



Welcome to Keighley Creative

Our Town, Keighley

Keighley has a population of around 50,000 people, making it one of the largest towns in West Yorkshire. A predominantly working class, post-industrial northern town, the three main wards are Keighley Central, Keighley East, and Keighley West, which are surrounded by small villages and beautiful moorland and farmland.

Historically it's known for its significant contribution to the textile and manufacturing industries during the Industrial Revolution, and the town is home to the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, a heritage steam railway that is frequently used as a filming location for film and television. Keighley has a number of listed buildings, including the East Riddlesden Hall, a 17th-century manor house; Keighley Library, Keighley Local Studies Library is on the first floor of Keighley's historic Carnegie library, the first public library in England to be funded by Andrew Carnegie and opened in 1904; and Cliffe Castle Museum and Park, a family favourite where visitors can see Victorian rooms and furniture, paintings, natural history, archaeology and social history, along with the internationally important display of stained glass by Morris and Co.

Its communities are diverse, including White-British, South Asian, Italian, Ukrainian and Polish communities and increasing numbers of refugees and asylum communities from eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Many families and individuals are living on benefits and low incomes, and Keighley scores poorly in almost all data relating to educational and employment life chances, quality of life and physical and mental health. It sits as the second most deprived in the 21 districts in Yorkshire and Humber, and is among the 10% most income and employment deprived within Bradford and the UK.

Over the years, the town has received negative media attention, which does a disservice to the people who call this town home. It undervalues the wide-ranging talents, humour, and humanity the people in this town have, and the desire from local businesses and education establishments to find innovative ways to improve footfall and opportunities for Keighley.



Keighley Library, displaying artist Letty McHugh's work "Let Brilliant Talents Shine Forth", 2023

Keighley Creative

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

“Keighley Creative has an important strength: it has never known ‘business as usual’. Unlike many organisations, KC is not trapped in that thinking and can turn this to its advantage by actively seeking to build its resilience and innovation.”

Tessa Gordziejko (Consultant), KC Development Plan 2023-2026

Keighley Creative (KC) was set up by local artists and supporters to address historic low levels of cultural provision in the town, based on a belief in the power of the arts to enhance individual wellbeing, community cohesion and quality of place. Keighley is a really hands-on, creative town, and it’s fantastic to see the turnout and demand for the workshops and events that Keighley Creative puts on.

Since its inception in 2019 it has attracted support from Bradford Council and Keighley Town Council, with awards from the Arts Council and the Government’s Towns Fund. It provides artist studios, an education space, a community-cinema and established the annual Keighley Art and Film Festival which has now developed into a year-round programme of public events under the title Keighley Creative Presents.

People participating in the work of KC derive multiple benefits including raised confidence, improved mental health, new life directions, a strengthened sense of town identity and cohesion. Its Mission, Purpose and Vision reflect both the needs and potential for Keighley as a place where people and communities can thrive through connection with creative experiences and opportunities.



Canvasses of Keighley
Drop in Workshop
Multiple Participants

Purpose, Mission and Vision

Our purpose

To improve the lives and opportunities for people in Keighley, by making our town a more creative, more attractive and thriving place to live, work and socialise.

Our Mission

To develop an artist-led creative community hub in Keighley town centre, and outreach programmes across the surrounding area that give everyone in Keighley the opportunity to share, express and realise their creative and cultural aspirations.

Our Vision for the Future

Keighley is known as a creative town. The people of Keighley feel able to express their own creativity day to day and are confident and proud of the place where they live. More have embarked on training and careers in the creative industries. Our hub is thriving, delivering year-round projects and exhibitions, events and an annual festival, all made for, with, and by the people of Keighley.

At its heart is a community of artists, at all stages in their careers, who prioritise socially-engaged practice, actively reflecting and inspiring different Keighley communities, and raising aspirations.

Keighley has a thriving community of artists, creatives, and arts organisations, working in partnership across the district and region and providing opportunities to access and enjoy all aspects of cultural activity.

