

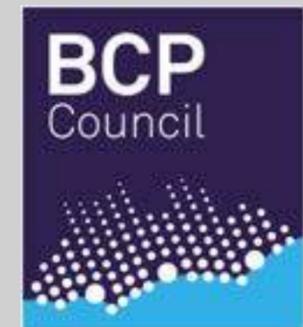


ARTS BY THE SEA FESTIVAL

**2025
IMPACT REPORT**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**





Who are we?

Arts by the Sea is an annual outdoor arts festival funded by BCP Council and Arts Council England.

We work to broaden access to art and culture while maintaining a commitment to excellence in the quality of art & the artists we support.

2025 was our 15th year and we share some of our highlights with you here in this impact report.

“It was such a great way to bring the community together, to be silly and creative and welcoming. My kids absolutely loved all the activities and the performance art was really engaging and funny and excellent. We love this festival, please keep doing it every year!”

Our Aims & Values

- To combine high-profile, inspirational, spectacular showcase events with local participation, increasing engagement in culture and enhancing a sense of community by combining culture, people and place.
- To deliver a diverse artistic programme which engages audiences in a carnivalesque celebration of culture in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's unique locations.
- To host a Talent Development programme, focused on upskilling artists, boosting our economy and supporting the local creative sector.
- To implement an Engagement & Participation scheme, providing opportunities for all.
- To demonstrate our commitment to diversity and environmental sustainability.



"The event was a joy to be a part of, such a diverse range of ages and people, it really felt like something that brought all of Bournemouth together."

National Profile

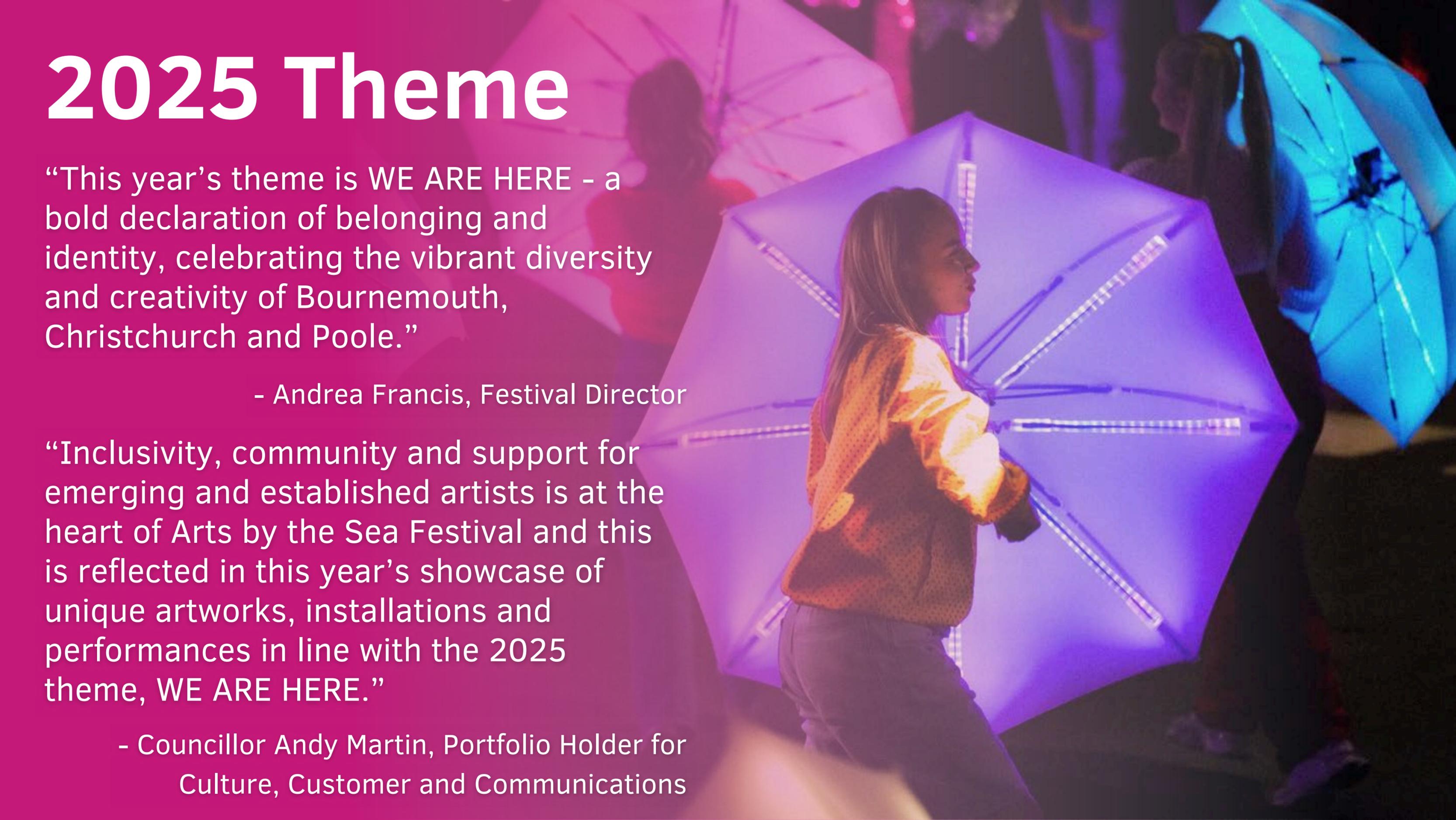
Two time winner of **Gold in the Dorset Tourism Awards** for Tourism Event/Festival of the Year and **Gold in the South West Tourism Excellence Awards**; we also won Bronze in BCP's DMB Tourism Awards.

