these major public events celebrated the sounds, cultures and people of Kirklees.
- **Learning & Young People** – The KYOM23 programme featured many opportunities for children and young people to experience the joy of making, playing and listening to music.
- **Music Industry** – KYOM23 presented and promoted a wide range of events and initiatives designed to support, promote and grow the local music ecology of Kirklees.
- **Health & Wellbeing** – A wealth of KYOM23 events and activities spotlighted the transformative power that music can have on mental and physical health.
- **Musical to the Core** – KYOM23 promoted and supported many music events on Kirklees' existing calendar, bringing them to the attention of new audiences from within and beyond the district.

KYOM23 ultimately reached thousands of residents and visitors from across the district and beyond at live events. It commissioned and funded 136 new projects and activities, created and safeguarded dozens of local jobs, and saw more than 20,000 active participants take part in its programmes – including over 10,000 young people. Through its website and social media, more than 1,000 events and activities from the Kirklees community were promoted under the banner of KYOM23. And in person and online, total audiences of 302,000 – and counting – enjoyed this pioneering year.

About this Report

This Impact Report starts the process of understanding the immediate and potential long-term impacts of KYOM23:

- The impact of KYOM23 across several key areas, guided in no small part by the ambitions of the five strands detailed above. Some of this impact is illustrated by short case studies into a number of the year's most notable events, activities and initiatives.
- The added value that KYOM23 brought to Kirklees and its music sector.
- Learnings for the continued development and growth of music in Kirklees.
- The legacy left by KYOM23 for the future.

The data in the report was compiled in late 2023 and early 2024, and represents all information that was available at the time of writing (February–April 2024). Further evaluation data and reports from partners will be compiled and published in due course to build on the findings in this report.

KYOM23 PROGRAMME

APRIL
MAY
JUNE

329 EVENTS

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH

232 EVENTS



Cleckheaton Folk Festival special concert: Dougie MacLean

Yorkshire Brass Band Competition



Independent Venue Week



Huddersfield Literature Festival

Musical Moment Dewsbury

Electric Spring



Music Changes Lives Conference with Yolanda Brown

Mrs Sunderland Festival



STRUT

A Summer Season of Music & PianoFestival

Deighton Carnival

Platform



Bands in the Park

From Pub to Pulpit

Organic Doom



Kirklees Pride



Festival of Conversations: In Conversation with Dame Evelyn Glennie



Cleckheaton Folk Festival special concert: The Young'uns

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

**JULY
AUGUST
SEPTEMBER**

281 EVENTS



HERD

**TOWNSOUNDS
exhibition**

Sounds of Dewsbury



**BBC Proms at
Dewsbury**

**Rasm-e-Milan
with Song-Geet**

Onwards Festival

**TOWNSOUNDS
Street Party**



**Huddersfield
Carnival**



**Sangam Mela
and Festival**

Yorkshire Day



Prince Re:Imagined

Tongue Fu

**John Tams and Jez
Lowe &
The Bad Pennies**

**OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER**

289 EVENTS

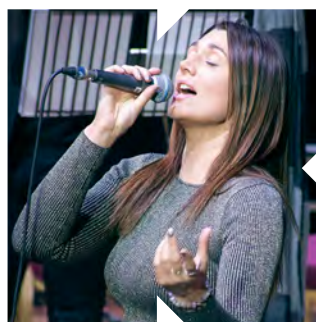


Beowulf

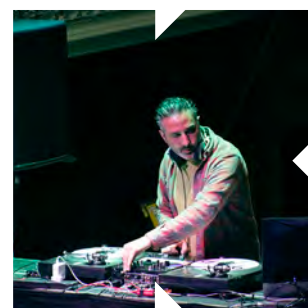
**Organ
Extravaganza**

**Yours to
Keep Festival**

hcmf//



**Songs
for the
Season**



**Live Cinema
Weekender with
Anna Meredith
and DJ Yoda**

**Marsden Jazz
Festival**



The Magic Flute

Soundwaves

**Huddersfield
Christmas
Lights Switch-
On**

Kirklees Concert Season

Heritage Quay Music Exhibitions

Speak Our Music

Cultures of Sound

TOWNSOUNDS podcast

Creative Minds

KYOM23 IN NUMBERS



35,000 +

people experienced HERD
over six days



12

episodes of the
TOWNSOUNDS podcast



400 days

of paid work for artists and
creative businesses in Dewsbury
via Taking the Lead



1,000 +

events promoted via the website



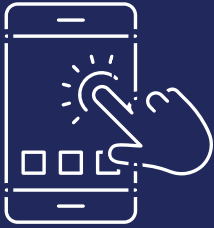
302,000 +

Engaged with the programme



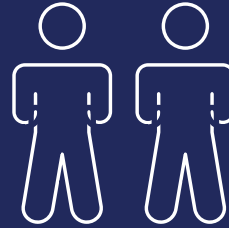
136

new events and activities
for KYOM23



100,000 +

digital audiences



202,000 +

live audiences



10,000 +

children and young people
aged 0 to 16 engaged with the
learning programme



20,000 +

active participants



75 young volunteers

aged 16–24 supported
85 events across 38 creative
partner organisations



3,000 +

participants and beneficiaries of
Health & Wellbeing projects

* Figures correct as of April 2024. Full evaluation to follow.

KEY IMPACTS

Kirklees Year of Music 2023 (KYOM23) reached thousands of residents and visitors during a packed 12 months of events and activities. From improving individuals' wellbeing to instilling confidence in the local music industry, it made lasting impacts across the region.

KYOM23 showcased Kirklees as a place where anyone can experience world-class music, and the year-round programme of events and activities celebrated the region's rich musical heritage while also promoting the growth of new music across the district. Support and funding from external sources such as West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Arts Council England allowed organisers to shape a year of culture that was delivered in partnership with organisations and individuals across Kirklees.

The following pages explore the benefits and positive impacts that KYOM23 brought to residents, communities, organisations and businesses in seven key areas:

- **Participation & Engagement**
- **Connections & Pride**
- **Placemaking**
- **Health & Wellbeing**
- **Schools & Education**
- **Young People & Careers**
- **Music Industry**



A Boliyan dance in St George's Square performing in the HERD finale. Photo by Matthew Andrews.



Prince Re:imagined at Lawrence Batley Theatre. Photo by Studio Bokehgo

PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

KYOM23 created and supported a wealth of events and activities aimed at everyone from children in early years education settings to older adults – with public participation central to much of the year-round programme.

KYOM23 put the public at the heart of its programme. Newly commissioned projects, events and activities took place in town halls, music venues, parks, theatres, community centres, pubs, churches, libraries, museums and other public spaces up and down Kirklees – and more than 80% of them were completely free to access.

More than 202,000 people attended live events and activities as part of KYOM23, supplemented by more than 100,000 digital audiences. Audiences flocked to a number of major free outdoor events, which took place either for the first time or on a larger scale than ever before. Together, they attracted residents from across Kirklees, from the wider Yorkshire region – and far beyond, including from London, Edinburgh and Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

At the same time, more than 22,000 people participated in activities across the year, including:

- **10,000+** children and young people aged under 16 from early years foundation stage (EYFS) settings, primary schools and secondary schools across the district participated in the KYOM23 learning programme.
- **1,000** children took part in a performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at Huddersfield Town Hall, presented in partnership with the **Royal Opera House** as part of its **Create & Sing** programme (see page 34).
- **2,000+** people benefited directly from activities presented as part of KYOM23's Health & Wellbeing series (see page 27).

Growing audiences

More than a quarter of audiences (26%) at outdoor and free-to-access events said that they participated in arts and culture experiences very rarely – just once a year or less often. Their attendance at KYOM23 serves as evidence of the programme's broad appeal. Some 29% of audiences at these events were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and 17% had a disability, reflecting the broader Kirklees demography.