Alongside our hub, Keighley's streets and buildings reflect the importance and value that is placed on culture, heritage and creativity, with imaginative and surprising interventions from street furniture to street art, signage and lighting, celebrated and refreshed each year through its famous festival.

Keighley will play a central role in Bradford UK City of Culture 2025, drawing national attention to the creative ways we tell our individual and collective stories. Keighley is recognised nationally as a cultural destination to visit, live and work, boosting the local economy and improving people's lives.

Our values

Creativity We make all forms of creativity accessible, with a focus on contemporary practice and the visual arts. We enable artists at all stages of their careers and creatives to grow, lead, and flourish through our programmes.

Listening and Learning We listen to individuals, groups, and our communities with empathy, and we build opportunities to learn into everything we do.

Enjoyment Our events create moments of joy, wonder, fun and celebration.

Collaboration We work in partnership to realise our purpose. Our programmes are founded on community requests and ideas.

Regeneration We're bringing people back into Keighley through arts engagement.

Wellbeing We motivate and inspire the community to join in with creative activities that support their mental and physical health.

Diversity We are open to everyone, and we strive to increase representation for underserved groups in the arts. Sharing our space with trust and equity. We are connected and rooted in our people and our place.

We achieve our mission by

- Supporting artists and creative people, exhibiting and championing creativity, playing and learning, celebrating and sharing
- Listening to and working together in partnerships with the people, businesses and representatives of Keighley
- Devising and delivering our programme activity with and for the people of Keighley, ensuring that our activities are relevant and representative
- Celebrating the creative potential in everyone, providing creative activity and opportunity that is excellent - and fun – and valuing the creative process and endeavour as much as artistic outcome
- Playing an active civic role, providing leadership in the culture and creative sector here and supporting others, in collaboration with other local, district-wide, and national initiatives, partners and funders, to help realise their full potential too
- Giving particular opportunity to the most underrepresented and least engaged people of Keighley. This is made manifest in our programme which celebrates all of contemporary Keighley, making creative, international links to the places and cultures that Keighley connects to through our people and businesses. It will also be reflected in our pricing, the look and feel of our spaces and projects, the membership of our board and advisory groups and our staffing and recruitment
- Putting Keighley on the map – through our events programme, and day-in-day-out - as a town with exciting arts, culture, and creative things to get involved in and experience as a local and to attract visitors, businesses and inward investment to Keighley
- Foregrounding and developing our artistic expertise in visual arts and creative practices as wellbeing tools, celebrating all art forms and signposting to others with expertise in other creative forms
- Understanding and being able to measure and describe the impact we have and the difference we make through our work



Creative Consultation: What Does Culture mean to you? Artist: Naseem Darbey

Keighley Creative's Programme

Keighley Creative's programme is designed under three Overarching Themes: Community; Place-making; Creative Industries, and three Cross-Cutting Themes: Ways of Seeing; Health & Wellbeing; Artist Development & Progression. This new thematic programme structure strengthens the communication, identity, strategy and prioritisation of KC and its work.

Community

Our work springs from, and is embedded in, communities in which we are based. Geographically, this is primarily Keighley Central, East and West Wards but also the wider Keighley district. Within Keighley there are different communities of culture, history, interest and identity co-existing and working together, and our work reflects both the diversity and ongoing need for cohesion which characterises the district – helping communities get to know each other in new, creative ways.

Place-making

We describe our work as creative place-making, bringing arts and culture to the foreground of Keighley's profile and into the experience of those who live here. We aim to contribute to the regeneration of our town through working in partnership with other key local civic and business leadership bodies to realise the full potential that the creative arts can bring to revitalising a local economy, jobs, skills and civic pride. Our projects help both to build the cultural infrastructure that helps define a place, and tell the story of Keighley: past, present and future. Keighley's place as part of Bradford district, of Yorkshire, of The North, the UK and the world are also part of that story.

Creative Industries

One of the earliest services we provided was low-cost artists' studios, recognising that there were and are a range of artists and creative businesses in Keighley, at different stages of development. Our work aims to connect the needs of current and future artists through a combination of projects with students – opening up ambitions and possibilities for creative careers – alongside facilities and activities that support creative individuals and emergent enterprises.