We share best practice with a network of peers and industry colleagues (including Without Walls, the Mela Partnership and Julie's Bicycle).

We have received national media & press attention, including coverage from Sky Arts and the BBC.



2025 Theme

A woman with long hair, wearing a yellow and orange patterned jacket, is holding a large, illuminated purple umbrella. She is standing in a dark environment, possibly at night, with other people and umbrellas visible in the background. The scene is lit with vibrant purple and blue lights, creating a festive atmosphere.

“This year’s theme is WE ARE HERE - a bold declaration of belonging and identity, celebrating the vibrant diversity and creativity of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.”

- Andrea Francis, Festival Director

“Inclusivity, community and support for emerging and established artists is at the heart of Arts by the Sea Festival and this is reflected in this year’s showcase of unique artworks, installations and performances in line with the 2025 theme, WE ARE HERE.”

- Councillor Andy Martin, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Customer and Communications



"We really enjoyed being part of such an amazing celebration of local arts and culture! Everyone involved was very friendly and helpful, and the audience was very supportive."

2025 Artistic Programme

43

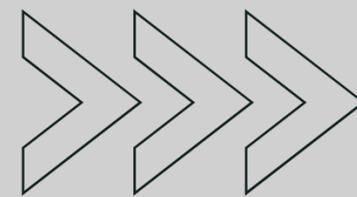
organisations
worked with



67% were
from the local
BCP area

340+

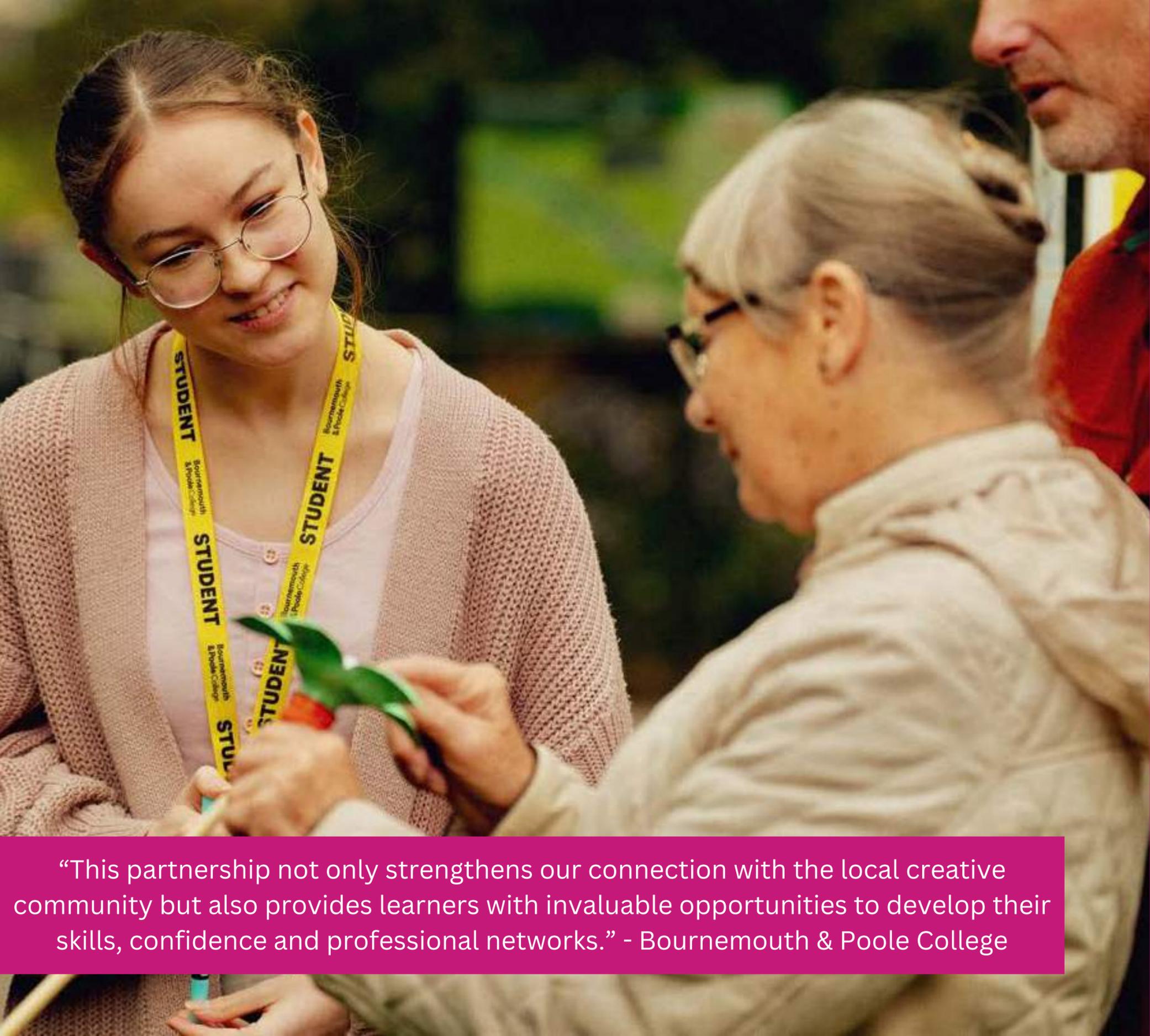
creatives
produced
over



104 free
performances

INCLUDING

19 local BCP
organisations
involved in a new
pilot Fringe
Festival



Talent Development

Providing opportunities for artist development and skills building for young people is core to what we do. In 2025 we extended our partnership with **Bournemouth & Poole College** providing a platform for **150+** students to create, perform & engage:

- Live music takeover of the Bandstand on Friday night
- Face-painting for Bourne to Love audiences
- Dance piece with Autin Dance for the performances of Parade
- Participatory activities run by students in the Community Zone

“This partnership not only strengthens our connection with the local creative community but also provides learners with invaluable opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and professional networks.” - Bournemouth & Poole College

Resident & Associate Artist Schemes