Audience surveys collected at major KYOM23 events found that 62% of audiences were residents of Kirklees, with every corner of the district represented.



Image left: Yorkshire Day. Photo by Lucy Forrester

Image right: Huddersfield Carnival. Photo by Alex Beldea



In Detail

Bands in the Park

This four-month programme presented free concerts in parks and other outdoor spaces across Kirklees between May and August, bringing back music to these open spaces – in some cases, for the first time in years.

Bands in the Park celebrated Kirklees' musical heritage with free performances by traditional brass and silver bands, jazz groups, blues, rock, swing ensembles and choirs. The series created opportunities for more than 600 musicians from 30 bands and choirs – and was enjoyed by audiences of more than 14,000 across 10 different locations, including parks in Batley, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike and Huddersfield. KYOM23 worked with Friends groups at Beaumont, Greenhead and Ravensknowle Parks to present and promote the season.

Despite the region's history of music in parks, bands today have very few opportunities to perform outdoors. Bands in the Park brought their music to new and sometimes unsuspecting audiences, including young people and families making the most of the warm summer weather. The concerts were also popular with older people, many of whom were delighted to see the iconic bandstands in places such as Huddersfield's Beaumont Park used again to great effect.

The Big Easy Band performing at Bands in the Park. Photo by Alex Beldea

Key numbers

14,000+ people experienced the programme

600+ musicians took part

10 different locations featured

'We love to see and hear live music on the bandstand – a real trip down memory lane. The sun even shone for us all! Lovely mix of music. Lovely to watch families enjoying the music. Thank you for giving us a lovely afternoon.'

Audience member at Grange Moor Brass Band performance, Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury

'Playing outside is always a joyous experience for the band and our new players have not done this before.'

Shepley Band

CONNECTIONS & PRIDE

Music is universal, but it's also very much a product of its time and its place. KYOM23 connected the people of the district with its musical past, present and future – and invited them to celebrate the sounds of Kirklees, then and now.

KYOM23 recognised and championed projects that celebrate the region's rich musical heritage and talent. Among them:

- KYOM23 supported emerging festivals such as **Onwards** and **Yours to Keep**, both of which are presented in Huddersfield, as they looked to take shape, grow their ambitions and provide platforms for Kirklees musicians to share their talents.
- It also celebrated established events such as **Huddersfield Literature Festival**, **hcmf//** and **Deighton Carnival**, and contributed to the district-wide **WOVEN** textiles festival, enabling them to develop, diversify their work and reach new audiences.
- Funding from KYOM23 supported the presentation of this year's **Huddersfield Carnival** and **Sangam Mela**, using joint infrastructure and a site in Greenhead Park.
- KYOM23 commissioned and/or supported a wealth of events that brought a greater sense of pride to residents, from the return of **Bands in the Park** to award-winning one-offs such as **HERD**.

Other events took a more unusual but no less compelling approach to instilling pride in Kirklees residents:

- **Organic Doom** featured the magnificent Father Willis organ at Huddersfield Town Hall as it's surely never been heard before – with organist David Pipe accompanying Arð and Pantheist, two doom metal bands. Part of a year-long programme of events organised by the University of Huddersfield.
- **Beowulf**, created by Proper Job Theatre, retold the Anglo-Saxon epic with a Yorkshire accent as it roved through the streets of Huddersfield (see page 25).
- **Songs for the Season** invited musicians from across the district to write new winter songs inspired by Kirklees.

TOWNSOUNDS

The extensive TOWNSOUNDS programme, produced by Let's Go Yorkshire, also brought new context and awareness to the history of music in Kirklees. TOWNSOUNDS included an oral history podcast series, hosted by Kirklees musician Sam Hodgson, a photographic exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery and a street party celebrating Huddersfield's reggae sound system culture – raising awareness of the district's strong musical traditions among new audiences, connecting the people of Kirklees to their shared musical heritage and increasing pride in the region.

Cultures of Sound

The School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield produced a year-long place-based cultural programme – a celebratory showcase of research exhibitions, installations, performances, workshops, talks and discussions.



In Detail

HERD

HERD was one of the year's flagship events – a major participatory project created in collaboration with more than 350 Kirklees musicians, and experienced by more than 35,000 people.

HERD was designed to tell the layered tale of Kirklees' heritage, culture and historic textile industry, and to celebrate the enormous contribution made by sheep to Yorkshire and its people. Produced by Artichoke and devised and directed by composer Orlando Gough, HERD featured contributions from Kirklees musicians, sound artists, schools and community groups, including three bands and three choirs.

Over six magical days in July 2023, 23 larger-than-life sheep appeared in unexpected places across Kirklees – from Castle Hill and Deffer Wood to Oakwell Hall, Slaithwaite and Marsden. They then travelled on canal barges and vehicles through Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, Batley and Mirfield before a spectacular finale in Huddersfield.

These fabulous creatures ranged in size from one to four metres tall. Designed and created by artists Dave Young and Jane Gaffikin with heritage craft practitioners, they were made from a variety of textiles, willow, salvaged and recycled junk. And wherever they went, the sheep sang original compositions into the landscape, programmed by sound designers Sebastian Frost and John Del'Nero. Each sheep had its own unique sound and character, and each was named after a word or 'number' in the ancient sheep-counting song *Yan Tan Tethera*: Aina, Bumfitt, Covero, and so on.

The project concluded in St George's Square, Huddersfield, with performances by Kirklees artists and organisations such as Bryony Griffith & Alice Jones, Thabo Mkwanzani, Supriya Nagarajan, Ruby Wood, Hade Edge Brass Band, Huddersfield Choral Society, Huddersfield Community Gospel Choir, Shepley Singers, Skelmanthorpe Brass Band and others.

More than 35,000 people and participants experienced and enjoyed HERD across its free six-day programme, including around 15,000 attendees at the live finale – with more than 20% coming from outside Kirklees. Some 82% of those who engaged with HERD said that it had inspired their imaginations, with 83% adding that it had fostered pride in their area. Three-quarters of audience members said they were now more likely to take part in other heritage activities or visit other local heritage sites as a direct result of their experiences at HERD.



The event was covered extensively in the local, regional and national media, including The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, BBC Look North, ITV (News Calendar), BBC Radio 4 (Farming Today), Times Radio, BBC Radio Leeds, BBC All Yorkshire, Sangam Radio, Huddersfield Examiner and the Yorkshire Post. And in 2023, it surpassed strong competition to win the Event of the Year category at the Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards.

Key numbers

35,000+ people engaged with HERD

83% of local people said HERD made them feel prouder to be from Kirklees

69% said they felt more connected to the stories of Kirklees and its people

‘I think HERD resonated with audiences because the actual physical artwork was superb and reflected ideas that came from the communities, which made it feel very inclusive. The people that were involved had a real sense of ownership.’

Jaydev Mistry
Sound artist on HERD



‘The music was spectacular, and it introduced me to community groups that I had never thought of joining before. It brought people of different ages, cultures, areas and interests together to celebrate our town. Thank you for giving me back the pride in our community!’

**Audience member
HERD**

‘The finale was wonderful to see – so many people there and loads of different styles and cultures all equally involved. Brilliant and very well thought-out.’

**Audience member
HERD**

‘The impact of the project within our creative community has been amazing. The collaborations that formed have developed and flourished. It’s wonderful to see musicians and artists sharing and creating and continuing to have conversations about future work and projects.’

Ian Medley
Paradigm Creative, which delivered film content for HERD

PLACEMAKING

KYOM23 aimed to highlight the important social and economic role played by music in Kirklees – championing the district as a positive place to live, work, visit and make music.

Kirklees was in the regional and national spotlight during 2023. Major events, activities and productions such as **HERD** (see page 21), a **BBC Prom** at Dewsbury Town Hall, **Organic Doom** at Huddersfield Town Hall and **Beowulf** (see page 25) drew the attention of the UK media, with dedicated articles in national news outlets reaching millions of people around the globe.