Ways of Seeing

Keighley Creative began life as a visual arts initiative – allowing a wide definition of that artform to include crafts, media, sculpture and digital. Expanding the definition to 'Ways of Seeing' (cf John Berger) and including it in our Development Plan as a cross-cutting theme, makes a clear statement both to the public and visual artists in the area that our wider programme is led by a visual arts specialism.

Ways of Seeing also makes a wider statement about diversity – that different communities and characteristics have different perspectives culturally, historically, experientially, neurologically; and showing how creative responses such as drawing offer alternatives to the dominant 'ways of seeing' in popular media, policy and politics.

A flagship brand within this theme is the KC's national award-winning Drawing Box which has been further developed and relaunched in 2023.

Keighley Creative and artist's Naseem Darbey and Gemma Hobbs have developed The Drawing Box Project as a socially engaged, not-for-profit initiative that teaches drawing as a multi-faceted, multi-sensory tool for connection and personal growth.

These connections are built through a shared exploration of traditional drawing skills, recognising that understanding the language of drawing exposes what a powerful and transformative tool drawing can be. Focusing on 'making your mark' ensures people recognise and value their own unique approaches and perspectives, opening up new ways to see and interpret the world.

This work has been funded by Arts Council England, South Pennines Park, Yorkshire Peat Partnership, Towns Fund, and sponsored by Brsk*.



MEGA Drawing Box, 2023 Team Photo at the end of a brilliant weekend! Photographer: Bob Smith

Health and Wellbeing

The definition of Health and Wellbeing in social policy is becoming wider, with mental health becoming a huge and growing priority, and social prescribing offering opportunities. There is also work to be done quite rapidly on evidencing and impact measurement.

The current flagship project within the Health & Wellbeing theme is work under the heading of Arts & Brain Health. There are currently two key projects within this:

Monday Creative

Weekly sessions offering creative activity for people living with dementia and other long-term neuro-degenerative conditions and their carers.

Started in 2018, the programme has been running for 5 years funded by Leeds Community

Foundation. This has seen it adapt to online delivery during the pandemic, before returning to face-to-face groups in 2021. Keighley Creative also runs training for other organisations about delivering stimulating and safe creative workshops that meets the needs of this unique group of people.

Sessions allow Keighley Creative to provide regular, safe and high-quality creative engagement sessions for people who are living with a dementia or other long-term neuro-degenerative conditions, accompanied by a carer/ relative/ friend. This is a very isolated demographic, frequently with multiple and complex needs. The impact of a dementia diagnosis on the health and wellbeing of the person living with the condition and their family and friendship groups is significant, often with gradual onset and increasing isolation over many years.

These sessions offer both participants a gentle, safe way to re-connect with the outside world, to meet new people, experience being in the present moment, have fun, try new activities and experience a different relationship than that of 'carer' and 'cared for'. People are supported to reach their full potential by highly trained and experienced artist-educators.

The charity's approach is informed by strong evidence that regular socializing, and stimulating, meaningful and imaginative engagement improves brain health, builds cognitive reserve and protects against cognitive decline.

Wednesday Creative

Starting in 2023, and built from community requests, these weekly drop-in sessions are designed to support adults who are living with social anxiety, isolation, low self-worth, and loneliness. Due to our location in the centre of town, and the demographics of Keighley Central and West Wards, there are high numbers of adults on a low income, who are unable to work due to sickness or disability; who are currently unemployed; and who are retired.

We have current funding for this work to April 24 from Bradford CNET and we anticipate that need will build and grow from these figures – we are currently seeking funding for April 24 onwards, probably for more than one group, and to train more delivery practitioners. We plan to widen the experience for those participants who are ready, to include activity outdoors in nature.

Artist Development and Progression

The Artist Development and Progression theme stem from the artist studios provided (currently 12, fully occupied and a waiting list). KC opens work opportunities to studio-holders on the programme, holds regular artist get-togethers and offer tours of artist studios to visiting groups. KC is aiming to create up to 8 new studios in 2024, but further work is needed to agree on a model for this that will link into it's work with East Street Arts on a capital project, which will see the charity permanently housed in a bespoke building in the centre of Keighley. Set to open at the start of 2026, this will become an important legacy project linked to Bradford 2025, UK City of Culture.