- Gabrielle Parker, our Artist in Residence, created a new performance piece for 7 shows over the festival weekend inspired by visual artwork created for Arts by the Sea.
- Bobby Brewer, our Associate Artist, created a new willow sculpture 'In Hand' in the Gardens for viewing over the festival weekend (and at a local nature reserve post-festival).
- Through these schemes, 6 community workshops were delivered with West Howe Community Enterprises, Poole Communities Trust, BPC Indian Community Association, and as part of the Fringe Festival.
- 22 pieces of digital communication released on Gabrielle Parker and 14 on Bobby Brewer.



“I’m really grateful that my work has been able to reach people like this, and in such an organic way.” - Bobby Brewer, Associate Artist 2025

“I’ve never done a piece where I’ve worked with performers, which was so insightful. It makes me want to bring my work out of the digital realm more.” - Gabrielle Parker, Artist in Residence 2025

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red jacket, is smiling warmly while holding a young child with curly blonde hair. The child is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and is focused on a task, possibly a craft or drawing. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. The overall mood is positive and engaged.

Engagement and Participation

The festival works with schools and community groups to offer opportunities to discover the arts, participate in creative activity and to become part of the festival performances themselves.

“It helps with introducing the children to cultural capital and opening their world to the Arts.” - Local School

A group of young people, mostly women, are shown in profile, clapping and smiling. They are outdoors, and the background is slightly blurred, suggesting a large gathering or festival. The lighting is bright, indicating it's daytime.

“I enjoyed the variety and quality of what was on offer through the weekend and the opportunities for attendees of all ages to engage creatively in a range of activities from crafts to dance. For children and young people these experiences could be very inspiring.”

Participatory Performances

27 members of BOH Studios and 50+ members of Funky Little Choir were part of the Bourne to Love performances.

33 students from Bournemouth & Poole College took part in artist-led workshops prior to the festival with Autin Dance to perform Parade four times with them over the weekend.