At the same time, KYOM23 made strong connections with people on a local level. Activities and events took place right across the district, reaching far beyond the typical urban centres for culture. From **HERD**, which celebrated rural life in Kirklees, to **Bands in the Park** (see page 19), a glorious series of free concerts in public spaces and bandstands that paid homage to the district's musical heritage, KYOM23 didn't just invite people to come and find music in Kirklees – it brought music to people where they live and work.

Building audiences

Audience survey data suggests that around 38% of people who attended the year's major events hailed from outside the district, with many visiting Kirklees for the very first time. In a survey carried out among attendees at **HERD**, three-quarters of visitors said their experience had made them more likely to return to the district in the future.

At the same time, district-wide programming encouraged Kirklees residents to explore different places and venues across the district, spotlighting culture and heritage sites including museums, galleries, town halls and independent music venues. In the survey of audience members at **HERD**, for instance, 22% of respondents told us they had visited somewhere in Kirklees for the first time.

Via digital channels, KYOM23 reached music fans in 138 different countries worldwide, showcasing Kirklees as a place where music runs deep through its communities.

Key numbers

71% of audience members had a new musical experience at KYOM23

40% visited a venue that was new to them during KYOM23

26% travelled to a Kirklees place or area they'd never previously visited

37% learned new things about Kirklees and/or its musical heritage

45% met people they otherwise wouldn't have met



In Detail

Beowulf

One of the highlights of KYOM23 took place in November 2023, when Huddersfield hosted an extraordinary immersive reimagining of an epic Anglo-Saxon story – playing to sell-out audiences, gaining substantial media coverage and winning rave reviews.

Proper Job Theatre’s spectacular production of Beowulf took over the centre of Huddersfield for four consecutive nights in November 2023. Created especially for KYOM23, this site-specific show was based on the oldest known English poem – adapted by five Yorkshire-based poets (Franc Chamberlain, Ian McMillan, Chris O’Connor, Michelle Scally Clarke and Joel Simmy), working with composers Leighton Jones, Supriya Nagarajan and Howard Jacobs, designer Lara Booth, and directors James Beale and Chloë Whitehead.

The production began each night with a Viking procession along the streets of Huddersfield, starting at the Byram Arcade and travelling to historic St Peter’s Church – which was sold out for all six performances. The performers included 120 Kirklees residents, who performed in a large community choir and as members of the cast.

Beowulf procession through the streets of Huddersfield.
Photo by Studio Bokehgo

Beowulf won nationwide media coverage, not least with a sizeable feature in The Guardian that previewed the show ahead of its weekend performances. The press coverage further boosted the profile of KYOM23 – and, indeed, of the wider Kirklees creative scene and cultural ecology.

The production also enthralled members of the audience – two-thirds of whom had never visited St Peter’s Church, despite it being located in the centre of the town. For one in five audience members, Beowulf was their first ever experience of an outdoor or site-specific theatrical production.

99% of Beowulf audience members agreed that it was both enjoyable and inclusive

98% said they would come to something like this again

89% said that Beowulf showed them that there was more to the Kirklees creative sector than they had previously thought

82% said that it encouraged them to see local places in a new way

73% said that it made them more likely to return to Huddersfield and/or Kirklees in the future

The average spend per person was estimated at nearly £50, demonstrating the economic value of major cultural events.



‘Having the start of the performance happening around the audience was a fabulous way to start what was an immersive experience. We were involved from the first minute. Being so close to the cast in the church made us feel involved. Thoroughly enjoyed the whole thing. More of the same please.’

Audience member
Beowulf

‘It really felt like you were in the moment – fantastic performance, staging, music and lighting.’

Audience member
Beowulf

‘To anybody that saw it, it showed what’s possible and what Huddersfield and Kirklees is capable of.’

Moira Wade
Proper Job & community choir member

‘It was an experience that I’ll never forget. I enjoyed every minute of it.’

Heather Pollard
Community choir member

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Health and wellbeing was central to KYOM23, which celebrated the transformative power that music can have on mental and physical health.

Across the year, a multitude of programmes explored and illustrated how music can bring joy, comfort, fun, energy and movement; how it can build and enhance social cohesion and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness; and how it can foster self-expression and a sense of connection. The activities helped people to develop new skills, gain confidence and forge long-lasting social connections, showing the pivotal role music can play in the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

More than 3,000 people took part in and directly benefited from health & wellbeing projects, including many from marginalised, vulnerable or under-represented communities most likely to experience health inequalities.

The programme was a finalist in the inaugural Northern Music Awards, in the Music and Culture for Wellbeing strand.

‘It has been really good for my mental health. Learning something new takes my mind off everything, and it’s been very enjoyable.’

Library of Sounds participant

‘Song Geet gave her the confidence to take a major new step – to enrol herself onto an Access to Higher Education Diploma Level 3 in Health Sciences.’

Song-Geet Choir Leader

Creative Minds

Creative Minds, an award-winning charity hosted by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT), delivered 16 music-themed projects in partnership with local, not-for-profit organisations. Co-funded by Creative Minds with KYOM23, Locala Health & Wellbeing and SWYPFT. Projects and activities included:

- **CREATE**, a programme of musical activities for young people with learning difficulties/disabilities run by Northorpe Hall Child & Family Trust in Mirfield.
- **Cross Cultural Music**, group music sessions to improve wellbeing hosted by Arts for Health CIC.
- **Dance and Sing**, movement-to-music workshops presented by Downs & Special Friends for people with learning disabilities and additional needs and their families.
- **Daytimers**, a community theatre and dance project by Chol Theatre, inspired by the stories of young people in Huddersfield who attended Calisto’s Club to listen to a fusion of bhangra, R&B, garage and hip-hop.
- **Djembe Drum Workshops**, presented by The Children’s Art School at MakerWorld in Huddersfield and at other pop-up events across Kirklees.
- **Dream Weavers**, a new music and performance project for children and young people with disabilities created by Slaithwaite-based Shabang Inclusive Learning.
- **Good Mornin’ Blues**, a six-week course and performance in blues music hosted by mental health charity S2R Support to Recovery.
- **Holme Valley Music Makers**, which offered opportunities for young people aged 18–25 to train in music event production and work at Holmfirth Arts Festival.
- **Kirklees Accords**, singing workshops for young people with special education needs and disabilities from Yorkshire Association for Music & Special Educational Needs (YAMSEN).
- **Mission Musicians**, a year-long music project with monthly music sessions and music-making programmes at Huddersfield Mission.

- **Raising Aspirations Through Music Production**, a Yorkshire Youth & Music initiative giving young people the opportunity to express themselves through music.
- **Sing and Breathe Kirklees**, sessions with a specialist singing tutor for people with lung-health and respiratory conditions hosted by Shared Harmonies CIC.
- **Song-Geet**, a new South Asian women's choir based at Lawrence Batley Theatre – where it made its performance debut in August 2023 as part of Rasm-e-Milan.
- **Sound Circles** and **Sound Global, Sing Global**, musical improvisation and practice sessions hosted by The Watershed and Be More Outdoors.
- **Aspire Voices** and **Mukirka**, (see page 30).

Inspired by KYOM23, Creative Minds also delivered a series of music-themed workshops with patients and service users at Calderdale & Kirklees Recovery & Wellbeing College, Calderdale Royal Hospital, Dewsbury & District Hospital and Enfield Down, as well as for Barnardo's Young Carers.

KYOM23 support helped people to create new sounds, learn about music, dance to new routines and gain skills. Funding has paid for instruments and equipment that will allow individual organisations to carry on the music. Many of the projects are set to continue in some way in future years.

'The funding from Kirklees Year of Music 2023 gave the opportunity for young people with SEND to participate in a large-scale choir and event. It gave staff the opportunity to see how their pupils respond in an environment that they were not used to. And it gave everyone the opportunity to participate in a high-quality musical experience with pupils from other schools.'

