

DURHAM CREATIVE CAREERS EVENT

18 Nov
2025



“Don't let anyone rob you of your imagination, your creativity, or your curiosity. It's your place in the world; it's your life. Go on and do all you can with it, and make it the life you want to live.”

[Mae Jemison](#)

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in our Creative Careers event at Ushaw Historic House.

This brochure will help you revisit the organisations and individuals you met, remind you of the skills and opportunities they shared, and give you space to think about your own interests as you start considering your GCSE options.

The Creative Careers event introduced you to an exciting cross-section of the creative and cultural industries—an area that is far broader, more dynamic, and more achievable than many people realise.

During the event, you explored careers that power some of the most vibrant parts of our society. You heard from film-makers, photographers and music-makers who use storytelling, technology, and craft to shape the way we see the world. You met theatre practitioners and community arts leaders who bring people together and spark imagination through performance, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. You spoke with professionals working in heritage, museums, and curating—people who care for our history, design exhibitions, and help audiences connect with ideas across time and culture. You also learned about freelance pathways, where creativity meets independence, ambition, and entrepreneurial thinking.

Alongside these industry voices, representatives from local FE colleges introduced you to courses in art, design, media, performance, and other cultural skills. They highlighted how different study routes—from vocational programmes to more academic pathways—can support your development and open doors into the sector.

This brochure gathers all of these experiences in one place so you can reflect on what inspired you, which industries sparked your curiosity, and what skills you might like to grow. Use it to think confidently about your next steps, explore new possibilities, and begin shaping a future that reflects your interests, talents, and creativity.

There is also space for your own notes and reflections. Use these sections to think about what stood out for you—what you enjoyed, what surprised you, and what you might like to explore further. And you can always use the website addresses we've provided to find out more about any of the organisations or people you met.

As you begin to make decisions about your GCSE options, we hope this guide encourages you to stay curious, be confident in your creative abilities, and recognise that there are many exciting routes into the cultural sector. Your future could take shape in ways you haven't imagined yet—and this is just the beginning.

1 in 8 businesses in the UK are part of the creative sector

The creative sector contributes 2.4 million jobs and £124bn to the UK economy – approximately 5% of the total economy.

In the last 10 years, the number of creative jobs has increased by about 10,000

There are now over **50,000 creative jobs** in the North East region (still growing)

Durham Creative Careers Event was supported by the North East Combined Authority, Durham County Council, Culture Durham and County Durham Cultural Education Partnership.

DISCOVER!

creative careers



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

The following pages are a reminder of the organisations and people you met at Ushaw Historic House on 18 November. There is room at the end of this brochure to make your own notes if you wish to.



Ushaw Historic House was delighted to host the recent Creative Careers Conference in partnership with NECA and Culture Durham. As a place dedicated to heritage, learning, and creativity, we were proud to provide an inspiring setting for young people to explore future pathways in the creative industries. Bringing together local partners, talented professionals, and emerging creatives truly reflects Ushaw's commitment to supporting the region's cultural and creative growth.

Lucy Jenkins, Co-CEO at Ushaw



The creative sector in the NE is full of exciting careers - from coding and design to music and media

With new investment and growing demand, there's never been a better time to explore creative pathways

Whether you're into tech, storytelling, performance, or design - your future could be creative

Workshops

Elysium Theatre Company

Jake Murray – Artistic Director

Elysium Theatre Company is an award-winning, independent theatre company. It all started with a conversation between director Jake Murray and actor Danny Solomon in the cafe in Waterstones in Manchester in 2016. Jake was in Durham, Danny was in Manchester. They had worked together before. Why not create a company to bring theatre to the North?

Now firmly established in Durham, we have been creating high quality theatre 2017, breaking new ground with hugely popular productions of classics and new plays of our own, touring across County Durham and many venues further afield. We provide opportunities for training in a whole range of theatre skills and welcome enquiries about work experience and training placements.

www.elysiumtc.co.uk



Durham Music Service

Kim Wearmouth

Durham Music Service provides music education and instrumental tuition to children and young people across County Durham and Darlington. This includes individual and group lessons in schools for a wide range of instruments — strings, brass, woodwind, percussion, keyboard, guitar, and voice. We run numerous after-school and weekend ensembles, bands, and choirs including the Durham County Youth Orchestra, Wind Band, and Big Band — giving students performance experience and progression opportunities.