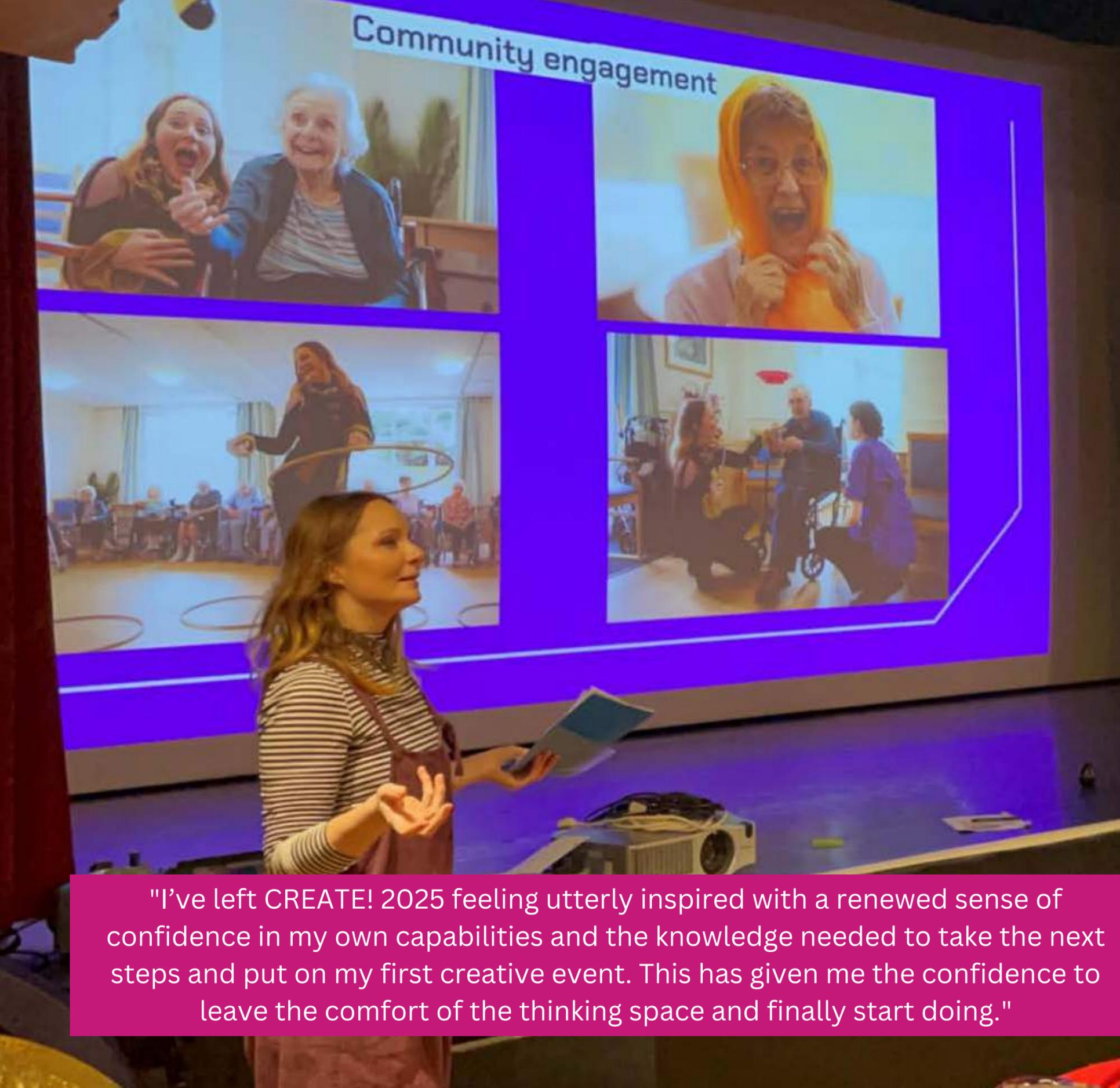
School Outreach & Arts Award

2,317 children participated in creative workshops in schools with Bournemouth Library holding a month-long exhibition of some of their work. 788 family activity packs provided via 20 BCP Library branches. Arts Award Discover was offered to children fully funded with 17 awards booklets completed.

CREATE! Programme

CREATE! is a free course delivered annually to budding creatives looking to develop their skills & confidence in the creative event sector. The course is organised collaboratively by Activate Performing Arts, b-side, & Arts by the Sea and led by experienced professionals.

- 18 participants from BCP & Dorset took the course.
- 71% of participants reported an increase in confidence.
- 100% of participants reported improved knowledge about how creative events are produced.