YAMSEN

Delivery partner, Kirklees Accords

hoot creative arts

hoot creative arts, a Huddersfield-based arts and mental health charity, focused on music as a therapeutic activity for all, and acted as a strategic delivery partner for KYOM23's Health & Wellbeing strand. Their KYOM23 programmes took place regularly throughout the year in a range of settings, including libraries, community centres and hoot's base in Huddersfield. The programme reached nearly 716 people through activities including:

- Monthly **Speak Our Music** events, providing musician-led support for those working in or interested in how Music affects health in the creative sector. Musicians with lived experience of illness facilitated the sessions, which included learning about sound therapy, lyric writing, and using Sufi and traditional Hindustani music to relax.
- **A special session, with Jane Willis, on Musicians' self-care as part of the Kirklees Music Ecosystem** in partnership with Music Cities Events. The live session was accompanied by a toolkit and resource.
- Hosted a series of **After Party engagement sessions** enabling those with learning disabilities to develop skills in DJing and producing parties, the group created props for the Dark Horse theatre's production of After Party #Unit21 and had a chance to try their hand at DJing on the decks at the event.
- The **Library of Sounds project**, focused on informal music making sessions for the community. The programme ran in every Kirklees Library through to Spring 2024.
- **Rhythm of Life podcast and toolkit project** – Podcast training, devising and recording with communities, traditionally not able to take part in mainstream events due to disabilities or access needs. The podcast episodes will be released from March to June 2024
- **HERD**, hoot worked with 30 participants who are not usually able to access outdoor events or activities, to create soundscapes for the KYOM23 flagship project HERD. This was the first time that any of the participants had engaged in a large outdoor musical event.
- **Resources - hoot compiled a toolkit of links to national and local resources** that focus on music and health, which will remain accessible after KYOM23.



After Party hosted by hoot creative arts. Photo by Studio Bokehgo



In Detail

Mukirka: A Musical Celebration

Aspire Voices

Two of the 16 music-themed projects delivered as part of Creative Minds' work showcased the diversity and power of KYOM23's Health & Wellbeing programme.

Mukirka: A Musical Celebration

Mukirka is a group of professional and amateur musicians with a passion for world music. For KYOM23's Health & Wellbeing programme, the group presented more than 20 free music workshops and rehearsals for children and adults across Kirklees, including members of the Huddersfield Ukrainian Club and refugees recently arrived from Ukraine.

Mukirka held special celebratory public performances at Marsden Mechanics Hall and Lindley Liberal Club, which attracted total audiences of around 250 people. The free concerts included material from Irish, English, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Chinese cultures, and featured local groups including the Ukrainian Community Choir, the Hanson Music Ensemble and Tanz Tanz. Donation buckets raised funds for humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

A total of 95 musicians and dancers took part in the workshops. A survey showed that 80% said they enjoyed the musical activities, while 60% said they gained friendships, new hobbies and new skills. Many of the workshop participants then performed at the concert – with 100% of performers saying they enjoyed the experience and 72% saying they had formed new creative connections. Mukirka continues to meet regularly and plans more events, supported by Creative Minds.

'I loved it with all of my heart.'

Ulia Lord

Singer and Ukrainian refugee



Aspire Voices

Aspire Creating Communities is a Kirklees charity that provides safe spaces for vulnerable adults aged over 55. For KYOM23, it invited its seven community groups to three singing sessions (21 sessions in total), leading up to a joint community celebration in July.

Aspire Voices was the first time that many of the 137 workshop participants had experienced singing 'for fun'. Before the first session with each group, the practitioner invited them to decide whether there would be a theme to their chosen programme and what they would like to sing. The sessions themselves included physical and breathing exercises, which served as warm-up activities while also encouraging good health.

The Aspire Voices project leads noted participants grew in confidence as they felt able to engage with singing. People took lasting skills from the sessions: many people, including volunteers, reported using breathing skills to help improve lung health, mitigate anxiety and improve their energy levels. Six people went on to join Sing and Breathe, a singing for lung health project, which also received funding from KYOM23. Aspire now hopes to make singing a part of its regular programme of activities.

'Today, I had an awful day, the worst in a long time, and I wasn't sure how I would feel singing, but it's raised my mood and I've loved it and feel so much better now. Thank you.'

Aspire Voices participant

Key numbers

100% of Mukirka performers enjoyed the experience

137 adults took part in Aspire Voices

16 projects presented by Creative Minds for KYOM23

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

KYOM23 put young people in the district at the front and centre of the programme – developing, presenting and promoting opportunities for them to experience making, playing and listening to music.

More than 10,000 children aged 0–16 from early years foundation stage (EYFS) education settings, primary schools and secondary schools across Kirklees engaged with the learning strand of KYOM23. The programme was designed and led by **Shape North**, a creative education consultancy, and was delivered in collaboration with Kirklees Council Learning Services and a whole range of other partners, including Musica Kirklees, a wealth of local musicians and organisations, University of Huddersfield, EVOKE, amongst many – all of whom worked to promote arts and creativity for young people.

Opportunities for all

The programme created opportunities for music to be part of the life of every child in Kirklees, and invited children to share in the joy of music through activities presented by professional musicians.

Children experienced music through live performances held both in schools and in external music venues – which many children were visiting for the very first time. The programme brought tangible benefits to the thousands of children who engaged with it. And at the same time, musicians themselves enjoyed direct benefits from helping to deliver the programme: cultivating new and younger audiences for their work, honing facilitation skills, and securing further work in schools and educational settings.

KYOM23 also provided opportunities for young people to learn more about the music industry through practical workshops and extra-curricular activities. Highlights included **Future Producer**, a programme in which more than 330 Key Stage 3 pupils (aged 11–14) many with limited musical experience took part in six weeks of workshops to learn about electronic music production techniques and jobs and careers in the sector.

Educators have also reaped the benefit of KYOM23. Some 300 teaching professionals have accessed a variety of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, raising awareness and understanding of how music can be used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. This included training for EYFS practitioners around the **Pocketful of Rhymes** resources (see below), guidance on how to incorporate music and creative practice into primary school settings, and support on the use of technology in Key Stage 2 music lessons.



Organ Extravaganza workshops as part of hcmf//. Photos by Alex Beldea
Learning through Music at the University of Huddersfield. Photo by Hylton Photography

A Summer Season on Music

More than 4,500 schoolchildren across Kirklees, from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, ages 0–4) to Key Stage 4 (KS4, ages 14–16), enjoyed a summer term of live performances and music-making inspired by June’s Make Music Day, the world’s largest DIY festival of music. Schools welcomed musicians and groups from a wide variety of genres, from brass bands to bhangra, who performed for schoolchildren and introduced them to music from around the world.

In total

18 schools took part

14 music acts

4,500+ schoolchildren engaged

100% of teachers said that it encouraged schoolchildren to be creative – and that the children enjoyed taking part

89% said it helped children feel more confident to try new things and raised their aspirations

78% said it had made children more aware of Kirklees’ musical heritage

Leaving a legacy

Other highlights of the programme included:

- More than 1,800 young people took part in ‘CPR to Music’ workshops at the University of Huddersfield and in schools. Held in partnership with Yorkshire Ambulance Service, the workshops used the rhythms of music to teach life-saving skills.
- Some 140 children from 5 Kirklees primary schools came together to explore graphic score production with **Shape North**. Huddersfield’s ‘edges’ supported the interplay of children’s art, music composition and performance, resulting in an event at Huddersfield Town Hall that introduced a new generation to **hcmf//**, the UK’s largest international festival of new and experimental music.

A bank of Kirklees-specific music learning resources has been developed as a legacy of KYOM23, extending the benefits of music learning and development into future years.