We also offer a vibrant events programme, which includes concerts, festivals, and large-scale events such as the Durham Music Festival and Durham Big Sing, showcasing young musicians from across the region. We lead on the Durham and Darlington Music Education Hub, funded by Arts Council England, to ensure access to high-quality music education for all children and young people in the area.

www.durhammusic.org.uk



Raby Castle

Julie Biddlecombe-Brown – Curator

From the age of seven, Julie knew she wanted to work with history. She began her career as an archaeologist and now works as a curator at the magnificent Raby Castle. Her job is all about caring for the castle and its amazing collections. Every day is different – she might be researching fascinating objects, creating exhibitions, writing articles, or planning themed events. Julie loves discovering new things about history and art, and sharing stories that show how the past can teach us lessons for the future.

Raby Estates manages acres of dramatic, heritage landscapes and unique buildings, steeped in a rich history, across County Durham and Shropshire. Its key heritage asset is Raby Castle, one of the most impressive intact castles in the North of England. Built in the 14th century by the powerful Neville family, it has a long and fascinating history.

www.raby.co.uk



New College Durham

If you're creative and want to turn your passion into a future career, New College Durham is the place to start. Whether it's art, photography, illustration and animation, fashion and textiles, fashion marketing and retail, interior and spatial design, media, TV and film, performance or music performance, there's a pathway for you. You'll work on real projects set by industry, take part in professional performances and showcases, use specialist studios and stage spaces, and build a portfolio that shows off your skills. It's your chance to take what you love doing now and turn it into something bigger.

Studying creative subjects at New College Durham is also about where it can take you next. Many of our students progress onto university-level study – either here at NCD University Centre or at leading universities across the UK – before moving into exciting careers in gaming, TV and film, fashion, theatre, music performance, design and beyond. With the tools, experience, industry links and confidence we give you, your creative pathway could take you anywhere.

www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk



Building Culture

Carlo Viglianisi - Founder and Director

Building Culture was founded by Carlo Viglianisi. Carlo has a fine arts background with over 15 years' experience of working in the arts and culture sector.

Building Culture is an arts organisation that combines classic, hands-on, delivery-led approach that was pioneered by Empty Shop, a Durham-based community interest company that Carlo set up with Nick Malyan in 2008.

Always starting from a baseline of social responsibility, our grassroots heritage and sector-level experience gives us a unique position from which to offer a distinctive brand of practice-led consultancy.

www.building-culture.org



Changing Relations

Lisa Davis - Founder and Managing Director

Changing Relations was set up in 2013 by Lisa Charlotte Davis to educate schools, organisations and communities about difficult and, often taboo, relationship issues. Lisa's mission was to give voice to the unheard members of society and engage with audiences by using the arts as a transformative way to reach people and change lives.

Since then, we have grown considerably to become an experienced and trusted organisation, whose work creates a lasting impact. As a social enterprise, Changing Relations is not about making a profit; it's about making a difference. We care about our social impact and work with schools, organisations and communities to break down gender barriers and foster healthy relationships.

www.changingrelations.co.uk



Elinor Creaby-Attwood – A Portfolio Career

Elinor Creaby-Attwood – Programme Coordinator, Into the Light

Elinor brings a wealth of experience to Into the Light, having worked across the North East's creative and cultural industries – including talent and skills development, partnership building, and creative programming. Born and raised in County Durham, she is passionate about developing sustainable, community driven arts opportunities in the region- fostering collaboration and striving to build access pathways for all. Most recently, Elinor has worked with Creative UK, Generator NE, AMP Music (previously NYMAZ), and Queen's Hall Arts Hexham. Away from Into the Light, Elinor is the Artistic Director of Saltburn Folk Festival – a multivenuue festival in the Tees Valley which champions community driven folk music, providing a platform for emerging and nationally acclaimed artists.



The Marketplace

In the Marketplace you met a range of cultural and heritage organisations and some of the FE colleges providing courses that could be the first step towards an exciting career. Some of these are listed in the following pages.



Northern Heartlands

Northern Heartlands is an arts charity based in Barnard Castle, County Durham. We offer exciting opportunities for freelance artists working in all sorts of different ways – visual arts, performing arts, written and spoken word, musicians, film-makers and photographers. We organise events and deliver activities that support mental health and wellbeing, connect communities together and raise awareness of landscape and the environment.

