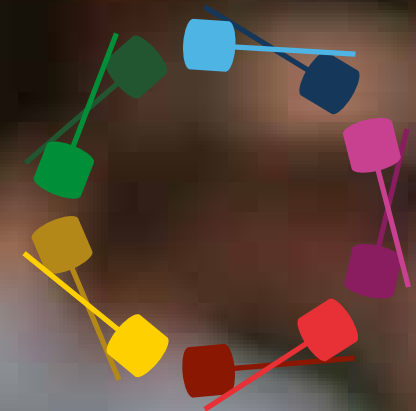




Global
Grooves

Impact Report 2026

Bringing worlds together

The Worker Becomes Queen, Barcelona 2025

When worlds combine

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When worlds combine

This has been a year of arrivals.

A master percussionist from the Ivory Coast fills a Mossley rehearsal room with rhythms new to Tameside. Giant puppets built by our own artists parade the streets of Barcelona at La Mercè — one of Europe's great civic celebrations. A 17-year-old takes their seat and adds their voice to the governing board of The Vale. Another young person joins our Creative Careers workshop and ends the year performing on stage, paid, as part of our team.

None of this happened by accident. Global Grooves exists to bring people, cultures, ideas and opportunities together. When worlds meet, extraordinary things happen — and this year has seen no shortage of extraordinary moments.

In context, it hasn't been an easy year. Funding remains tight, the political climate for the arts is uncertain, and every organisation is being asked to do more with less. Yet we've continued to grow, deepen our practice and push further — creating new work, expanding development pathways, strengthening partnerships and reaching more people than ever.

The evidence begins below. The numbers are good. The stories are better.

Leon Patel, CEO, Global Grooves

Leon Patel, CEO of Global Grooves

Global Grooves is one of the UK's leading Carnival and outdoor arts organisations.



Bloco dancer

From our home at The Vale in Mossley, Tameside, we've become an international force of attraction, drawing together people, cultures, ideas and opportunities from different neighbourhoods, cities and continents.

These encounters play out in streets, parks, civic centres and overlooked spaces, expressed through the Carnival languages of music, dance, visual art, craft, movement and heritage.

Our work encourages people to see their communities afresh, shape the cultural life around them, and create new memories of the places they call home. The result is places that feel more alive: higher footfall, stronger local businesses, and paid opportunities for artists, performers, producers and event workers.

It gives communities a stronger sense of belonging, identity, confidence and civic ownership. We call this creative health: using creativity to help people feel better, connect with others, and find their confidence again.

We work with and for places, connecting artists, communities and civic partners to explore local identities and traditions. Out of this come public experiences that could only have been created there.

Global Grooves works with heritage as much as living art. The traditions we celebrate carry generations of history, but we see heritage as something active and evolving, shaped by the people who practise, honour and pass it on.

We work at every scale — from someone's first interaction with a musical instrument, to an international festival commission for hundreds of thousands of people. Our work is rooted in Tameside, active across Greater Manchester, commissioned throughout the UK and connected internationally. Every exchange brings new ideas, skills and opportunities back into the communities where we began.

We exist for the people excluded from mainstream pathways. We proactively go to where people are, removing financial barriers and co-designing with participants to bring their knowledge, traditions and experience into the creative process. Our Disability Confident Employer status is one marker of this commitment.

Our leadership is measured not only by the work we create, but by what becomes possible around us: artists finding careers, communities shaping culture, partners growing stronger, places becoming more confident in who they are, and investment reaching places that don't always get their fair share of cultural funding.

We're a Charitable Community Benefit Society, governed by a board of trustees with a wide range of skills, backgrounds and perspectives — including, this year, a 17-year-old founding trustee at The Vale. We work deliberately to broaden that mix, so our governance continues to reflect the communities we serve.

From The Vale we provide shared cultural infrastructure: developing artists, supporting partners, convening networks and creating opportunities that extend far beyond our own programmes.

A single Bloco session captures our whole approach — building technical skills and fostering belonging amongst artists at every career stage carrying forward centuries old traditions.

Four major funders support our work at national and regional level. Each invests in a different aspect of what we do, but all recognise an approach in which artistic ambition, community, heritage and place strengthen one another.

Arts Council England backs us as a National Portfolio Organisation — recognition of our artistic quality, and our place within the national infrastructure for Carnival and outdoor arts.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation has committed three years of core funding, reflecting the depth of our work with people facing real barriers to taking part, and the lived experience they bring to shaping it.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority supports our role across the city-region — building the creative workforce, connecting boroughs into a shared cultural ecology rather than isolated pockets of activity, and shaping what a place feels like to live in.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund enables Dancing Threads, our work exploring and carrying forward Carnival heritage — traditions, skills and memory passed between generations.