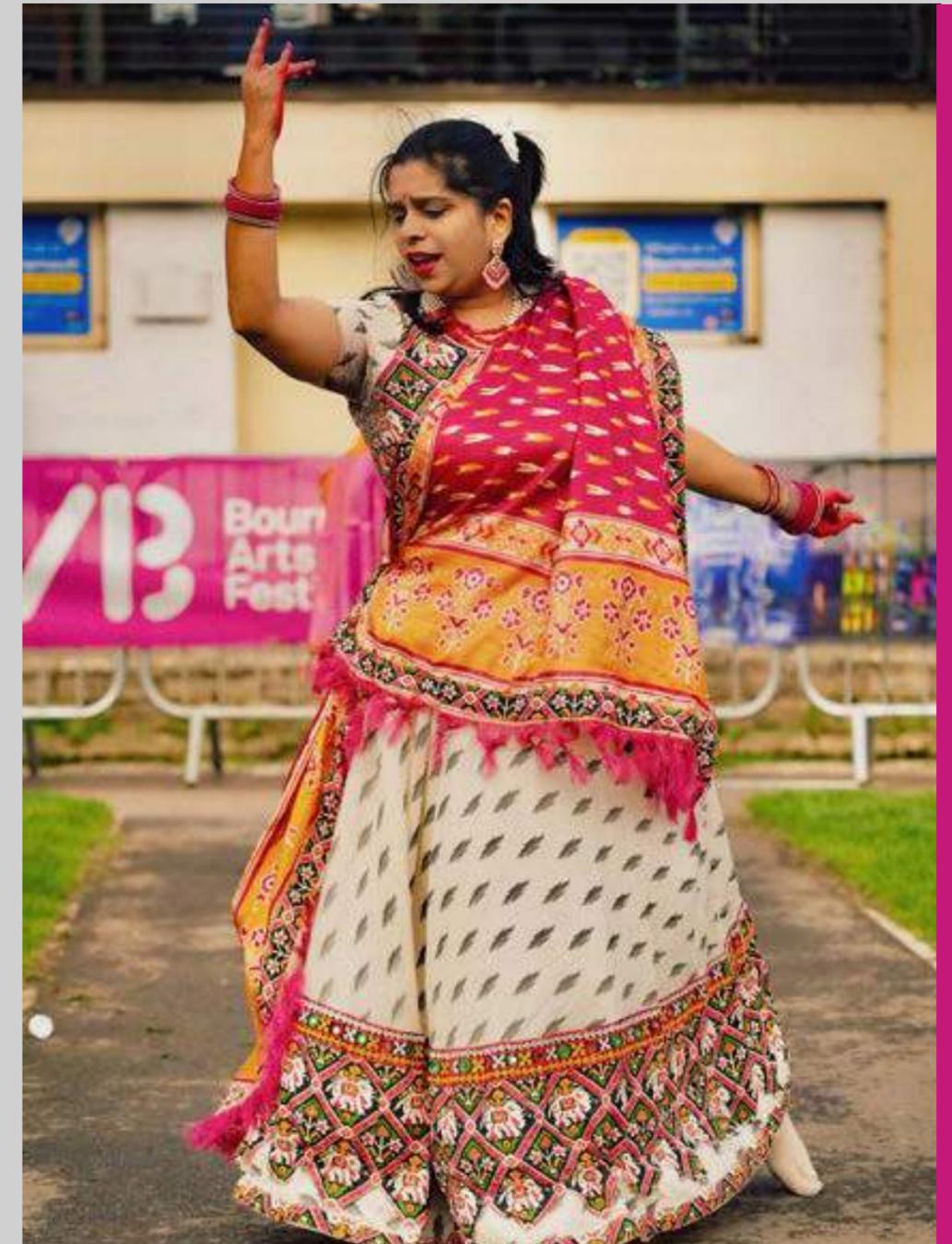
A woman with long brown hair, wearing a striped shirt and a dark apron, stands in front of a large projection screen. She is holding a blue folder and gesturing with her hands as if presenting. The screen displays four photographs under the heading 'Community engagement'. The top-left photo shows two women, one younger and one older, smiling and clapping. The top-right photo shows a woman in a yellow hooded jacket smiling. The bottom-left photo shows a woman performing hula hoops in a room with other people seated in the background. The bottom-right photo shows a group of people, including one in a wheelchair, engaged in an activity.

"I've left CREATE! 2025 feeling utterly inspired with a renewed sense of confidence in my own capabilities and the knowledge needed to take the next steps and put on my first creative event. This has given me the confidence to leave the comfort of the thinking space and finally start doing."

Diversity & Accessibility

We aim to create an inclusive artistic programme, which champions our diverse communities, and to deliver a festival that is accessible to everyone whatever the challenges.

- We design a varied programme that is inclusive to different access needs.
- We listen to feedback and engage with local groups to continually improve our festival.
- Our participants come from a range of local organisations, ensuring our performances reflect and attract our local population.