If you're interested in finding out more about our work with individuals, communities, schools and partners just get in touch – we're a friendly team and great at connecting people! Together, we deliver projects, activities and events that can change how people feel about themselves, the places where they live, and what happens there.

www.northernheartlands.org



Locomotion

Locomotion is part of the National Railway Museum, based in Shildon. It's a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can explore the wonder of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and where attitudes towards them can be positively influenced. Our youth volunteering programme (14–18-year-olds) offers an opportunity for those passionate about the heritage sector, science communication and gaining a new perspective on our collection and the process of railway preservation.

www.locomotion.org.uk



Durham County Council Culture

Durham County Council Culture covers our Heritage and Theatre offers including The Story, Gala Durham, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, Empire Consett, Durham Town Hall and Killhope Lead Mining Museum. The Story offers a gateway to the history of County Durham and its people. Bringing together our diverse collections of records and objects for the first time, The Story charts thousands of years of everyday life in the county. We offer a myriad of careers from curators and archivists, technical, front of house, box office and many others.

www.durham.gov.uk



Bishop Auckland
Town Hall

Empire
Consett

Gala
Durham

Into the Light

Into the Light is a three-year programme that aims to drive long-lasting growth in County Durham through a transformative programme of creative collaboration, experimentation, and community empowerment.

Now in its second year, the programme continues to cultivate talent, widen access to creative education, enhance the skills of the cultural workforce, and break down barriers to working in the creative industries.

Over the course of its delivery, Into the Light will support more than 100 creative commissions, produce nationally significant performances and theatre-making rooted in communities, inspire children and young people, and invite visitors to explore the region's unique blend of culture, science, and heritage. More than that, partnership with Durham University is strengthening our understanding of creativity's role in driving innovation, regeneration and community pride through place-based research and storytelling.

Into the Light is a partnership between, Beamish Museum, The Bowes Museum, Creativity Works, Culture Durham, Durham County Council, Ensemble '84, The Forge, Durham University, No More Nowt, Northern Heartlands, Redhills CIO, and TIN Arts.

The programme is funded by Durham County Council, the National Lottery through Arts Council England, the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and Durham University.

intothelightdurham.co.uk



National Youth Choir

The National Youth Choir (NYC) brings together young singers aged 9–25 from across the UK to share the joy of singing. We run national choir residentials, creative projects and recording sessions that help young people grow in confidence, learn new skills, and perform in amazing venues with inspiring musicians. Through our SING! workshops in schools and communities, we make sure everyone has the chance to experience the power of singing together — no matter their background or experience.

Our Chief Executive, Anne Besford, leads the organisation from our Durham head office, and is passionate about creating opportunities for young people to discover their voices and creativity through music.

Find out more: www.nationalyouthchoir.org.uk
Listen to our music: open.spotify.com/user/nycgbspotify



Bishop Auckland College

Unlock your creative potential at Bishop Auckland College, Creative Industries Department! Whether you're passionate about photography, visual arts, textiles, performing arts, or music, we offer full-time and part-time courses tailored to suit your lifestyle. From Level 1 through to HND Level 5, our programs provide the skills, knowledge, and hands on experience you need to thrive in the creative sector. Our expert tutors guide you through dynamic, industry focused learning, ensuring you gain the confidence and practical expertise to succeed in today's fast-paced creative industries. With flexible study options and state-of-the-art facilities, this is your opportunity to build a successful, rewarding career. Explore your creative future with us, where imagination meets opportunity.

[Home - Bishop Auckland College](#)



Sunderland College

Sunderland College is an Ofsted Outstanding institution offering an exciting range of Creative and Digital courses designed to inspire innovation and develop real industry skills. Students can explore their Creative passions in Performing Arts, Music, Media, Art & Photography, as well as cutting-edge areas such as Esports, Games and Animation. Our state-of-the-art facilities and expert teaching provide the perfect environment for creativity to thrive. Learners also benefit from enrichment opportunities, industry links, and live project experiences that prepare them for successful careers. With clear progression routes to Higher Education and professional pathways, Sunderland College empowers students to achieve their ambitions and excel in the ever-evolving creative and digital industries.

www.sunderlandcollege.ac.uk



Northern School of Art

At The Northern School of Art, we understand the steps needed to become a professional creative. So how do you become a director? Run a ceramics workshop? What course do you take if you want to be an architect? How do you make money from a post on Instagram? Edit a magazine? How can you make your app? Sell prints? Create an animation? Make sets? Write a script? This is where a creative degree and our school can help you not only gain the relevant practical skills you need but give some clarity on how to achieve your goals. Allow you to experiment, weigh up your options and help you get to where you want to be and there has never been a better time to do so!

northernart.ac.uk



Front Cover image:
Lucille Clerc - Ushaw Historic House,
Chapels and Gardens

Culture
Durham

