CHORLTON 2025 ARTS FESTIVAL 2025 Review

"It's a magical festival to be included in"[1]:

....a 10 day Festival, costing £3467, delivering 162 varied arts events across 52 local venues, supported by over 300 artists, 25 volunteers, 12 volunteer organisers, 5 local arts Patrons and 13 sponsors



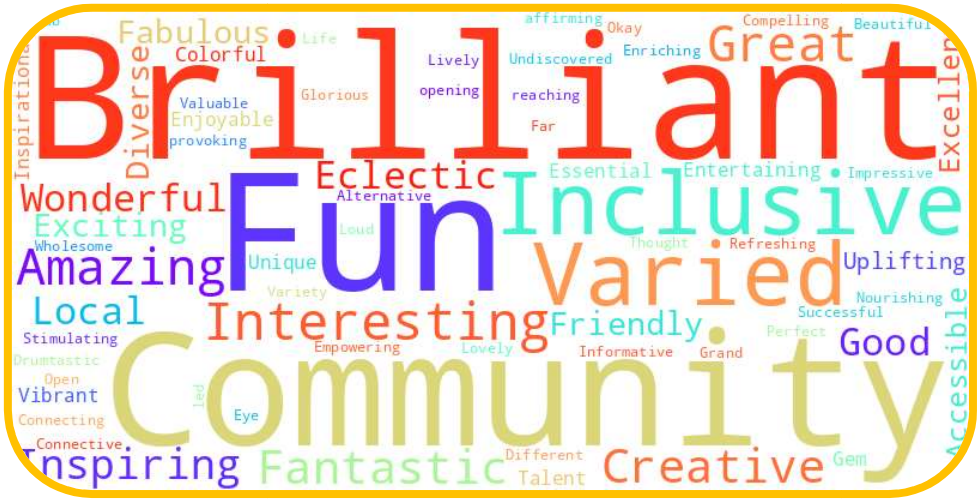
[1] Artist's feedback

Chorlton Civic Society has led, in partnership with others, on the delivery of Chorlton Arts Festival since 2019. This short report draws on the feedback from audiences, artists, venue hosts, volunteers and sponsors, all of which fed into a review by the organising committee to identify changes for the next Festival.

What was new in 2025?

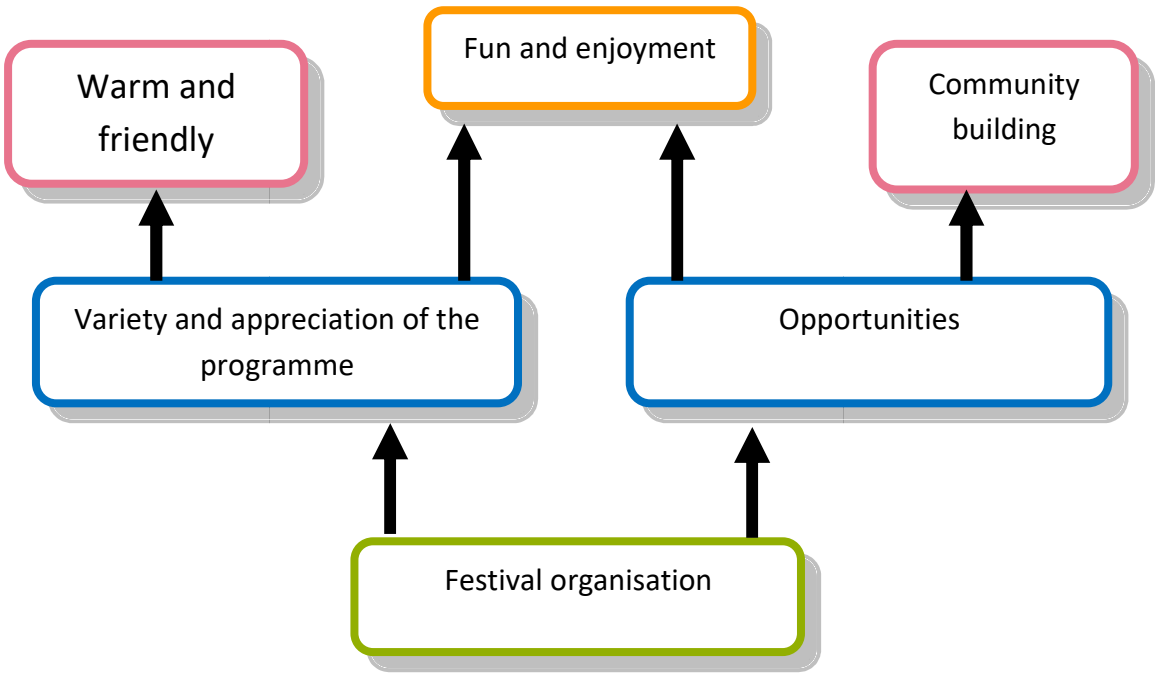
We had many new artists – 27.3% of those formally responding said they had taken part in the Festival for the first time. 14 of the 52 venues participated for the first time since 2019. We had a full programme of youth music events involving more than 11 bands, bringing in large, mostly young audiences. Plenty of events innovated in their delivery, from constructing an art gallery in a primary school to holding interactive street art activities. Five new volunteers joined the group of stewards and five local businesses took the total number of sponsors to 13. Changes had been made to the website, making navigation through the complex programme easier to navigate and additional consultation meetings were held with prospective contributors prior to signing up to join the Festival. The number of printed programmes available was doubled. This year we invited donations via collection boxes in most venues, and we shared those donations with participating churches. As the Festival approached we piloted arranging for artists to visit schools to help inspire pupils.