Together, these four relationships reflect confidence in our artistic quality, our social purpose, our governance and our heritage practice — and in what all of that contributes to cultural life across Greater Manchester and the wider UK.



Manny

The scale of *it*?

1 April 2025 — 31 March 2026

Lizzie Rigby, visual artist

213k+

people experienced our work

60+

performances and commissions across Manchester, the UK and internationally

6.5k+

got involved in our participatory arts sessions

140+

freelance artists and producers worked with us

25+

young and emerging artists moved into paid opportunities

200+

volunteers gave their time, energy and talent

Bringing the world in

Global Grooves brings the wider world to public spaces and everyday places across Greater Manchester, the UK and beyond. Ideas and opportunities flourish. Beautiful creations, memories and friendships take shape, leaving a lasting legacy in the communities that host them.

The Worker Becomes Queen, Barcelona 2025

Carnival productions: culture in motion.

September 2025: two giant bees alight on the streets of Barcelona...

The Queen Bee and the Worker Bee — kinetic sculptures built by Global Grooves artists — became a centrepiece of La Mercè Festival, one of Europe's great civic celebrations. But The Worker Becomes Queen began much closer to home: with artists and communities in Oldham and Tameside working alongside communities in Catalonia, and drawing together English folk, South Asian dance and Catalan performance traditions.

To stand at La Mercè is to insist that Carnival, folk and diasporic traditions are not fringe. They are sophisticated, rigorous and relevant.

Leon Patel, Global Grooves 🗨️

The result carried Greater Manchester onto an international stage without reducing "Manchester" to its city centre or its most famous cultural exports. It gave space to places, traditions and communities that are too often missing from that story — rooted in industry, migration, working-class resilience and culture made collectively rather than consumed.

When we represent Manchester it's Tameside, Oldham, Mossley and the wider city region. These are places rich in creativity, resilience and collective endeavour, but too often left out of the cultural story.

Johnny Clifford, Global Grooves 🗨️

Carnival turns shared public space into a stage for identity, memory and collective expression. It enables communities to celebrate who they are, carry traditions forward, make themselves visible in the civic life of a place — and to see their own culture treated with artistic seriousness and ambition.

This approach shapes our work across the UK. We delivered more than 60 performances and commissions during the year, working with councils, festivals, artists and communities to create ambitious outdoor work shaped by the places and communities where it belongs.

Stockport Spectacular Sunday, Oldham Illuminate and Tameside Winter Carnival each brought communities into their town centres this year — through processions, lanterns and large-scale performance. Events like these create paid work, lift footfall, and give communities a visible role in shaping how their towns celebrate and remember themselves.



Bloco drummers

Featured events

Stockport Spectacular Sunday

220 artists transformed the town centre through brass, Carnival percussion, giant puppets, stilt walkers and a 100-strong flag-bearing procession. The finale brought bands and choirs together in Merseyway for All You Need Is Love.

Rochdale Feel Good Family Picnics

Carnival processions moved through parks across the borough, combining giant puppets, costume, live music and dance with local participation and celebration.

Oldham Illuminate

Community-made lanterns, illuminated puppetry, projection, costume, music and dance turned the town centre into a night-time expression of local stories and pride.

Creating Carnival at Kendal Calling

More than 200 freelance and amateur artists took part in masterclasses, leadership training and mass rehearsals before creating a large-scale procession of brass, percussion, dance and puppetry. Many progressed into future commissions and paid opportunities.

Across the UK the commissions kept coming — NOW Northwich, Lancashire Science Festival, Chester Zoo Afterglow, Norwich Lord Mayor's Parade, Wilmslow Street Festival, Crewe Carnival, Denton Carnival, Stalybridge Street Fest, Barnsley Bright Nights, Lightpool, Manchester Christmas Parade, Oldham Bonfire Night, Birmingham Light Festival, Rochdale Youth Arts Festival, and Diwali celebrations in Reading and Basingstoke.

Each commission was different in scale and setting, all sharing the same ambition: outdoor arts made with communities, rooted in place and strong enough to stand on any stage.

Culture here isn't simply consumed. It's created, sustained and passed on by communities.

Holly Prest, Global Grooves 🗨️



Queen Bee

International exchange: ideas in motion.

This year, artists and master practitioners from Brazil, the Ivory Coast, India and Catalonia shared their knowledge, traditions and practice with communities, artists and young people across Greater Manchester.

