



making space

A case for the Arts in Leigh Park



At Making Space, our ambition is to see Leigh Park thrive through a collaborative approach to culture. Our work focuses on building skills, providing opportunity, and reinvigorating our neighbours through partnership with local charities and support groups, we will make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of our neighbours, generating a sense of possibility, cultivating aspiration for a brighter, more vibrant Leigh Park.



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This community project is second to none and we have nothing else like it in our area. Myself and my team are delighted that the free space sessions are returning, as these have been invaluable for our patients in the past.

Pre-COVID, I had a young female patient who went along on our recommendation – she used to be a kitchen designer but had lost her way, became lonely and her mental health was suffering. Making Space reignited her passion for creative design and after attending for a while, got chatting to other community members who invited her to an additional art group. The patient eventually found her way again and started her own business in nail art/design.

Having these types of links for us to talk to patients about and get them motivated and excited about being creative is extremely beneficial. As Social Prescribing Link Workers, we aim to lead the patient away from medical models and look at things differently, things they can get involved in and participate in for themselves.

Making Space is inspirational to us as Link Workers as well as to the patients we involve in the activities. Allowing patients the space to be creative in a warm and welcoming environment, in the heart of the community, is something special.

– Social Prescribers Network, Leigh Park

Leigh Park comprises of approximately 11,136 homes with a population of just over 28,000. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation identify a number of Leigh Park wards in the worst 10% nationally, where one in five children grows up in poverty.

Unemployment is consistently above the UK average and education levels are amongst the lowest in the UK. Leigh Park is a community that requires the highest levels of public support and higher than national average financial assistance, as families live with significant financial stress. Perhaps this goes some way to explain the high level of poor mental health in the area – sadly resulting in one death by suicide each month. And yet, for all local authority subsidised wellbeing services – such as leisure centres, and arts provision, the 28,000 residents of Leigh Park must travel. The nearest arts centre is 1.7 miles away, not on a direct bus route or not fully accessible and has no programme for craft.

Being situated in a leafy suburb of the borough, the main arts centre is not consciously presented as a location that Leigh Park residents might feel welcome attending. It is not 'their space' in the way that Making Space has the location and potential to be. Making Space is a purpose-built craft centre in the heart of Leigh Park, We literally make space for people to engage in craft. In 2019/20 we ran 248 workshop sessions with adults, young people, children and families – a total of 4,055 attendances.

We create opportunities for residents to come together and experience the benefits of crafting, and become part of an inclusive community in their neighbourhood.



Multiple studies show how engaging in craft activity helps to ameliorate and manage the effects of living with mental health conditions and chronic physical illness, generates a sense of empowerment and improves learning outcomes for children. Crafting groups provide places of safety, support, learning and inspiration. Our specially tailored projects inspire, challenge, skill-up, engage and support individuals and groups.

We know that the projects we run improve well-being and increase confidence. For example, our "Reach Out" programme for young people with additional needs including autism, and our workshops with teenagers, provide new skills, inspire and engage. Young and old all benefit when engaged in meaningful creative activities. Evidence from our Learning Through Craft project demonstrated that pupils participating increased their reading age by 2+ years. Our neighbours tell us how much they value opportunities to develop and express their creativity, both on their own and with others. But they also describe difficulties in finding activities for themselves or their families to take part in, as well as barriers to becoming, and then staying, involved.