“It was an amazing experience. We felt proud to present our culture and grateful to be included in a festival that celebrates diversity and brings people together.”
- The BPC Indian Community Association



New Access Initiatives

We held two focus groups with Dorset Blind Association to understand the barriers that people with low vision or visual impairments face when attending festivals and coming to the Town Centre. We hosted a guided tour with audio descriptions and touch tour of performances.

We also encouraged people from the local D/deaf community to attend. We had an information video signed & captioned, and BSL volunteers at World Kiosk.

This is in addition to our regular access provision.

"You exceeded all expectations around accessibility. Inclusive guided tours, touch tours, audio-described performances, and interactive art experiences made the festival accessible for people with sight loss. That's a fantastic achievement."

- Dorset Blind Association

Community Outreach in West Howe & Bourne

Our Community Days bring quality cultural activity and a touch of Arts by the Sea out into the community for people who are unlikely to attend the festival itself.

- We returned to West Howe for a seventh year and to Bourne for the third time by delivering a Community Day for both communities!
- We organised 18 activities/performances for each event, ranging from comedy walkabout to aerial performances.
- 10 of the 11 artists & creative practitioners at the events were local to BCP.

The events attracted over 370 attendees, all of which were from the BCP area with 47% from West Howe/Bourne postcodes. 100% of survey responses said they enjoyed the day and 100% said would attend next year if able.



“Being on a low income the free day has been full of fun activities that we wouldn't usually be able to afford. Plenty of choice - loved the face painting”

Shaped by Local People

Volunteering

We offered 4 different volunteer opportunities which included practical training and professional guidance. **35 volunteers** contributed **291 hours**. 99% of our volunteers said they they enjoyed the experience and 98% would recommend volunteering with Arts by the Sea.

Focus Groups & Community Input

We engage with a variety of community groups, including charities, BCP Council Youth Forum and education partners to help shape the festival each year.



“I loved all of it to be honest, the interactions with the team and public were great and the events were awesome”

Our Audience

data based on survey responses



74% had visited Arts by the Sea before, 26% were new audience.

The ethnicity of our audience is approximately reflective of BCP's population as per the 2021 census (a difference of 2% of those identifying a minority ethnic group).

85% of our audience were from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and 11% from the rest of the country. 0.5% were from overseas.



11% of our audience have a disability. 23% of our audience identify as neurodivergent.

75% of our audience visited the festival with other people, around half attending with children under 16.





Audience Feedback

96%
rated their experience
of the event as very
good or good

**98% of attendees
said that Arts by the
Sea Festival makes
them feel welcome
and included**

"I have always loved Arts by the Sea festival! From having first stumbled across it and since made an effort to attend it each year. It's inclusive, fun, inspiring, educational and great for kids and adults."

"I love the performances throughout the town. Everyone we came into contact with was fabulous! Absolutely feel World Kiosk should be a permanent feature. A truly wonderful time spent here!!"

"What I love most is how it brings people together. You see families, students, visitors, and locals all sharing the same experience, often stumbling across something unexpected and inspiring. It reminds me that art isn't just something to be tucked away in galleries, it can be part of our daily lives, accessible to everyone."



190,000+ footfall in the Town Centre over the festival weekend

"The festival feel in the town is so welcoming and really does feel like we're all being brought together to experience something new and enjoy something together. It changes the feel of the town for me and makes it somewhere I want to spend time in."



Environmental Impact

Each year we work with artists, traders and suppliers to reduce our environmental impact, and we promote our three key environmental projects: **Reuse, Reflect, Sustainable Travel.**