What did people like about the Festival[2]?



[2] In a report like this we cannot include everyone's comments: we have selected those that were shared and illustrate a theme. All comments received were made available to the review team. Visitors' views were collected via paper forms, online feedback forms, emails to organisers, and comments made to stewards. Venue feedback via online forms, emails or comments made to organisers. Artists' feedback was via online forms, emails and comments made to organisers and stewards. Word cloud created from written feedback.

There was a large amount of very positive feedback about the Festival. People loved the warm, welcoming community feel and the free, varied programme which was Inclusive, accessible, for all ages, and family-friendly. They were able to discover local artists & hidden venues. All this was underpinned by good organisation and support, as shown in the following diagram.





Collage of events

Illustrative comments follow.



Sign me Happy at Wilbraham St Ninian's Church

Fun and Enjoyment

We really enjoyed it like we do ever year. It is a magical festival to be included in. Thank you for creating the space for us to share our love for The Arts (Artist's feedback).

I had so much fun trying different things in the workshops - thankyou! (Visitor's feedback).

I enjoy it so much as the talent is amazing. I wish there could be more of it. (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

All the staff had a ball for the whole Festival (Venue host feedback).

Wonderful, non-celebrity talent (Visitor's feedback, 56+) *with* Lots for different age group Visitor's feedback, 36-45_ *and* there are lots of kid friendly activities Visitors' feedback, 36-45 and 0-18).

[the singers] brought great energy (Visitor's feedback 26-35).

I've enjoyed every aspect of it (Volunteer's feedback).

The thought provoking interactive street art was incredible (Visitor's feedback, 36-45).

I've really enjoyed stewarding at several events – what an amazing Festival (Volunteer's feedback).

Warm friendly atmosphere

Warm, welcoming, friendly atmosphere (lots of visitors' comments, ages 19-25, 36-45, 46-55).

[Best thing was] the relaxed and welcoming vibe (Visitor's feedback, 19-25).

Very welcoming, community spirit, entertaining. (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

Friendly and supportive (Visitor's feedback, 45-56).

"Just ordinary creative people" made it feel authentic (Visitor's feedback).

Great to see young people performing and expressing themselves (0-18, 26-35, 45-55).

It's been a wonderful 10 days (Volunteer's feedback).



Bunting being created 'I am Greenfield' at Tea HIve



Cancer Wellbeing Choir at the Edge Theatre

Sense of community

Helped people feel part of the community and connected to local creativity (Visitor's feedback, 26-35, 46-55, 56+).

Inclusive, accessible, and open to all ages (Visitor's feedback).

Liked the helpful stewards and clear support at venues (Visitor's feedback 25-36).

Made me feel a part of the community (Visitor's feedback).

A wonderful warm welcome and sense of community (Visitor's feedback, 36-45).

It makes me want to participate and stay in Chorlton. (Visitor's feedback, 26-35).

Great looking at art in local venues - helps to engage with the community (Visitor's feedback 56+).

It's a fantastic local event, and a great way to meet new people and connect with others that you know already (Venue host feedback).

Overall, it does wonders for Chorlton, everyone supporting each other is a must in this day and age (Venue host feedback).

Variety and appreciation of the programme

Good spread throughout Chorlton, easy to catch multiple events (Visitor, 46-55).

I went to a fair few events on the programme myself and was deeply impressed by the quality and diversity of performances and exhibitions (Artist's feedback).

Variety of artwork and mediums is wonderful (Artist's feedback).

Great to have see and hear young musicians. There's such a varied programme – can attend things I wouldn't normally book (Visitor's feedback, 46-66).

Love how it's a free event for all ages. Great way to showcase local talent. (Visitor's feedback, 26-35).

Lots of different events all offering different things. Lots of interesting venues. (Visitor's feedback, 19-25).

Inclusive and generous in allowing a variety of participating arts. (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

Considering we are living in a cost of living crisis, most events were free. Just ordinary creative people (Artist's feedback).

Good spread of events throughout all of Chorlton – easy to catch multiple events (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

So many people turned out. We had 60 on Eventbrite and usually only 30 show. But we had 80 show this time - am well chuffed! (Artist's feedback).



