



Finding a new venue - some ideas

Finding a suitable venue for your voluntary arts or crafts activity can be a challenge – whether it's for a one-off show or exhibition, a regular workshop or rehearsal, or a meeting space for your management committee.

This Briefing provides voluntary arts groups with lots of ideas for who to approach when looking for new places and spaces.

Venue ideas and useful links

Other cultural groups – there may be other creative groups in your area that have a space you could use. For example, if you're a choir, there might be a dance group right down the road from you with their own hall that they only use three nights a week – perhaps you could lease it from them when they're not using it?

It is also worth contacting other groups working locally to see if they could pass on any useful contacts or suggestions of venues you could approach. See Briefing 127 'Working with groups of other art and craft forms', available to download from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings

Empty Shops - it's estimated that about 13% of the UK's shops are sitting empty, and that one in five empty shops may never be used again.

The Empty Shops Network helps new initiatives start on the high street, bringing visitors back to town centres and helping local communities turn private spaces into public places.

To find out more and get guidance on how to transform an empty shop in your area, visit www.emptyshopsnetwork.com

3Space is an award-winning charity which was set up to unlock the value of empty commercial

property. The organisation works in partnership with property holders to make otherwise empty commercial spaces (of all types) available free of charge for a limited period for community use.

Visit the 3Space website for more information and to search available properties – www.3space.org



Creative Stirling, a not-for-profit community arts organisation, exhibit and sell the work of local artists in a shop unit on the high street.

Cafes and pubs – make great informal meeting spaces, depending on your groups needs, and can help raise the profile of your group, inspiring other customers to join in.

If you think your activity is suited to a venue like this, approach your local cafe owner / landlord to see if you can come to an arrangement. You might find that they are willing to let you reserve and use a space for free, as long as participants purchase drink/food whilst on the premises. Alternatively, they might have additional space that they are willing to lease, or may be prepared to let you use the space when it's closed to the public.

Pub in the Hub (England and Wales) is an initiative inspired by HRH Prince of Wales to encourage rural communities and pub landlords to work together to diversify business. In addition to community group activities, shops, post offices, meeting spaces and small businesses have been developed inside pubs involved in the project. To find your nearest participating pub, visit – www.pubisthehub.org.uk

Note: not everyone will feel comfortable in an environment used primarily for the consumption of alcohol – it might be a good idea to seek your participants' views before booking a pub as a venue.



Say it Ain't Sew' hold weekly craft classes in pubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, inviting people to sip while they sew.

Churches, temples, mosques and synagogues and their related ancillary buildings, can provide good venues for group activity, whether or not you have any religious links or affiliations. Contact the person responsible for maintaining your local place of worship, and ask if they have a scheme for community access.

Note: not everyone shares the same religious beliefs and participants may not feel comfortable in a place of worship that doesn't align with their views – it might be a good idea to seek opinion from your participants' before booking a place of worship for your activities.

Sports clubs – as with the arts, many local sports clubs are run by volunteers as well as professionals, and many have venues that they own or lease from the local authority or from private landlords. By seeking out the sports clubs in your area, you may be able to find a venue that is available for your group at particular times of the week on a shared tenancy, leased or sub-leased basis.

The great outdoors - gardens, parks, woodlands and greenspace can make great settings for a special event, performance or workshop. Think pop-up theatre in the woods, nature inspired arts and crafts workshops or line dancing with the grass between your toes.

Take a look at your Local Authority / Cultural Trust website for details of council run parks and gardens in your area. The following organisations might also be worth contacting:

The National Trust (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) looks after over 350 historic houses, gardens and ancient monuments, as well as forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, downs, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, castles, nature reserves and villages. For more information, visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The National Trust for Scotland is responsible 35 major gardens, 190,000 acres of countryside and 45 sites of special scientific interest, plus historic houses, castles, monuments, coastlines, archaeological sites, Munro mountains, footpaths and nature reserves. For more information visit www.nts.org.uk

An Taisce (Ireland) is a charity that works to preserve and protect Ireland's natural and built heritage. Visit their website for details of historic buildings and nature reserves www.antisce.org



Crafters share their skills at the Diamond Jubilee Orchard, in County Antrim, and invite passers-by to contribute to their Woollen Woods display.

The Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity. It works to protect precious ancient woods, restore the ones that are damaged and fights for those under threat, in addition to working with communities, schools, organisations and individuals to create new native woodland around the UK. Search for woodlands here – www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Forestry Commission (England and Scotland) plants many millions of trees every year, to create new woodland and replace the trees they harvest.

There is a network of Forestry Commission visitor centres and over 140 waymarked walks, trails, cycle routes and bridle paths spread across England and Scotland. For more information, visit www.forestry.gov.uk

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens directly supports over 700 member groups across the UK, including: community farms and gardens, school farms, care farms, wildlife and roof gardens, community orchards, community-run allotments and community supported agriculture schemes. Visit the FCFCG website for more information on projects in your area – www.farmgarden.org.uk

England's Community Forests is a programme set up to regenerate derelict land, creating new opportunities for leisure, recreation and cultural activities, enhancing biodiversity, preparing for climate change and supporting education, healthy living and social and economic development. To find your local community forest, visit www.communityforest.org.uk

Schools – many schools make facilities available for the community to use, including cultural groups, as part of an 'Extended Schools' programme. Contact your local school directly or visit www.schoolswebdirectory.co.uk to look up details of schools in your area (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

Note: in some areas booking is done through the local authority rather than directly with the school.