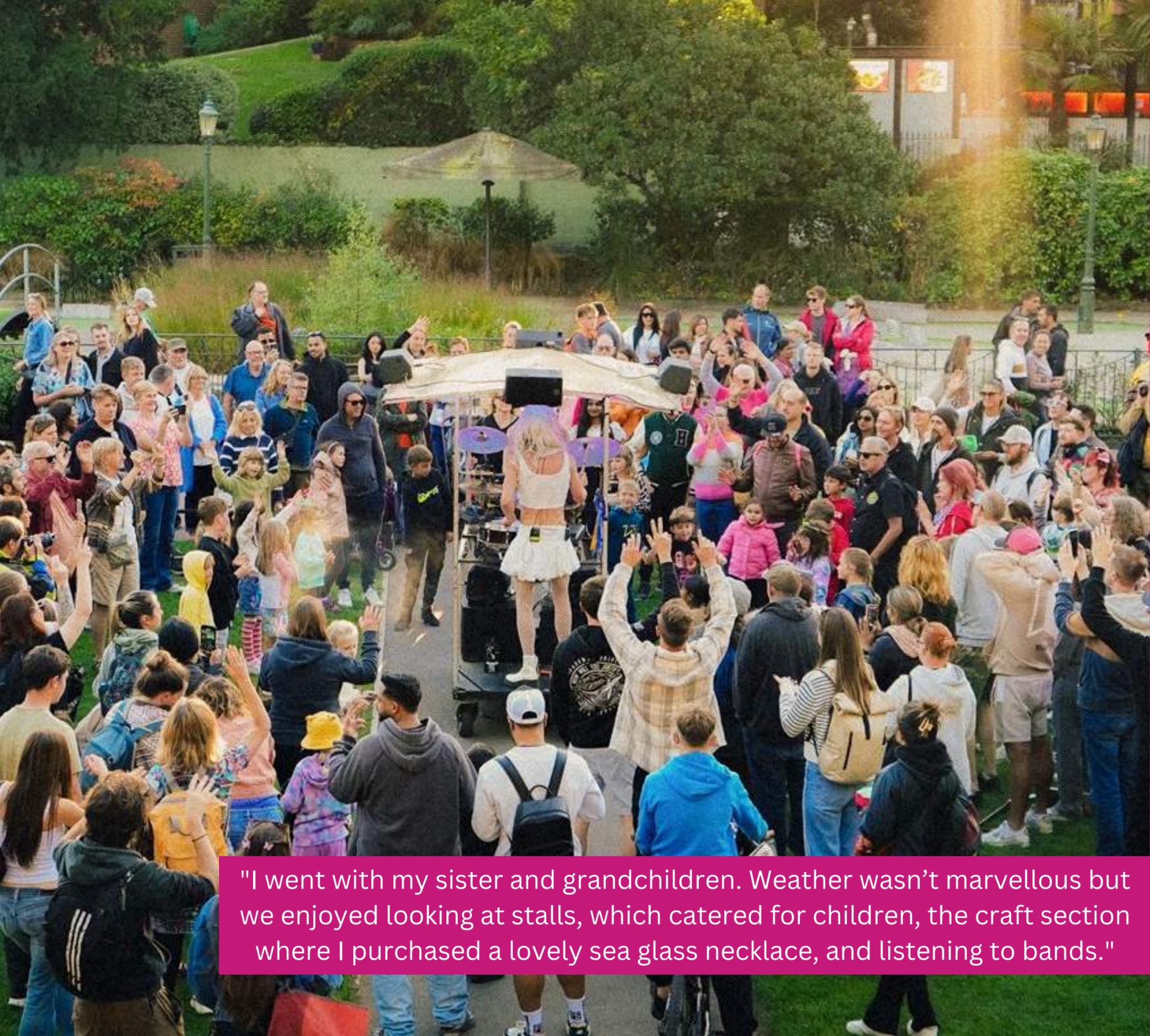
We host a festival Green Hub of environmental partners and activities to raise awareness about sustainability. This year we had 11 local organisations at the Green Hub & Community Zone, which is sited at the heart of the festival site.

The Festival's artistic programme contained performances that addressed themes of climate change or climate action, human rights & ethics, nature or ecology, and sustainability.



"Showcasing my latest practice-based research project, Pluvilore, at the festival was a brilliant opportunity to test the work with a broad audience and to open conversations about my research. Presenting my research in a festival context not only reached thousands of people over the weekend but also tested how accessible and engaging it is outside an academic setting."

- Alice Stevens, Senior Lecturer, Arts University Bournemouth & PhD Candidate



Economic Impact

Spending

- 78% of people spent or intended to spend in a restaurant, café, pub, bar or shop.
- 7% did another creative or cultural activity.

Promoting local

We partner with and promote local businesses as part of the festival, including the South Coast Makers Market and the Art & Makers Market in our brochure and marketing.

Direct gross visitor spend of £3.8M.

"I went with my sister and grandchildren. Weather wasn't marvellous but we enjoyed looking at stalls, which catered for children, the craft section where I purchased a lovely sea glass necklace, and listening to bands."

Marketing

17,736 Facebook followers
10,683 Instagram followers
573,458 interactions & reach from social coverage



Website Engagement

- 15,665 unique visitors on the website over Sept - Dec 2025.
- 63,389 site events/interactions (e.g. clicks, submissions and scrolls) over Sept - Dec 2025.