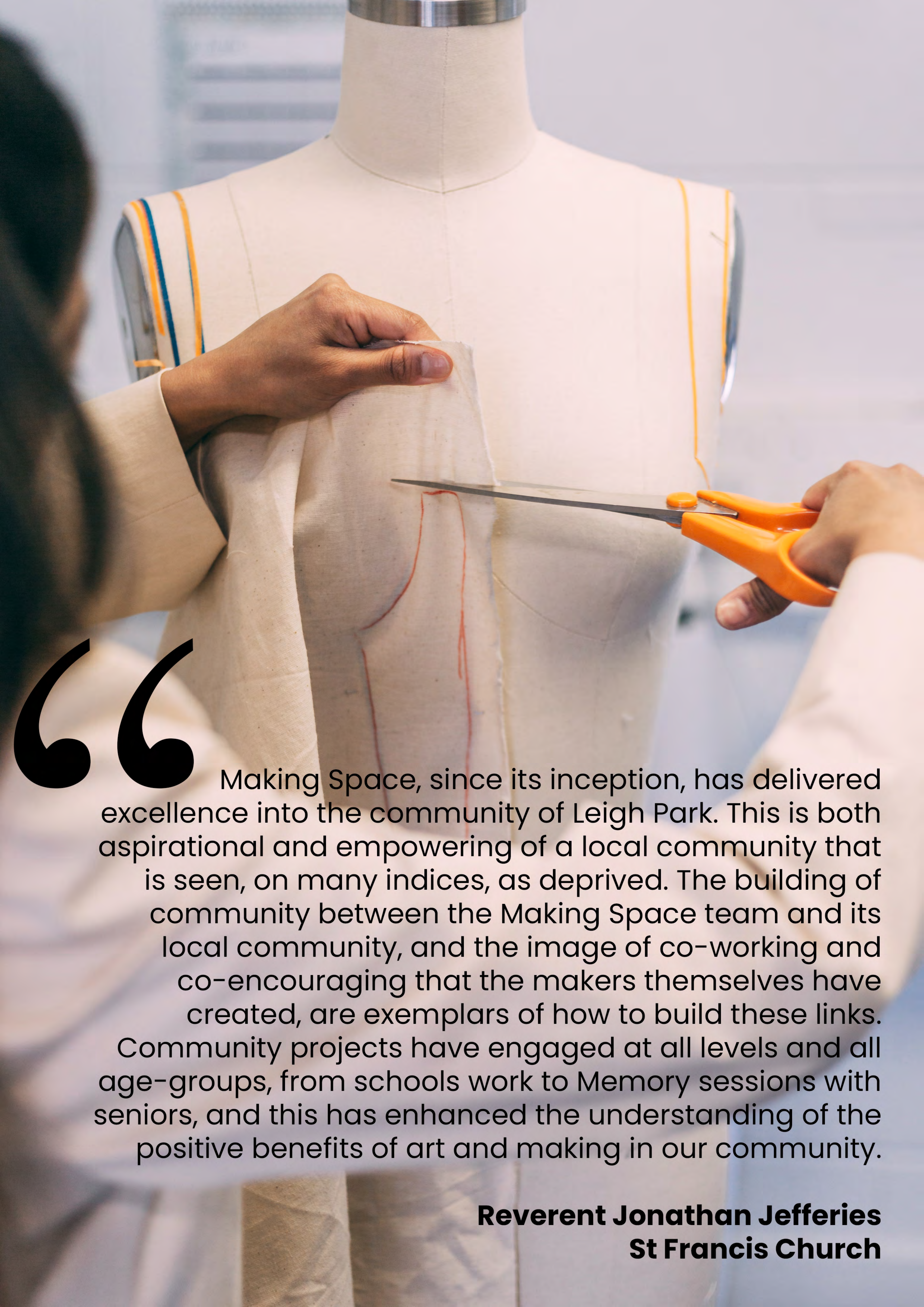
Through consultation, they have told us they need activity that is local, regular and long term.

We believe that everyone should have access to a full range of cultural opportunities wherever they live – but these opportunities are currently uneven, in the borough.

Our work speaks for itself: 15+ years of diverse, dynamic creative programmes in the centre of Leigh Park, run by and for its residents. You can read more about the work we do on the pages to follow. It is the feedback from the people of Leigh Park that truly makes the case for the arts in Leigh Park.

The solution is clear – a consistent investment in Leigh Park's own creative space, resulting in regular opportunities for engagement and relationship building, giving the people of Leigh Park the opportunities afforded to those living elsewhere in the borough.

Faye Hughes
Director, Making Space



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Making Space, since its inception, has delivered excellence into the community of Leigh Park. This is both aspirational and empowering of a local community that is seen, on many indices, as deprived. The building of community between the Making Space team and its local community, and the image of co-working and co-encouraging that the makers themselves have created, are exemplars of how to build these links. Community projects have engaged at all levels and all age-groups, from schools work to Memory sessions with seniors, and this has enhanced the understanding of the positive benefits of art and making in our community.

Reverent Jonathan Jefferies
St Francis Church

Reaching Out to our community by Ami Hyde

I've had the pleasure of working at Making Space since we opened in 2007, and in the last 15 years have designed, delivered and overseen hundreds of inspiring creative projects that are testament to the incredible work Making Space does for its local community. Since 2009 we have delivered over 1000 community outreach sessions with over 10,000 attendances. Here are a selection of my favourite projects & some facts about them.

A Space To Make | Launched in 2018 | 685 attendances to date

ASTM was designed to specifically benefit local residents. A free regular service where people can come in and use our space to make, helping themselves to materials on offer. The sessions build confidence, forge friendships, and offer a valuable opportunity to get out of the house, meet like-minded people and explore creativity in a safe & welcoming setting. ASTM has now relaunched after lockdown, and we now offer this service every Wednesday, doubling the number of opportunities. It is open to all!

Reach Out | Launched in 2012 | 145 sessions / 1440 attendances to date

Reach Out is an ongoing project supported by Short Breaks. We programme in workshops specifically for SEN children who cannot attend mainstream activities. Our sessions provide them with a high-quality creative experience and their parent(s) a short break. We have had children grow up through Reach Out and we have supported some of these young people to access our mainstream offers, on various Arts Awards, volunteering opportunities and paid teaching jobs. This partnership project is a lifeline to many children and young people with additional needs local to us in Hampshire.

Craft Kits | Lockdown Project | 2020 | 922 craft kits delivered

In 2020 during the first lockdown, Making Space had to close its doors like everyone else, but rather than putting the staff on furlough we embarked on a crusade to provide creative inspiration to our community, to keep morale up and ease mental health worries and feelings of isolation. Initially we created tutorials for creative activities for people to join in with at home and shared these online for free. They received over 1600 views to date. Following on from that we sought funding to design and create nearly 1000 bespoke free craft kits which were delivered to the most vulnerable people in our community.