A two-week residency with Percussion D'Abobo brought established musicians and emerging leaders from the Ivory Coast to Tameside, working alongside local artists through workshops, performances and creative collaboration. The exchange of skills, knowledge and friendships continue to shape work in both Greater Manchester and Abidjan long after the performances have ended.

It was a beautiful thing to witness people experiencing a cultural expression new to them in our venue in Mossley; wide eyes and shouts of 'whaaaaaaat?!' as masters blasted out powerful beats and unbelievable solos to a room full of excited laughter.

Holly Prest, Global Grooves 🌱🌱

Beyond the residency, other visiting masters brought decades of expertise in percussion traditions and performance craft to Mossley — including BC Manju, Sidiki Dembele, Guga Santos and Mestre Nilo — exchanging ideas with the artists and young people who train at The Vale. Knowledge travelled well beyond individual workshops, reaching artists, tutors, partner organisations and future commissions across the region.

International exchange is embedded in the way we work. Ideas travel in, are developed collaboratively, then travel back out again through artists, performances, partnerships and communities across Greater Manchester, the UK and beyond. This makes our model distinctive. Rather than just host international artists, we learn from them, create with them and build partnerships that strengthen artistic practice on every side.

Long-term partnerships with La Mercè in Barcelona and Denifari in Abidjan continue to deepen, creating opportunities for artists to collaborate across cultures, develop new practice and build relationships that strengthen Carnival and outdoor arts well beyond our own organisation.



Queen Bee puppet make, 2025



Jordan Ferguson

Artist development: every project grows people.

Jordan first joined Global Grooves in 2014, as part of the first Future Leaders cohort. This year, he's joined our team translating for visiting Brazilian masters after several study trips to Brazil.

Development runs through every part of Global Grooves. Young people, emerging artists, established practitioners, volunteers, producers, technicians and community leaders all find opportunities to learn, contribute and take on greater responsibility. Some join formal programmes. Many more progress through the everyday work of making, rehearsing, touring, mentoring and performing together.

People follow different routes. A participant may become a performer, volunteer, facilitator, designer, producer or technician. Emerging artists work alongside experienced practitioners before leading work of their own. Established artists develop new practice through collaboration across cultures, disciplines and communities. Progression looks different for everyone, but the opportunity to grow is built into every project. Some learn alongside visiting masters. Some lead a rehearsal for the first time. Some discover they can organise, teach, design or produce. The route is never fixed, but the expectation is always the same: keep growing.

Weekly Bloco sessions are one expression of this, providing a regular, open, focused space where skills are built and careers begin. The same progression happens in residencies, commissions, workshops, performances and behind the scenes. Every project leaves somebody more capable than it found them.

International training with visiting masters feeds in directly, so that knowledge arriving from Brazil or the Ivory Coast moves through the whole community of practice rather than staying with one person. Juliana, a Brazilian artist based in Liverpool, returns each time a masters programme runs — translating workshops and sharing her knowledge in the process. What's learned through these international partnerships is then passed on through rehearsals, workshops and performances, strengthening artists, tutors and future leaders across the wider community.

This year more than 140 freelance artists and producers worked with Global Grooves. Some were taking their first professional steps. Others were extending established careers through new collaborations, larger commissions and international exchange. Alongside this, we supported partners, shared practice across the sector and helped strengthen the wider ecology for Carnival and outdoor arts. The result is stronger artists, stronger communities and stronger work.

Growing people

Global Grooves is in the business of human potential. Whoever you are, wherever you're starting from — there is a place for everyone here, and somewhere further to go. Every programme is designed to help people learn, grow, shape a path and lead.

People come to us for different reasons — to make, play, volunteer or belong. With us, they discover unexpected abilities, take on new kinds of responsibility, and often become the ones helping the next generation do the same. And in turn they shape **Global Grooves**. Their stories, traditions and ideas influence what we create, decide and become.

Creative Careers music workshop

Future Leaders: already leading.

Two facilitators running our Bloco sessions are 25 years old — and first came through the doors here just like the beginners they're now teaching.

The Future Leaders network now spans more than 200 alumni, with around fifty supported this year through mentoring, professional development and priority access to paid work. Members of the network — some from as far back as the 2014 cohort — regularly return as volunteers, guest speakers, mentors, workshop leaders and performers. The cycle continues.