Virtual visual and literary art – online

Opportunities

Great to have see/hear young musicians. There's such a varied programme – can attend things I wouldn't normally book (Visitor's feedback, 46-66).

It was an opportunity to show my work and meet like-minded people (Artist's feedback).

It was really fun to be able to participate and you offered a great opportunity for new artists such as myself (Artist's feedback).

Discovering new venues and friends' art (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

It's a great opportunity to experience new arts and artists (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

It gives you the chance to experience something out of the ordinary (Visitor's feedback, 56+).

I'm new to Chorlton and this was a great way to find different places (Volunteer's feedback)).

It's a great opportunity to learn about the local groups and societies [I did not know about(Visitor's feedback, 25-36).

A great opportunity to discover local artists, venues, and hidden talents (Visitor's feedback).

We were delighted to be a part of CAF and very pleased indeed with the turnout and trade outside our normal working hours (Venue host feedback).

We definitely had increased footfall of people looking at the art and I'd say 75% of them bought something (Venue host's feedback).

We got lots of positive feedback – people viewing the café just to see the art, which is amazing (Venue host's feedback).

Definitely increased sales of one of our two events – not sure about the other (Venue host's feedback).

Overall positive experience from all guests that came in. Not our normal crowd so good to diversify our passive exposure in Chorlton (Venue Host's feedback).



Volunteers and performer Georginaeliizabeth at the Lloyds

Festival organisation

I liked the website as you can search for events on the day or by artist or venue. (Visitor's feedback, 46-55).

The hard copy brochure is very attractive but the font size is unreadable for the details of the events. (Visitor's feedback, 56+).

Organisers were very quick to respond to my queries (Artist's feedback).

Signing up could be simpler I think, although the web master was very helpful and fixed all my issues! (Artist's feedback).

The volunteers were absolutely AMAZING this year, a great practical help, I couldn't have done it so effectively with out their help!! (Artist's feedback).

Running into the bank holiday weekend meant that weekend had smaller audiences (Volunteer's feedback).

Thank you (to the organisers) for all the work you do for our community. I was proud to partake. (Artist's feedback).

What could be improved for future Festivals?

Visitors, artists and venue hosts all took the trouble to make suggestions about how the Festival could be improved. These were mostly about Festival organisation, although a minority were about specific Festival events. A number of visitors of all ages reported that the printed programme's font size was too small and suggested organising the programme by date, rather than by arts genre, and with longer event descriptions. Similarly some visitors thought improvements could be made to the website, particularly regarding the search function and ease of navigability. Whilst most artists found the sign up process straightforward, some made suggestions about simplifying it.

Some venue hosts recommended more initial face to face contact from organisers, making the remit for venues more explicit and giving them greater opportunity to suggest the type of art that would fit with the atmosphere of their venues, as well as for the communications with artists to be eased. Some venue hosts were confused as to how to work with direct approaches from artists after slots had been made available to the Festival – this was an issue also raised by organisers. Visitors suggested earlier publicity and availability of printed programmes. Whilst most visitors liked the spread of venues, a minority thought greater concentration in the centre of Chorlton would be advantageous. One artist requested more visibility about the organising team. Organisers reported the problem of artists withdrawing after scheduling had taken place, sometimes stranding other artists who had been scheduled to share a time slot. They also reported that repeated events were not successful in attracting reasonable audiences. Some events did not have stewards and organisers noted that earlier recruitment of even more volunteers would help to remedy this.

These comments were considered carefully by the review group alongside organisers' feedback.



Creative Corner - drummng in Chorlton Park

What will change for 2026?

What we will be certain to keep:	What we will change:
Run the festival in 2026.	We will explore the viability of bringing the Festival forward by a week, checking with schools that they would still be able to take part.
The default for all events to be free to attend.	Venues will have a named organiser to liaise with, and support them through sign up and the Festival itself and will be passed telephone numbers of artists (with their agreement).
The diversity of types of art and event .	Sign up for venues will enable them to describe the kinds of art activities that would best fit their venue.
A range of types of venues across Chorlton, including some in Whalley Range.	A meeting of interested artists will be called in the autumn to enable networking.
A young person's music strand to the Festival.	Sign up period will be earlier to give more time for schedule changes in advance of finalising the programme.
Consultation sessions with artists will continue.	The printed programme will be organised by date, have longer event descriptions and larger font.
The artists-into-schools programme will be extended.	An attempt will be made to improve the search function of the website .
Process of recruiting and involving volunteers.	Details of the organising committee will be placed on the website.
Virtual Festival.	We will explore the possibility of making a £10 charge to participating artists, refundable by request once their event had taken place.
	Publicity, including the availability of printed programmes, will be brought forward in advance of the Festival



Unity Arts at the White House

Huge thanks to all the artists, venue hosts, volunteers, organisers, visitors , Patrons and sponsors, without whom there would be no Festival!

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Art Gallery at the Golf Club