From food banks to hospices, rape & domestic abuse charities to those working with disabled people. 350 of the craft kits were also delivered to Leigh Park school children in receipt of free school meals!



Heritage Lottery Projects | 2009 & 2011 | £100,000 worth of projects

Making Space have delivered two 2-year projects for the people of Leigh Park. The first project partnered with local creches, schools, The Spring & Staunton Country Park delivering a mix of sessions for free. The second project focused on the post war acquisition of land from Portsmouth City Council and the build of the Leigh Park Estate. Memory Roadshows took place at old people's homes and in the community centre, and schools worked with artists to create four Leigh Park memory boxes that are still being hired out, for free, to community groups now. The project celebrated local heroes through documentary films, and a legacy piece of artwork in the form of a map from people's memories lives at The Dickinson Centre at Park Community School.

A Woman's Space | 2020 | £9k project for women and girls of Leigh Park

In 2019 Making Space was granted money from the HIWCF and The Tampon Tax Community Fund to design and deliver a project for Leigh Park females. Inspired by the old Tampon factory that used to be in Leigh Park, Making Space commissioned local female artists and makers to lead creative workshops that focussed on female empowerment, body positivity and feminism. From a young designers course and creative craft kits for teenagers, to empowering Adult Saturday workshops and mother and daughter workshops, the project was a huge success.

Arts Awards | 141 successful qualifications since 2011

We have currently logged 141 Arts Award qualifications with Trinity College London and have been involved in countless more through other outreach work. The Arts Award is an accredited qualification similar to the Duke of Edinburgh Award. There are 5 awards available from Discover & Explore suitable for young children aged 5years+, right up to university level where the award equates to UCAS points. Making Space is an Arts Award supporter, centre and has trained advisors to deliver and assess the Arts Award at all levels. This valued addition to our outreach work has benefitted many children from Leigh Park.

Organisations we've supported and worked with

Motiv8, Active Communities Network, The Rowans Hospice, Leigh Park Food Bank, The Right To Work, PARCS, Positive Pathways, Home Instead Havant, The Roberts Centre, The Original Place Youth Club, The You Trust, Brendon Care Home, Leigh Park Community centre, Enable Ability, Bedhampton Community Centre, Portsmouth Asylum Seekers, Planet Aware, Two Saints homeless charity, The Spring, Staunton Country Park, The D-Day Museum, The Historic Dockyard, Park Community Enterprises, The Discovery Centre, New Ashgate Gallery, Stansted Park and many more.






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As a Leigh Park resident, I could not see how to fulfil my dreams of becoming a successful craftsperson in such an impoverished and creatively disregarded area. One day I was told about Making Space. This friendly and humble body has completely revolutionised my personal and professional life beyond belief. Provision of a studio to develop my work and professional mentorship allowed growth of my idea into a full time, internationally recognised craft business. Through affiliation with the organisation, I've also been firmly encouraged to share likewise, providing opportunities to other local artists and craftspersons in education and mentorship. What the regional academic and employment bodies failed to provide to this budding creative is generously provided by Making Space. There is no doubt that without the provision of Making Space in my life, I could not have fulfilled my potential. But it's not just about me. The enrichment of my neighbours, aged parents and inquisitive children, has been vastly improved by this brilliant team of visionaries.

These troubled times we are experiencing are disproportionately felt most by the poorest and most neglected communities in magnitudes unacknowledged by those who can make a positive difference. The increase of mental wellness, social support, employment opportunities and personal development through engagement in craft conducted through this charity is a shining beacon of warmth and light in my neighbourhood and must never, ever be underestimated.

- Richard Walker
Resident Maker, Board Member and Leigh Park Resident



“ Making Space provided FoodBank PO9 with activity packs for families at the beginning of lockdown. These were not only a treat for families but helped as a ‘way in’ for some parents new to focused activities to begin home learning during a time when schools were not accessible. The feedback was very positive and the families were very grateful

– Darren Mckenna
Director of 13ANK Community Interest Company
(Leigh Park Food Bank)

“ A very welcoming space both, amazing facilities for all types of creativity. Empowering and encouraging space for all, particularly giving inspiration in the space to make. This gives confidence to access other groups and facilities within the community.

– Jenny Smith
Adult Wellbeing Manager and Engagement & Participation Lead
Havant and East Hants Mind

“ Making Space is a wonderful community space for young people to create and explore the arts in Leigh Park. I have seen the difference in the young people attending Reach Out workshops where I support as an additional helper. The Reach Out workshops are a safe, nurturing, creative space for the young people to be themselves and to make some incredible art projects. Full imagination is encouraged with exciting projects & working with skilled professional artists. The young people leave the workshops proud of their achievements, make friends and are keen to discover a new skill next time.

Ali Slater
Reach Out Parent



To show your support for Making Space, and the
creativity of Leigh Park contact our Director at
director@makingspace.org