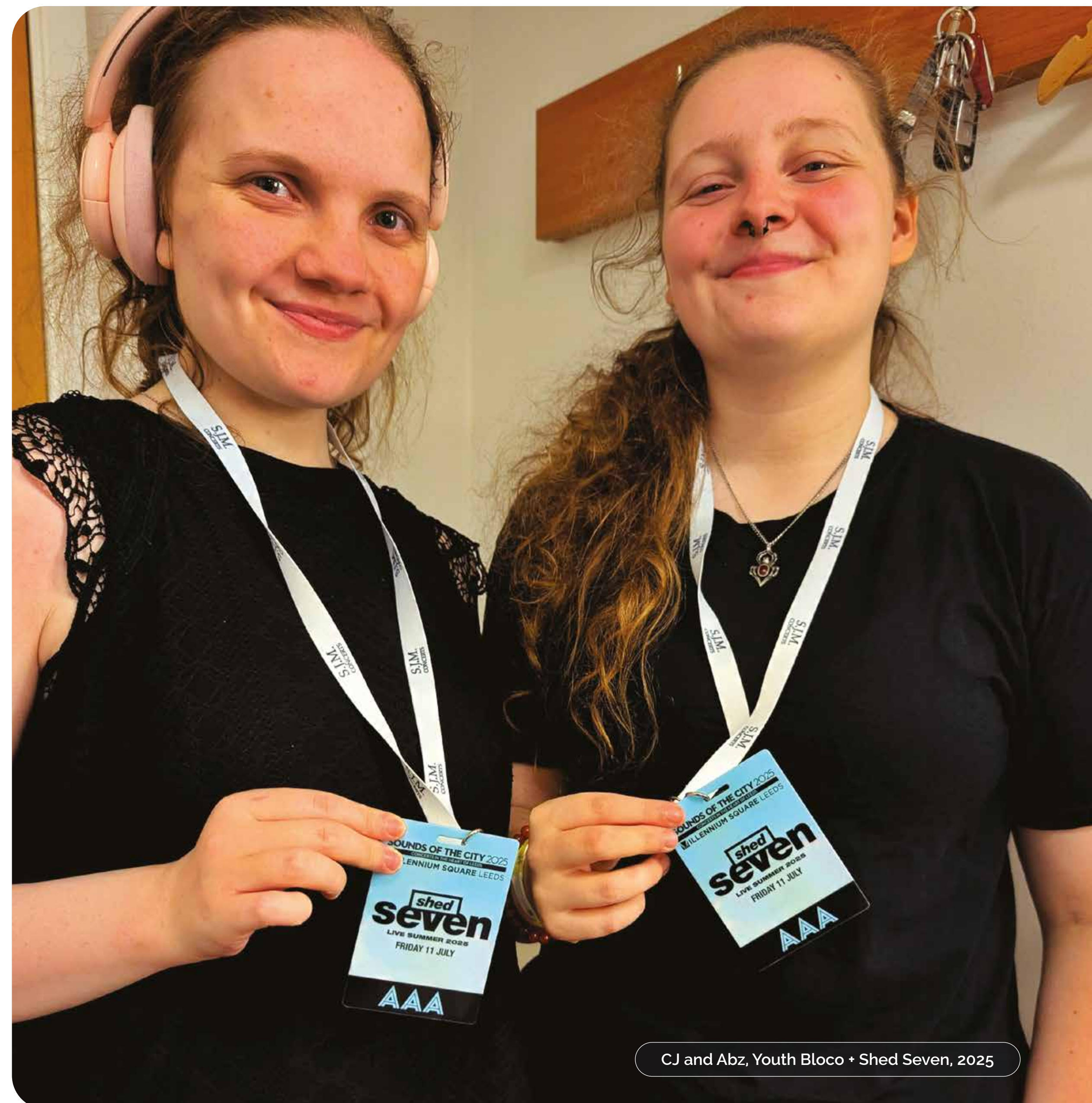
Leadership grows through doing. Young people help shape projects, lead workshops, support performances and take real responsibility long before they complete the programme.

Two young facilitators now lead the GG Youth Bloco almost entirely, having come up through the programme themselves. The 13-strong group collaborated this year with Shed Seven and TC and the Groove Family. Two Future Leaders performed in a paid Sunday Sessions commission for International Women's Day. Others led the La Mercè Festival collaboration in Barcelona. One Future Leaders alumna now holds a full-time producer role with us.

Members of the Youth Bloco led the second national Ritmos Por Ela gathering — a network of women in Carnival arts — with several Future Leaders alumni delivering workshops. A young producer now performs regularly with Full Stilt, our in-house stilt-walking company. There's room for every kind of person: you just have to show up.

Future Leaders increasingly represent Global Grooves beyond The Vale. This year they co-delivered presentations at the University of Salford, contributed to Oldham's Young Cultural Producers Programme, supported Creative Futures careers events and took part in workforce development networks across Greater Manchester.

Many young people, including those with autism and ADHD, have found their place with us. We're proud to see them grow into confident artists, leaders and role models.



