

How we re-opened our doors



Lawrence Batley Theatre (Huddersfield) was one of 40 arts centres to take part in Here & Now, a national project where arts centres worked with artists and their local communities, as part of the National Lottery's 25th anniversary in 2020. Hoot Creative Arts brought together two groups, who would not usually have contact with each other, to develop new creative conversations which explored the aspirations and fears of their communities.

It was 2020 and we were just coming out of a lockdown. At the time, the most notable impact of the project was bringing two generations together. They really loved doing things together and it had lots of personal importance for the individuals.

Looking back, the most significant change was our change in the use of the courtyard. We'd had to change the shape of the project, because of Covid. The original plan was to be offsite, but we changed it to be on site in the courtyard, which was really lovely. It brought the courtyard to life in a wonderful way – it was especially exciting given we'd been shut down.

Before, we may have had the occasional activity in the courtyard but it felt risky, especially with the weather...we're in Yorkshire after all!

But one of the things that came out of Here and Now was we all said 'we should use the courtyard more'. Plus there were conversations at that time about how we could re-open and been seen to be visible – lots of that still applies in a different way now.

Now we use the courtyard quite frequently and have an annual series of public performances called Summer in the Courtyard. In terms of participation, we held a Jo Cox Great Get Together day which included a whole building takeover, including the courtyard. My favourite part of that day was a South Asian women's choir we work with, doing their second workshop in the courtyard in the sunshine. They were teaching songs in Punjabi to a group of older white women, and there was loads of laughter and connection.

This Most Significant Change story was shared by Jenny Goodman, Head of Participation at Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield, in October 2024. Find out more about [Walk in my Shoes](#) and [Most Significant Change](#).