Press

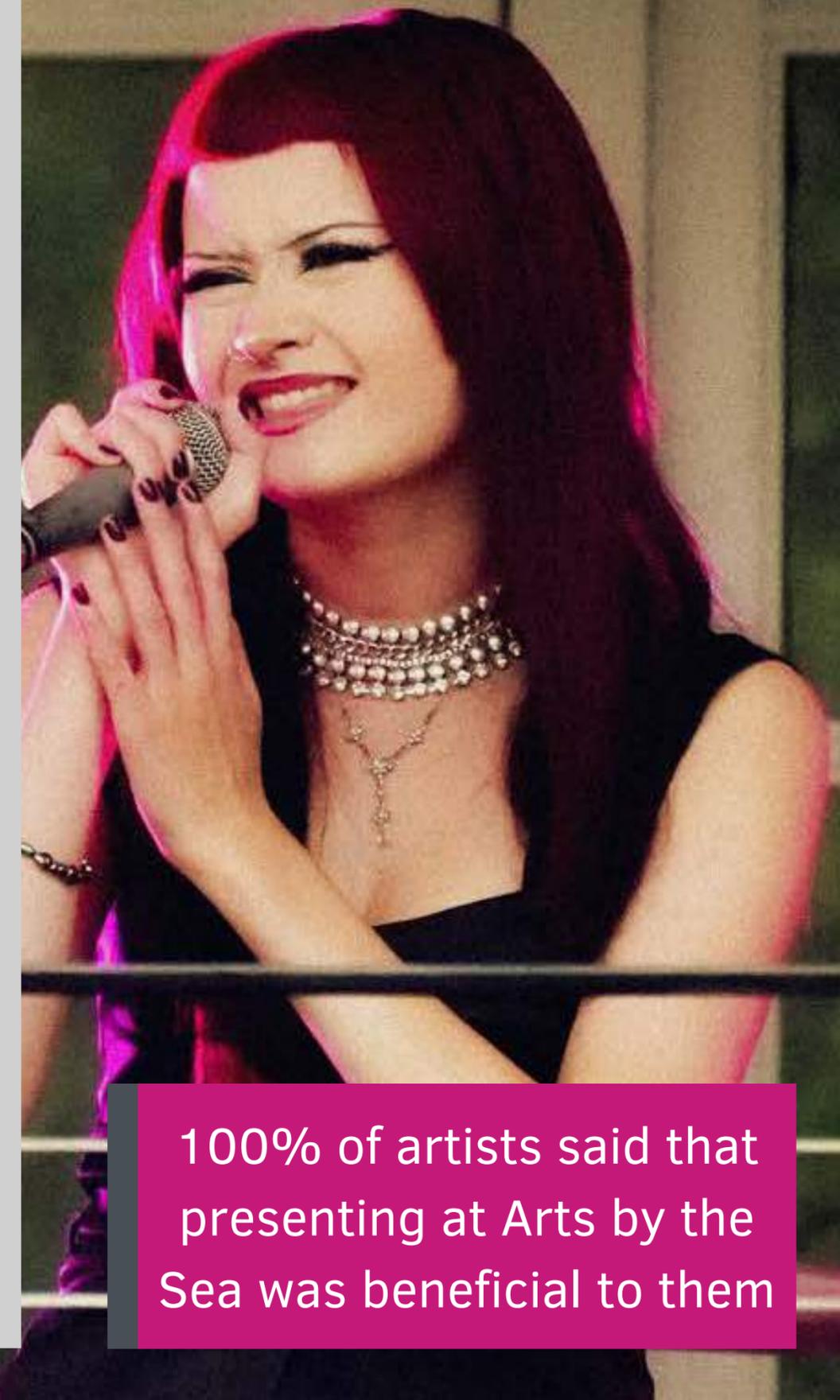
Estimated audience reach of 5,083,625,071, with 74 pieces of coverage, resulting in an AVE (advertising value equivalent) of £15.3M.

Partnerships

Arts by the Sea benefits from a huge range of creative and practical partnerships and is developing relationships with key diversity-led organisations.

Thanks to BCP Council, Arts Council England, Without Walls, We Broke Free, Bournemouth Pier, Activate Performing Arts, b-side Festival, Arts Award, Bournemouth & Poole College, West Howe Community Enterprises, Poole Communities Trust, BCP Libraries, Mela Partnership, From the Fields, Arts University Bournemouth, SUBU, The Cultural Hub, All Fired Up, Dorset Blind Association, BOH Studios, BPC Indian Community Association, The Chatterboxes, participating schools, Green Hub and Community partners, our Artists, our Volunteers, our Board, the Festival Team (and more!).

Interested in becoming a festival partner? [Find out more.](#)



100% of artists said that presenting at Arts by the Sea was beneficial to them



"Arts by the Sea is one of those events that makes me stop and really appreciate living in the heart of town. Every year, it transforms our town and open spaces into something magical. From large-scale performances to smaller, more intimate moments of art, it's a festival that celebrates creativity in all its forms."



SEE YOU IN 2026