Among these resources is **A Pocketful of Rhymes**, a new suite of films and resources devised for early years development to build learning and linguistic skills through musicality. Featuring Kirklees performers and filmed in locations such as Dewsbury and Huddersfield town centres, Beaumont and Crow Nest Parks, Castle Hill, Colne Valley Museum, Emley and Meltham, the films are available online via the Music in Kirklees and Kirklees Libraries websites, where they have already been viewed over 72,000 times. In addition, a series of place-based learning resources, which celebrate the musical heritage of Kirklees has been developed to accompany the **TOWNSOUNDS** podcast series - Key Stage One to Key Stage Four.





In Detail

The Magic Flute

One of the highlights of the learning programme took place at Huddersfield Town Hall in December 2023, when 1,000 children took part in a performance of Mozart's The Magic Flute. The event was held in partnership with the Royal Opera House as part of its Create & Sing programme, and featured artists from the Royal Opera House alongside Musica Kirklees' 80-piece orchestra.

The Royal Opera House's Create & Sing is a creative engagement programme designed to introduce schoolchildren to the world of dramatic singing. The programme typically provides schools and teachers with the resources to introduce their pupils to singing and opera in the classroom, with an online performance – but for KYOM23, singers and musicians from the Royal Opera House travelled to Huddersfield for an unforgettable day of music-making with 1,000 schoolchildren from across Kirklees.

Create & Sing reached young people from some of the district's most deprived communities, giving many of them their first ever experience of opera. In doing so, it increased cultural capital, introduced opera to new audiences and raised aspirations among pupils.



‘Most children had not heard opera before and were initially daunted by the songs. [But] to hear a live orchestra really enthused the children. Singing allowed those normally affected by anxiety to be completely freed of their inhibitions and taken away by the music – something that can only be achieved [in] a large group. Allowing children to shine like this outside of an “academic” lesson boosts their self-esteem and contributes to increased confidence in class, sense of identity – and cohesion of the whole class and school team.’

Participant school
The Magic Flute

‘Many of our children don’t get opportunities like this outside of school. Most of our families can’t afford to pay for music/ singing lessons for their children, so opportunities within school are vital. It’s been a highlight of many children’s years!’

Participant school
The Magic Flute

YOUNG PEOPLE & CAREERS

A number of KYOM23 programmes were designed to harness the power of music to help shape the future lives and careers of young people in the district.

Whether as performer or producer, DJ or artist manager, it has long been a huge challenge for young people to gain a foothold in the music industry. KYOM23 aimed to address this with several programmes that helped young people to find their way in the music industry – such as **Volume UP!**, an eight-week creative course for musicians aged 16–25 that will continue in 2024.

Music of Tomorrow

Yorkshire Youth & Music (YYM) delivered this series of free activities for more than 50 young people aged 16–24, of whom around half were otherwise not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The sessions offered participants the chance to develop skills in music production, DJing, live performance and songwriting. Led by music industry professionals based in Kirklees, the programme enabled participants to take advantage of state-of-the-art studio facilities at the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees College, and to perform at music venues such as Small Seeds in Huddersfield and Dewsbury Town Hall.

The programme has had a positive effect on the confidence and aspirations of those who took part. Some have successfully re-engaged with mainstream education and/or training, while others have secured funding for music-related projects or found employment within the local music sector.

Since the end of 2023, 26 Music of Tomorrow drop-in sessions have been held at Kirklees college sites including Brunell, The Waterfront, Engineering and Springfield Sixth Form Centre in Dewsbury, allowing over 100 more young people to share their favourite tunes whilst trying their hand at DJing.

Participants collaborated and experimented with a wide range of musical genres from metal to dub-step, learning from each other. They continue to meet up to make music and work together at Safe Space Studio, YY&M's new space in central Huddersfield.

'Now I know that these things are possible and what we make can actually sound good, I want to get my head right and release something professionally... Hopefully, that will be a leap start for my career.'

Participant
Music of Tomorrow



Music of Tomorrow programme participants. Images courtesy of Yorkshire Youth & Music

Unlimited Micro-Commissions

Unlimited, a disabled-led arts commissioning organisation, and KYOM23 teamed up to invite disabled artists and organisations in Kirklees to explore, experiment and develop their music-led practice. Awards of £1,800 were available to help participants at any stage of their careers to research and develop music-led creative ideas, such as performances, recordings and sound installations. Funds could be spent on rehearsal space, lessons, studio sessions, equipment, instruments, other artists' time, travel and training.

Six artists were awarded Unlimited micro-commissions:

- **Ding Frisby** Guitarist and drag king
- **Sean Harrington** Singer/songwriter
- **DJ Soca Haze** Parang/soca music artist
- **Nat Sharp** Musician and performer
- **Joshua Smith** DJ and musician
- **Simon Walker** Singer and musician

Unlimited Micro-Commissions supported disabled artists to continue their personal and professional development, enabling them to overcome financial barriers and seek out new opportunities to record, release and perform their music. Artists reported using the funding to purchase specialist equipment, one-to-one tuition, licensing or studio time, or a combination of all these things.

In total:

- All six artists said the funding helped them feel more creative
- Five said the funding helped to improve or develop their creative practice
- Four said it helped them learn new skills
- Four said it helped them gain confidence
- Four said it made them feel more able to overcome future challenges

'Receiving this award has restored my passion and opportunities to be involved in the music industry and will allow me to reach levels previously thought out of my reach.'

Joshua Smith

Unlimited Micro-Commission recipient

'I really developed as a songwriter, musician and performer thanks to this opportunity and greatly appreciate being given the chance to do so by this scheme.'

Sean Harrington

Unlimited Micro-Commission recipient





In Detail

Future Creative

This initiative offered creative volunteering opportunities to young people aged 16–24 from diverse and/or disadvantaged backgrounds – and in the process, forged new alliances within Kirklees’ creative and voluntary sectors.

Future Creative was a volunteering programme delivered by Third Sector Leaders Kirklees (TSL Kirklees) and managed by Lawrence Batley Theatre Trust, funded by the Volunteering Futures programme, which was managed by Arts Council England and funded by DCMS through National Lottery Project Grants. The initial project ran for 24 months up until March 2024. KYOM23 was a catalyst for the programme, and many of its events were beneficiaries of the scheme.

Some 75 young people were engaged as Future Creative volunteers, and a further 109 volunteered through partner projects supported as part of the programme. Innovative approaches to engaging young people in flexible, event-based volunteering were tested at 85 events across Kirklees, supported by the volunteers. Those involved enjoyed meeting musicians, artists and other creative professionals involved in KYOM23 and other cultural events, and embraced opportunities to learn about the technical aspects of delivering events

The Future Creative programme enabled the expansion of the volunteering network supporting the creative sector in Kirklees, as well as the development of good practice in relation to delivering inclusive, event-based volunteering.

The programme has also opened opportunities for participants, some of whom have progressed to jobs, apprenticeships, internships, skills bootcamps and regular volunteering. Feedback highlighted the positive health and wellbeing impacts of volunteering in a supportive environment, to grow confidence and build connections.

A new volunteering programme named Creative Steps, under the leadership of TSL Kirklees and with additional funding from the UK Government’s PACE (Participation in the Arts and Creative Economy) programme, will continue the work started by Future Creative until 2025.

Images courtesy of Future Creative



‘I’ve been doing a lot of work with local filmmakers and creative types, and I’ve learned a lot about what equipment they use and how to use it, their techniques and their methods. It’s a head start that I think will help a lot with going into the media industry, which I plan to do.’

Participant
Future Creative

‘When I was struggling with my mental health, I had to take time off work – but when I volunteered, it allowed me to get back into work again. Volunteering gave me the confidence and put me in the right state of mind to go back into work.’

Participant
Future Creative

‘Volunteering has definitely helped me to be more open, be more myself. It has given me confidence to do things that I just would never have considered before.’

Participant
Future Creative

MUSIC INDUSTRY

KYOM23 worked with a range of local, national and international stakeholders to support those working across the music industry in the district – and to help those looking to gain a foothold in the music business.