Museums and galleries are usually owned by the local authority or a charitable trust. Although they are not set up specifically for voluntary arts use, they may have spaces suited to exhibitions, workshops or even performances, and certainly for planning/committee meetings etc.

Culture 24 supports the cultural sector to reach online audiences and holds details for over 6,000

cultural venues across the UK. To find a cultural venue near you, visit www.culture24.org.uk/places-to-go



The Gurdwara Youth Choir perform in the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow.

Arts centres and performance venues – whether these are owned by the local authority, charitable trusts or private owners, professional arts venues are a tailor-made setting for arts events and workshops. Many have community or outreach programmes that you might be able to tap into in order to get favourable rates.

Libraries and community centres - similar to arts centres and museums, these are usually owned by the local authority or a charitable trust.

They may have spaces suited to exhibitions, performances, workshops and/or meetings. Visit your Local Authority or Cultural Trust website for listings and contact details.

Village halls / community halls – these are a time-honoured haven for voluntary-led creative cultural activity, although many have struggled financially in recent years, they remain a wonderful hub for local recreation.

You may be able to find a village hall in your area at www.uk-hallhire.co.uk which includes listings for over 20,000 low-cost or free halls and function rooms across the UK.

Or if you're based in England try:

Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) – www.acre.org.uk/our-work/village-halls

Shopping centres and supermarkets – some supermarkets have a dedicated community room or may have office space you can use. Alternatively shopping centres and supermarkets can be great places to stage an event, especially if you are looking to engage new audiences / participants / volunteers. Think information stands, drop-in workshops or a flashmob performance.

Get in touch with the store manager or phone the general enquiry number to see who the best person is to deal with your request.



The Cobweb Orchestra takes classical music to the shopping centre in Newcastle.



The Packhorse Gallery knitting group gets crafty on the high street in Huddersfield and invite passers-by to join in.

Listings and directory services

Spare Place is a map of spaces across the UK that can be used for temporary and 'pop-up' projects, including: empty shops, church halls, fields, shopping precincts and old offices – all spaces that can be legally occupied by agreement with the owner. It's not yet a comprehensive map of every available space, but with increased use it is hoped that it will grow into a valuable resource – www.spareplace.com

somewhereto_ is a UK-wide project, which offers people aged 16-25 years old access to free spaces in their communities to pursue creative and enterprising endeavours. **somewhereto_** received a £7m grant from the Big Lottery Fund in 2012 to support its nationwide expansion.

Visit the website to search for available spaces in your area – www.somewhereto.com/register



somewhereto_ in full swing at Beyond the Finish Line; a pop-up space in Trongate, Glasgow.

The School of Everything lists details of informal learning groups, teachers and classes throughout the UK. It also includes details of venues: www.schoolofeverything.com/subject/all/gb/venue

My Community Space is a resource created by Community Matters, where groups can search for venues that are low cost or no cost. The website also features resources that advise on finding, managing and making improvements to premises – www.mycommunityspace.org.uk

Things to think about

Insurance – if you are hiring a venue or someone has donated the use of their venue to you, find out what insurance the owner already has, and whether it covers your planned activities. Ensure that your own cover is adequate to fill any gaps. For more details, download Briefing 118 'Insurance for voluntary arts groups' from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings

Accessibility – always consider accessibility for disabled visitors, and discuss the issue with the venue manager before deciding whether or not to use it. For more details, including a handy accessibility checklist, download Briefing 128 'Events checklist – disability and access' from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings

Risk Assessment - when using a new venue it is important to identify any potential hazards and make the environment as safe as possible. Briefing 67 'Risk assessment for event organisers – a beginners guide' offers practical guidance on how to carry out a risk assessment, download this from www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings

Further Resources

Voluntary Arts Briefings

Once you have found a new venue, there will be other things to think about, such as how to fund and publicise your activity. Visit our full suite of informative Briefings for guidance and useful links on a range of topics – www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings

Voluntary Arts Funding page

Visit our website for a list of funding opportunities for community engaged creative groups and projects – www.voluntaryarts.org/funding

Voluntary Arts Enews

Sign up to the [Voluntary Arts enews](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/eneews) to stay in touch and receive regular updates on arts news, events, funding, volunteering and job opportunities – www.info.voluntaryarts.org/eneews



The Clydeside Singers perform in the foyer of their local Tesco.

Information contained here may go out of date and you are therefore advised to check its currency. Updated information may be available on the Voluntary Arts website www.voluntaryarts.org.

Disclaimer: Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure the information in this document is accurate. However, it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith at the stated date but without accepting liability. We therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking action on any of the matters covered herein.

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Voluntary Arts is the UK and Ireland development agency for voluntary and amateur arts and crafts. Visit www.voluntaryarts.org for more VA Briefings and other interactive learning materials.



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