

Creative Children 2026



Information for Resident Artists



eastsidearts.net/creativechildren

**EAST
SIDE
ARTS**

01.

Call for Socially Engaged Artists

DEADLINE

22nd Sept

ARTIST FEE

£3,960

EastSide Arts is seeking four socially engaged artists to take part in Creative Children - Artists in Residence. This is a pilot programme exploring how artists and early years practitioners can work together to strengthen creativity within everyday practice.

Artists will work collaboratively with practitioners and young children over a ten-week period to explore ideas, experiment with creative approaches and respond to the unique context of each setting. The focus is on the development of enduring creative methods rather than on delivering activities.

We welcome artists working across a wide range of artforms. The creative

approach should be responsive to the developmental stage of the children in the setting. The programme is based on play, curiosity, collaboration and shared learning.

Creative Children - Artists in Residence is part of a wider Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded project called Creative Citizens, which aims to broaden access to arts and creativity in East Belfast.

What do we mean by socially engaged art practice?

Within this project, socially engaged art practice is a collaborative approach to making art that responds to the people, place and context of a setting. It uses creative enquiry to explore themes that are meaningful to those involved, creating opportunities for dialogue, experimentation and new ways of thinking together.

Partner settings

Artists will be matched with one of the following settings:

Setting	Description / Age Group	Available Spaces
Sure Start East Belfast	Supporting young children and families through play-based early years provision. Age group 2-3 year olds	2 artists residencies
Tor Bank School	A specialist school supporting children and young people with a wide range of additional needs. Age group 2-11 year olds	1 artist residency
Toy Box Project	Working with Traveller, Roma and newcomer families through home learning and community-based early years support. Age group 0-4 year olds	1 artist residency

The programme will follow five stages:

Learning Exchange

Relationship Building

Co-design

Creative Practice

Practice Exchange

Who are we looking for?

Experience of working in early years settings is welcome but is not essential. The successful artists will be required to undergo an Enhanced AccessNI check before commencing work.

ARTISTS WHO:

Have an established socially engaged creative practice.

Are interested in collaboration, listening and relationship-building, and enjoy working in responsive and open-ended ways.

Are excited by the opportunity to learn alongside early years practitioners.

Are interested in exploring artforms, ideas and themes through creative practice rather than delivering predetermined activities.

Can create inclusive, welcoming and playful environments for exploration.

The role

ARTISTS WILL:

Work alongside practitioners as creative partners

Observe and understand the setting before developing ideas

Co-design creative approaches with practitioners

Explore themes emerging from children's interests, the setting and the wider place

Introduce new creative processes, materials and perspectives

Contribute to shared learning with the other artists and settings

Artist fee and commitments

Each artist will receive a **fee of £3,960**, plus a **materials budget of up to £500** will be provided separately.

Artists will commit to the following:

- * Participation in a pre-project Learning Exchange with all recruited artists and childcare practitioners.
- * Creative practice development within a childcare setting for 7 hours per week for 10 weeks. This is likely to look like a regular commitment of 2x half days per week. Times and days will be agreed between the artist and the childcare setting. During this 10-week period, artists will have time to observe the setting, build relationships with staff and co-design creative approaches with practitioners.
- * Participation in a final Practice Exchange with all recruited artists and childcare practitioners

How to apply

Click here to apply via email. Applicants should include a CV, references and a cover letter (500 word limit). Tell us why this opportunity suits you, what your practice is and what distinctive perspective or process you would bring to the residency. Let us know which setting would suit you best, and include examples/links to any relevant work.

Apply by 22nd September. Interviews will happen in the week commencing 29th September.

Click
here to
apply



02.

Artists in Residencae - Collaborative Practice Model

A collaborative model of artist residencies, where artists and practitioners learn alongside one another to embed creative approaches into everyday early years practice. Rather than delivering a pre-designed programme of workshops, artists will work with practitioners to understand the setting, co-design creative experiences and develop approaches that respond to the needs of children and families.

Five Stages of the Model	
Stage	Purpose
01. Learning Exchange	Artists and practitioners come together to build relationships, share knowledge and establish a common understanding of child development, creative practice and the aims of the programme.
02. Relationship Building	Artists spend time within the setting observing routines, getting to know children, practitioners and families, and understanding the culture of the setting, and the place, before planning activity.
03. Co-design	Artists and practitioners jointly develop creative ideas, drawing on children's interests, the strengths of the setting and the artist's practice.
04. Creative Practice	Artists work alongside practitioners over a sustained period, experimenting with creative approaches, responding to children's ideas and adapting practice through reflection.
05. Practice Exchange	At the end of the pilot, participants come together to share learning, celebrate outcomes and identify how approaches can be embedded and shared across the wider early years sector.

Roles		
Artist	Practitioner	Child
• Observe and listen • Build relationships • Bring creative expertise • Experiment alongside practitioners • Document learning • Reflect and adapt	• Share knowledge of children and families • Co-design activity • Participate in experimentation • Reflect on changes to practice • Embed learning beyond the pilot	• Lead exploration through their interests • Shape the direction of creative activity

Principles	
Collaborative	Artists and practitioners are equal partners, each bringing different expertise.
Child-led	Creative experiences emerge from children's interests, curiosity and play.
Process-led	The emphasis is on exploration, experimentation and learning rather than producing finished artworks.
Relationship-centred	Time is intentionally allocated for discovery - observation, trust-building and understanding the setting
Responsive to people and place	The programme is co-designed within each setting rather than following a standard curriculum.
Sustainable	The focus is on building practitioner confidence and leaving creative approaches that continue beyond the pilot.

EASTSIDE ARTS

EastSide Arts is part of EastSide Partnership, a regeneration charity working across physical regeneration, education, poverty alleviation, arts, tourism and heritage.

www.eastsidearts.net

For any other questions, please email **eastsidearts@eastsidepartnership.com** or phone **028 9045 1900** and we will get back to you.