The Fifth Sector, a creative consultancy, estimated in 2022 that the total gross value added (GVA) of music in Kirklees was around £36 million – around 20% of the total financial value of the creative industries in the region.

Despite the importance of music to the local creative economy, Kirklees had previously offered little by way of formal and organised support specifically to those who worked within the music industry, or who aspired to start careers within it. There was no mechanism to dispense reliable music industry-standard advice and information to those looking for guidance. Although there is a Creative Industry support network in Kirklees, there wasn't a specific, coordinated music support network for individuals and organisations who were offering or seeking informal support, and no means for them to benefit from peer-to-peer learning opportunities or collaborations with other organisations.

Consultation and dialogue with the Kirklees music industry ahead of KYOM23 identified skills development, business support, peer-to-peer networking and learning as key support needs. Addressing these gaps would support economic growth, enable those working in the music sector to become more resilient, ensure more sustainable career paths, and build greater productivity that would help Kirklees to be more competitive on regional, national and international platforms.

Partnerships and collaborations

To help meet the needs identified in our research, a KYOM23 Music Industry Coordinator was employed to work with regional, national and international music industry professionals and agencies to develop and deliver a support offer for both emerging and established artists and businesses in the Kirklees music industry.

To add national and global context to the local agenda in Kirklees, KYOM23 also worked in partnership with two major international agencies to deliver services:

- **Music Cities Network**, a network of international cities that is dedicated to improving communication and collaboration between music cities; and
- **Music Cities Events**, which organises international conferences on the topic of music cities, music policy and music tourism.

Other national organisations that contributed to seminars and workshops, both in person and online, included **PRS for Music**, the music rights management organisation; the **Musicians Union**, representing working musicians in the UK; **Music Local**, which develops place-based music support systems and infrastructures; and **Help Musicians**, the leading UK charity for musicians of all genres.

These collaborations helped to support the growth of the Kirklees music sector: supporting musicians and the music industry by providing advice and advocacy; sharing research and knowledge, connecting networks by adding national context to the local agenda; and offering and delivering services to our audiences, stakeholder and networks.

KYOM23's music industry support programme ultimately included:

- **Networking and partnership development:** Encouraging a stronger music ecosystem by forging stronger links between businesses, artists, venues and support providers.
- **Workshops and seminars:** Skills and knowledge development delivered by specialist regional and national organisations.
- **Vocational programmes and mentoring:** Ensuring that those who aspire to develop careers in the music sector are better equipped to enter the marketplace.
- **Showcasing and live music events:** Giving artists exposure to new audiences and markets, supporting the time economy and music tourism.
- **Digital engagement:** Working with international music communities to learn, network and raise awareness of local and global opportunities.

Looking to the future

The success of the first Platform event during KYOM23 has inspired a fresh approach for Platform 2, which will offer a series of **Gigging 101** workshops, and the chance to participate in a professional live video shoot. The programme will enable Kirklees artists to hone their stagecraft, marketing and business skills and takes place in 2024.

Key numbers

554 businesses engaged across the programme

40 jobs safeguarded through KYOM23 support

17 jobs created through vocational training



Music Cities Forum. Photo by Alex Beldea



In Detail

Platform

KYOM23 worked with Music Cities Events on this major event, which gave Kirklees artists a potentially career-changing opportunity to be seen and heard by industry professionals at a special live showcase.

Platform launched in January 2023 with an open call for artists, who were invited to apply online. Eight local acts were then chosen to perform at a live showcase, which took place in April 2023 as part of a two-day programme of live music and industry panel seminars at the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield:

- **Lucas Bernard**, a singer-songwriter;
- **Boxteles**, a four-piece indie band;
- **Don Gonzo**, psychedelic rockers;
- **Here's the Steeple**, aka folk-influenced singer Dan Walters;
- **Klonk**, an eight-piece klezmer/funk collective;
- **Knuckle**, a garage blues trio;
- **Isaac Malibu**, an R&B act; and
- **Lauren Mikki**, a singer-songwriter.

Each act performed a short set in front of a live audience of fans and music industry representatives, and their sets were also streamed to a network of international buyers via the Kirklees Music Ecosystems Network.

Seven of the eight acts took advantage of the opportunity to meet international buyers – and several acts were offered opportunities to perform at the prestigious South by Southwest (SXSW) music conference in Austin, Texas; Supercrawl, an annual showcase in Hamilton, Canada that promotes emerging artists; and the Jazz & Rhythms Festival in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Mexico.

The Kirklees Music Ecosystems Network continues to provide a forum for Kirklees-based musicians to connect with one another and the wider industry. The Network regularly presents webinars and workshops, with previous events available to Network members via a free video library.

The success of the first Platform event during KYOM23 has inspired a fresh approach for Platform 2, which will take place in 2024.



Images clockwise, from top left: Klonk, Issac Malibu, Lauren Mikki and Lucas Bernard performing at Platform.
Photos by Abbie Jennings





Thabo Mkwanzani performing at the HERD finale. Photo by Matthew Andrews

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & REACH

From the promotion of concerts and live events to the prominence of local music businesses, Kirklees Year of Music 2023 led to a step-change in the visibility of music in the region.

A Pollinator consultation with the music sector in Kirklees, held ahead of Kirklees Year of Music in 2022, highlighted marketing and communications as a key area where the local music industry felt it needed support.

Two major Kirklees Council initiatives were designed to meet these needs:

- **Greater digital presence:** The creation of a dedicated 'Music in Kirklees' website (musicinkirklees.co.uk), email newsletter and social media channels, all of which were collectively established to complement the existing Creative Kirklees channels.
- **External consultants:** The appointment of an external marketing and communications team - The Cogency, working with Kallaway PR - to increase profile, media coverage and audiences for KYOM23, Kirklees Council. Both companies have extensive experience in national cultural marketing and communications campaigns.

The overall aims were to:

- attract audiences, locally, regionally and nationally;
- drive significant media coverage;
- make visible the wealth of music activity taking place in Kirklees; and
- build a stronger and longer-lasting narrative for music in Kirklees through the promotion of Year of Music events and activities.

The KYOM23 marketing and communications campaign sought to grow the existing Music in Kirklees channels by encouraging the local music sector to engage with it - showcasing their events and activities through the website; and driving audiences to the channels through a combination of paid spend, partnership marketing, media coverage and organic content.

The Music in Kirklees website and social media channels remain active today, acting as a one-stop place for bands, promoters, venues and organisations to promote their activity - and creating the foundations for the future marketing and communications of music in Kirklees in 2024 and beyond.



Photo by Abbie Jennings

Key numbers



musicinkirklees.co.uk

34,045 website users

52,721 website sessions

1,058 events listed in



Social media

15.5m impressions

145,710 engagements

35,275 link clicks across all channels



Press

137 articles 35m

total reach

'We saw the best results in terms of national press coverage and audiences in our history during KYOM23 – from early support from The Cogency into our marketing strategy to secure ACE funding, from significant national press coverage in The Guardian and The Times, to the success of the local marketing campaign that meant the production sold out 10 days in advance. The impetus continued to grow during the run, in part due to content captured as part of the KYOM23 campaign – and the audience for the free elements of the production more than doubled over the course of the run. The content will be valuable in the future to demonstrate the quality and value of our work – and the support of the KYOM23 marketing and PR campaign meant it was shared by as many people as possible.'

Chloë Whitehead

Proper Job Theatre – creators of Beowulf

ADDING VALUE

From broadening cultural engagement to delivering tangible economic impact, Kirklees Year of Music 2023 brought benefits to the district far beyond the music sector.

KYOM23 showcased Kirklees as a place where anyone and everyone can experience world-class music, celebrating the region's rich musical heritage while promoting the growth of new music across the district. But it did more than that – KYOM23 also provided the region and its citizens with additional benefits and value far beyond the musical scope of its programme.