Our work with schools is important for the initial planting of seeds of creative aspiration. Our current schools work focusses on primary school children, who in our district often have low aspirations, low expectations based on early life experiences and skill deficits in areas such as

fine motor skills. In 2024/5, the charity will develop a Young People's Strategy which will draw together work with schools, families and young people in other settings such as youth provision. As a key element it will aim to address, through engagement with art and nature, the poor mental health of young people in Keighley, illustrated by shockingly high figures for self-harm admissions among young people aged 10 to 24, an incidence of 171 higher per 1000 head of population than across the rest of Bradford District.

Keighley Creative Presents

Keighley Creative Presents, currently funded by Keighley Towns Fund and drawing in match funding from multiple sources, is a successful series of year-round events held in the centre of Keighley to raise the profile of the town. Creative, cultural and leisure activities give the public reasons to get active again, and visit town centres that are otherwise seeing footfall and local spend decrease.

We are looking to work more directly with local businesses, from hyper-local independents to the international companies who operate on our doorstep. Past projects like K-Town Shopper and MEGA Drawing Box demonstrated the potential of this in increasing footfall, and pride in place.

Nationally, Keighley has had a negative reputation and our programme, which sits at the heart of our Creative Place-making, aims to build a positive profile and energy around the town centre and in our communities.

Staffing

Keighley Creative has a current core staff of 2.0FTE – Events Manager (F/T); Arts and Heritage Officer (F/T), and retained freelancers for CommsMar (0.2); Finances (0.2). Three new staff roles will be onboarded in July 2024- Executive Director (F/T); Creative Director (0.8); Events Producer (0.6).

Between 2019 and 2023 Keighley Creative existed on what was essentially an extended 'start up' modus operandi: highly dependent on voluntary effort by skilled board members, with paid executive capacity limited to one role, Creative Director. Trustees have been closely involved in all aspects of operations and the future of the organisation has depended on their skills, time and willingness to work on an unpaid basis in strategic management, financial recording and reporting, fundraising, human resources and policy development. Whilst this has provided an invaluable resource for the organisation starting up, it is unsustainable and does not provide the level of management required to take KC on its journey of increased scale and complexity of projects. The role of Executive Director is critical to this process of transition.

Hanover House, Capital Project

East Street Art & Keighley Creative

East Street Arts and Keighley Creative are working together to achieve community ownership of premises that will become known as Keighley Creative Hub. East Street Arts are overseeing the project, and Keighley Creative will be the anchor tenants. The East Street Arts team has successful experience of initiating, overseeing design and construction works and managing capital funding and will act as the enabling landlord. Keighley Creative will occupy the premises and lead on operations.

East Street Arts as Sponsor

First formed in 1998 in Leeds, East Street Arts (ESA) promotes artistic activities by providing facilities for & supporting visual artists, advocating for the visual arts in the public arena and developing an artistic programme that engages with public audiences.

ESA has been a National Portfolio Organisation with Arts Council England (ACE) for eight years, a Sector Support Organisation for five years and is actively involved in advocacy work locally and nationally. ESA owns and operates multiple arts facilities in West Yorkshire and is one of the largest and longest established providers of meanwhile space for artists in England.

Since 2010, it has managed over 60 temporary spaces nationwide, helping to link empty spaces to artists and other creative practitioners. East St Arts continues to build infrastructure. East Street Arts is a nationally recognised operator of workspace for creatives. On behalf of Arts Council England, it leads a national network of studio providers, identifying and articulating needs and best practice. Through its Guild programme, it also delivers capacity building to arts organisations in England seeking to develop capital projects in their local areas.

Keighley Creative as anchor tenant

Plans for a permanent base for Keighley Creative became featured in the town's Keighley Vision plan in 2020. Public consultation (Jan 21) ranked the creative arts hub project as a priority in the Keighley Town Investment Plan proposals.