Some examples include:

Growing and enhancing existing events

- **Kirklees Pride** and the **Huddersfield Christmas Lights Switch-On** were just two of the existing events that were expanded and augmented by KYOM23, each featuring a live music stage with Kirklees performers. The learnings from the success of those events will carry forward into 2024 and beyond.
- **WOVEN** in Kirklees, the biennial celebration of textiles in Kirklees, worked in partnership with KYOM23 to augment its programming – particularly through STRUT, a free one-day festival in Dewsbury that featured established and emerging bands from Kirklees plus sets from Huddersfield DJ Beth Holloway.
- **Huddersfield Carnival** in 2023 saw the parade return to the streets of Huddersfield for the first time since 2018 – followed by a day of music, stalls and family fun in Greenhead Park delivered in partnership with Kirklees Council as part of KYOM23.
- **Huddersfield Literature Festival** took the theme of 'Music' for KYOM23, and featured a special talk and listening party with writer John Aizlewood on the theme of his book about Radiohead, rap workshops with champion rapper Rob Bradley, and live music from soul legend Omar.

- **Sangam Mela** returned to Greenhead Park as part of KYOM23 – a major event on the local calendar celebrating South Asian music, culture and food, sharing infrastructure with Huddersfield Carnival.
- **Taking the Lead** (see page 50) in collaboration with KYOM23 delivered hundreds of music-focused events, including a Live Cinema Weekender at Dewsbury Town Hall featuring the music of Anna Meredith and a live audio-visual performance by DJ Yoda, plus a special Dewsbury edition of the successful music and spoken word event Tongue Fu.

Increasing tourism and awareness of Kirklees

Events such as **HERD** (see page 21) and **Beowulf** (see page 25) did much more than position music at the heart of cultural life in the district. Both events brought Kirklees a share of the local and national cultural spotlight, bringing the district to the attention of some audience members for the first time.

HERD drew over 35,000 people, more than 20% of whom hailed from outside Kirklees. Some 80% of attendees stated that the project had inspired their imaginations and increased their pride in the area. HERD also brought an economic boost to the region, with audiences spending more than £30 per person on food and drink, merchandise, travel and other local attractions. It went on to win Event of the Year in the Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards 2023.

Beowulf, too, inspired audience members to see Kirklees in a new light. Some 83% of audience members said it encouraged them to see local places in a new way, while 74% said it increased their interest in local history and heritage – and 72% of visitors indicated that it had made them more likely to return to Huddersfield and/or Kirklees in the future. The average spend per person was estimated at nearly £50, further demonstrating the economic benefits of cultural events.



Laura van der Heijden performing at BBC Proms Dewsbury. Photo by Justin Slee

Taking the Lead

KYOM23 contributed to activity in Dewsbury through Taking the Lead, a cultural initiative that forms part of the Dewsbury Town Investment Plan.

Taking the Lead was established to celebrate Dewsbury's rich cultural heritage through a programme of activities and events. A vital part of the programme was for Dewsbury to take a central role within KYOM23 – including an engagement programme in schools and communities; working in partnership with venues, music promoters and musicians; commissioning new cultural work and the creation of music events in a range of indoor and outdoor settings around the town centre.

All this activity resulted in over 400 days of paid work for artists and creative businesses in Dewsbury, spanning 240 workshops, 21 talks, 105 performances and 6 films showings and exhibitions – reaching over 20,000 beneficiaries aged two to 92.

Taking the Lead was a significant piece of work which has contributed to all strands of the Year of Music programme through workshops, performance and events.

‘Kirklees Year of Music 2023 was a catalyst for Kirklees Museums & Galleries Service to upscale our events programme and become more ambitious. We initiated a new internal partnership with the Council’s Events team to bring back the much-loved Yorkshire Day event at Oakwell Hall bigger and better than before – and Live Room Cleckheaton, which delivers its annual Livefields Festival at Oakwell, expanded to a second day.

‘Unit 7, our temporary town centre art gallery space in Huddersfield, hosted TOWNSOUNDS: Celebrating the Diverse Musical Heritage of Kirklees, an exhibition that attracted over 1,700 visitors, and we also partnered with Creative Minds to host a performance event at Tolson Museum. The Bands in the Park programme helped support the Friends of Tolson and Ravensknowle to deliver their annual programme of music in the Heritage Memorial Garden – and Kirklees Year of Music gave us a reason to shine the spotlight on our permanent Batley Variety Club exhibition at Bagshaw Museum.’

Ralph Parmar
Museums Operations Manager
Kirklees Museums & Galleries



DJ Yoda performing at Live Cinema Weekender in Dewsbury Town Hall. Photo by Studio Bokehgo

LEGACY

Kirklees Year of Music 2023 (KYOM23) leaves the Kirklees music sector in better shape than it found it, with renewed confidence and greater visibility – but work remains to ensure that music continues to play a vital role in Kirklees life, education and culture.

Discussing and determining the legacy of any major event or project is a challenge. Always open to debate, the idea of legacy may be received as a gift or perceived as a consequence, positive or otherwise. The legacy of any event can be understood in countless ways, depending on the individual, and any event of this scale and breadth will ultimately leave multiple legacies on different communities across a region.

More than that, though, are the related issues of time and distance. This Impact Report was written in the first few months of 2024, when the last remaining chords and notes were still hanging in the air. The true legacy or legacies of KYOM23 will ultimately only become apparent with greater perspective in the years to come.

Working together

Perhaps the most visible legacies left by KYOM23, at least in early 2024, were the successful partnerships it built within the district.

The introduction to this Impact Report outlines how KYOM23 developed in a much more organic way than was originally envisaged. The programme that eventually launched in January 2023 was less focused on high-profile new events and commissions, and instead placed a far greater emphasis on celebrating, supporting and growing the existing musical ecology of Kirklees.

Delivering an event in such a way necessitates partnership, and there's no doubt that KYOM23 has helped to shape a wealth of new collaborations and relationships across the district. Eight working groups were formed during the planning of KYOM23, bringing together key figures working in everything from festivals to music education. The relationships forged during those planning stages had a tangible benefit on the success of the reshaped KYOM23 programme – both on how it was envisaged and how it was delivered.

This process of joint working and delivery defined the character of KYOM23 in many ways. The challenge now, eminently achievable, is to ensure the benefits of working together in this way are neither lost nor forgotten, as collaboration remains key to unlocking the opportunities presented by KYOM23.



Special schools performance of *The Magic Flute* with performers from the Royal Opera House and Musica Kirklees Orchestra. Photo by Studio Bokehgo

Future generations

KYOM23 placed children and young people at the centre of the programme. The Learning & Young People strand of programme was among the broadest and most visible – more than 10,000 children aged 0–16 from early years foundation stage (EYFS) education settings, primary schools and secondary schools across Kirklees engaged directly with it. Other programmes, too, were expressly designed to connect with, engage with and benefit young people, not least several initiatives that aimed to help young people looking to make their first, sometimes tentative steps in the music industry.

Some of the children and young people who experienced, engaged with and enjoyed the learning programme will grow up to become the Kirklees music industry of tomorrow – musicians, producers, administrators, educators, leaders. Others will grow up with a greater appreciation, understanding and even love for music through their experiences in 2023.

But they were not the only beneficiaries. The programmes also supported professionals working in education and learning – building skills, capacity and experience, and forging new collaborations between individuals and organisations. The future direction of music learning and education in Kirklees will be shaped by their experiences during KYOM23.

Publicity and profile

One of the key purposes of KYOM23 was to build the profile of Kirklees and its music sector in the wider region and beyond, providing tangible benefits to local musicians and organisations while simultaneously starting conversations and sparking ideas for new and future projects.