In summer 2020, supported by Bradford Metropolitan District Council (BMDC), KC carried out extensive 1-to-1 and group consultation with a wide range of current and potential stakeholders and partners. The response to both our work and our future ambition has been almost universally positive and is further reinforced by public comments captured by Keighley Towns Fund via the UK Gov My Town portal.

In 2022 Keighley Creative was awarded funding to take our work forward, building momentum, engagement and demand and growing participation from people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and interests; and harness the momentum and opportunities offered by

Bradford 2025 to establish our young organisation as Keighley's beating creative heart. In the same year, the New Statesmen nominated the project for the Positive Impact on the High Street Award.

Working Together

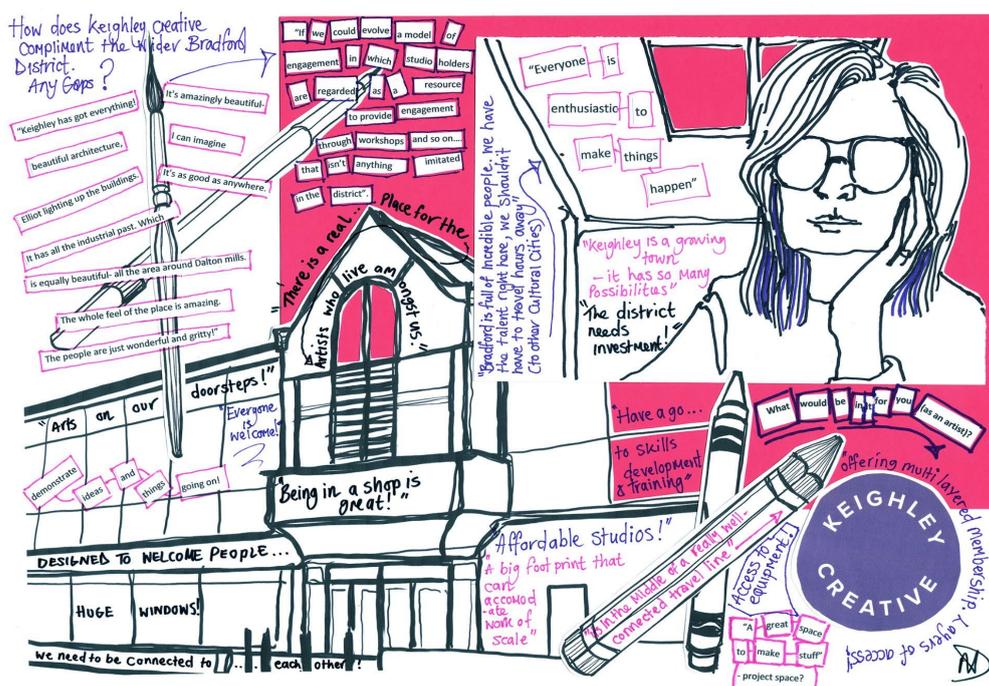
The Capital Project is being realised in 2024-2026, and by partnering with a lead organisation that brings experience of developing capital projects for the visual arts sector, this has become an incredible opportunity for Keighley to maximise on the benefits that creative and cultural activity can have as a place-making tool for town centre regeneration.

East Street Arts is the project lead. Its function is to use its experience and capacity to lead on project design, capital funding and delivery of the building as a lettable space.

Keighley Creative will be the anchor tenant for the upper floor. It will operate as an independent social enterprise, delivering activity of proven community value in an affordable fit-for-purpose space on a long-term lease. East Street Arts will be responsible for delivering the project outcomes and agreements will be put in place that pass on delivery, evaluation and reporting responsibilities to Keighley Creative where appropriate.

A Project Group was formed between East Street Arts and Keighley Creative in March 2023 to inform a renewed development of the design and revenue plan. Since then there has been a great deal of progress. Since then a renewed business case has been approved and the project received sign-off from Towns Fund Board and BD25 in December 2023.

The next steps will be very, very exciting! For Keighley, for Keighley Creative, and for the district.



Creative Consultation: Keighley Creative as a Capital Project. Artist: Naseem Darbey