KYOM23 undoubtedly brought greater profile to the music sector in Kirklees. Landmark one-off events such as HERD (see page 21) and Beowulf (see page 25) won national media coverage, supplementing a substantial amount of coverage in local and regional press, radio and TV. Equally, musicinkirklees.co.uk (see page 46), a dedicated website established to complement the existing Creative Kirklees channels, continues in 2024 as a one-stop place for bands, promoters, venues and organisations to promote their activities, ensuring the continued visibility of music and musicians in Kirklees.

Tangible legacies

Legacy, of course, is about much more than intangibles. A number of new programmes and activities have already been planned and launched for Kirklees in 2024 and beyond, many of them directly resulting from KYOM23 initiatives. Among them:

- **Platform** (see page 42) gave eight Kirklees artists an amazing opportunity to be seen and heard by music industry professionals at a showcase in Huddersfield following an open call for applications. The success of the initiative has already inspired a new, refreshed programme for 2024. Kirklees bands and musicians are invited to take part in a series of “Gigging 101” career development workshops, plus the chance to benefit from a professional video shoot of their work leading to a showreel that they can use to promote their work.
- **Organic Doom** - the legacy of the hugely-successful Organic Doom event at Huddersfield Town Hall has seen new collaborations between organist David Pipe and metal bands including Plague of Angels, led by University of Huddersfield lecturer Mark Mynett. Their recent concert at St Paul’s Church in Huddersfield was featured on BBC TV’s The One Show.
- **Creative Steps** is a new volunteering programme led by Third Sector Leaders Kirklees (TSL Kirklees) with additional funding from the UK Government’s PACE (Participation in the Arts & Creative Economy) programme. It’s a direct product of Future Creative (see page 38), the volunteering programme for young people aged 16–24 delivered by TSL Kirklees and managed by Lawrence Batley Theatre Trust that completed in March 2024.
- **Music of Tomorrow** (see page 36) was a series of free music production and performance activities delivered by Yorkshire Youth & Music for young people aged 16–24, around half of whom were otherwise not in education, employment or training (NEET). Through their experiences on Music of Tomorrow, Yorkshire Youth & Music identified the need for a permanent space where young people could enjoy access to music equipment – and after a successful fundraising drive, the organisation has now built a studio in its Huddersfield building that is freely available for young people to use. Music of Tomorrow continues until June 2024, and Yorkshire Youth & Music are exploring how it can carry on in some form in the future.
- **Volume UP!** (see page 36) is another direct by-product of KYOM23. This eight-week creative course for musicians aged 16–25 has been designed to help young people find their way into the music industry, and will continue in 2024.

- **A Pocketful of Rhymes** (see page 32) is a lasting legacy of the KYOM music education programme. Created by Shape North, this new suite of films and resources for early years development are available for free online via the Music in Kirklees and Kirklees Libraries websites.
- **Creative Minds** (see page 27), a charity hosted by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT), delivered 16 music-themed projects in partnership with local, not-for-profit organisations across Kirklees, and looks set to expand its work further in 2024 following the success of its KYOM23 initiatives.
- **Rhythm of Life** is a new podcast that emerged from KYOM23's Health & Wellbeing programme. This hoot creative arts initiative invites community groups, members and leaders in Kirklees to create their own podcast episode about music, health and wellbeing. The first episode was published in March 2024.
- **Into the Light – A Song for Kirklees** initiated by Musica Kirklees, was created through a two-day songwriting workshop involving students from All Saints Catholic College in Huddersfield, Newsome Academy and Honley High School, led by local singer-songwriter Henry Bateman and sponsored by the National Lottery Community Fund and Musica Holme Valley. The song has been professionally produced and has been gifted to primary schools.
- **Songs for the Season** saw eight Kirklees songwriters – selected via an open call – create eight new songs for what became the Kirklees Winter Songbook. The songs premiered at a special concert at Huddersfield Town Hall in December 2023, and are now freely available in print or to stream at musicinkirklees.co.uk – and will remain available for choirs, schools and community groups to use and sing in perpetuity.
- **TOWNSOUNDS Podcast** (see page 20) this 12-part oral history podcast series hosted by Sam Hodgson and free to download, explored Kirklees' musical heritage. The podcasts remain available online –and will soon be supplemented by a collection of free resources for schools inspired by the stories they tell.
- **Yorkshire Day** saw thousands descend on Oakwell Hall to celebrate the best of what Kirklees has to offer – including a KYOM23 stage showcasing a range of local acts. The event will become a regular fixture on the Kirklees cultural calendar.
- **Sound Identities** commissioned seven artists working across seven different genres, from rock to bhangra, to create new music inspired by what Kirklees meant to them. The pieces are all still freely available to hear online.
- **Sound Journeys**, commissioned by Taking the Lead, sought out an artist or composer to develop a piece of music or soundscape celebrating Dewsbury and its surrounding villages. Composer Ed Waring, was commissioned and is currently developing the piece in collaboration with people from the area.
- **hoot creative arts** (see page 28) will continue to provide elements of their monthly Speak our Music sessions, through a new programme to include peer support services, and trial a new CPD programme for artists called Cultures of Creative Health in April – May 2024, in a new partnership with the University of Huddersfield - The Centre for Cultural Ecologies in Art, Design and Architecture.
- **After Party** (see page 28) all partners are committed to aiming to re-run the programme in 2024, accessing new participants and places not engaged with during KYOM23.
- **Beowulf** (see page 25). After the success in 2023, Proper Job Theatre Company are exploring the possibility of taking the production on tour across the whole of Yorkshire and further afield.



Sam Hodgson performing at Northern Quarter. Photo by Alex Beldea.

Looking ahead

KYOM23 shouldn't be seen in isolation. Not only did it build, carefully and deliberately, on the existing musical ecosystem of Kirklees – it also formed part of a wider series of cultural offers that are continuing to shine a spotlight on culture, creativity and the arts across West Yorkshire.

- **2023** also saw LEEDS 2023 Year of Culture, a 12-month city-wide cultural programme that also ran throughout 2023.
- **2024** has so far seen the launch of Culturedale, Calderdale's year of culture, and Our Year Wakefield, a similar initiative in nearby Wakefield District.
- **2025** will see Bradford District become just the fourth ever UK City of Culture – and the first since Hull in 2017 to operate a full 12-month programme after the effects of COVID-19 on the programme for Coventry in 2021.

There is considerable value in collaborations like this – each district will prove stronger for its cultural connections with its neighbours. But it is crucial that the momentum built through such connections – and, more specifically, through the success of KYOM23 – isn't lost.

The funding crisis in local government has made it more difficult to ensure legacy funding for projects such as this, forcing councils to find and adopt a more agile approach. Acknowledging the importance of both tourism and the cultural economy to the future of the district, work is underway at Kirklees Council to realign the work of the Culture & Tourism team – and three new strategies covering culture, heritage and tourism, each undergoing consultation in 2024 ahead of publication, will each be informed by KYOM23. As well as helping to define the council's understanding of the legacy of KYOM23, the trio of strategies will serve as an opportunity for Kirklees to define its direction, demonstrate its readiness for future opportunities – and continue the work, already started, to cement the roles played by culture and creative development in its future success.

KYOM23 has shown the value of music and the arts to society, to education and to the economy. It has helped to spur and maintain inward investment to the region. It has shown how the arts can contribute to placemaking through everything from town-centre redevelopment to landmark festivals and events – all with the potential to change how a place is seen by residents and visitors alike. It has shaped new partnerships across performance, production, education, health and wellbeing. And it has helped to build cultural capacity through investment in skills and people, looking to ensure a stronger future for music and the arts in the district.

Kirklees Year of Music 2023 changed music in Kirklees – and there is surely more change to come.







Song-Geet Choir performing at Rasm-e-Milan at the Lawrence Batley Theatre. Photo by Studio Bokehgo

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC!

Thanks to everyone who presented events, participated in a project, attended an event, supported, volunteered and worked with us to deliver Kirklees Year of Music 2023.

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