CJ and Abz, Youth Bloco + Shed Seven, 2025

Creative Careers: yes, you can go further.

Fifty young people from Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside spent 12 weeks on Creative Careers this year. Several had joined the payroll before it ended.

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity isn't. Creative Careers is designed to bring the two together. Now in its second year, the employment pathway was co-designed and delivered with Future Leaders alumni.

We built the programme with employment as the destination. Several participants joined us on live events before the course had even finished; others moved straight into paid work. It's one way we open professional pathways for people who've too often found those doors closed.

Alongside the main programme we made a documentary, ran a parallel WEA-funded adult strand, and built new partnerships with the Nigeria Community Association, Barnsley Music Service, Stockroom in Stockport and dance schools in Rochdale — extending the programme's reach and creating new routes into creative work.

Young people trained directly with visiting masters BC Manju, Sidiki Dembele, Guga Santos, Mestre Nilo, Mestre Toinho and Mestre Jamesson. They worked alongside practising artists, contributed to live productions and began building professional networks of their own.

Places and communities shape Creative Careers too. Local stories, traditions and lived experience become part of the work participants go on to create.

E discovered Global Grooves at a Creative Futures careers day at Oldham Sixth Form College — and kept finding reasons to come back.

E joined the Creative Careers programme, signing up for hands-on crewing and volunteering opportunities throughout the twelve weeks.

Long after the course had finished, he returned to The Vale to work alongside another young artist on a puppet commission. He also joined partner organisation Jubacana in Oldham and our weekly Bloco sessions, developing his musical skills while becoming part of the wider community.

Today, E is a paid puppeteer and crew member at many of our outdoor events.



Creative Careers music workshop



Family crafts at Spring Up

Volunteers: 200 reasons why this works.

Jayne trained in first aid, carbon literacy and natural dyeing. Now she runs a social enterprise built on all three.

Jayne came to Global Grooves as a carer looking for a way back to herself through one of our training programmes. She started volunteering. Then she began tending the garden. Then growing food. She helped establish a community garden and brought people together around shared environmental goals. Now she runs 'Good Earth Community', a social enterprise focused on environmental and community action, which she founded. Jayne's story is her own: volunteering starts in different places and leads in different directions.

I'm making a difference... I feel like I have opportunities. I feel hopeful. I feel like I am back.

Jayne, volunteer and Our Space lead 💕💕

She's one of more than 200 people who gave their time to Global Grooves this year. Some carried props. Others ran front of house or tended the garden at The Vale.

Volunteering builds confidence, new skills, new friendships and a sense of purpose. Many people go on to paid work with us or elsewhere; others create opportunities of their own.

In January we held our first annual volunteer celebration night, where key volunteers shared their stories of work at The Vale.



Jayne at Our Space

Rooted in place

Great cultural work needs somewhere to grow. The Vale gives Global Grooves a permanent place to make, test and share ideas: a workshop, rehearsal space, performance venue and meeting place in one. From here, work travels across Greater Manchester, the UK and internationally, in turn bringing culture and joy back again.



Naomi Kalu at Sunday Sessions

The Vale: where the work begins.

A normal evening at The Vale? Brass band practice in one room, writers' group next door, yoga upstairs. And in the bar locals catch up before tonight's gig.

The Vale opened in 2021, built for our artists and community. The building itself carries its own heritage: once a working mill, now a home for Carnival and outdoor arts — heritage and creation under one roof.

Every year since, it's opened its doors wider. Mossley Writers meet monthly, a yoga class runs weekly — and community groups such as Knights of The Vale grow with us, picking up new members at open days and celebrations throughout the year.

Behind the open-access sessions is a working creative hub: studios, workshops and rehearsal spaces where artists, makers and creative businesses design costumes, build puppets, compose music, rehearse performances and develop new work for streets, parks, festivals and public spaces.

Today, The Vale is one of the UK's few dedicated centres for Carnival and outdoor arts. Alongside Global Grooves, freelance artists, community organisations and creative partners use the building to create music, movement, costume, puppetry and large-scale performance before taking that work into streets, parks, festivals and public spaces across Greater Manchester, the UK and internationally.

Because The Vale is here to stay, every project leaves something behind. Skills accumulate. Relationships deepen. Costumes, puppets, instruments and artworks become part of a growing collection. Each commission leaves more knowledge, confidence and creative possibility for the next.

Live music drew more than 1,200 people across the year to hear The Unthanks, Kasai Masai, Arun Ghosh, Funke and the Two Tone Baby, Kyla Brox, Beans on Toast, TC and the Groove Family and a growing roster of emerging local talent through the In Our Backyard strand. Every event runs a Donate What You Can ticket scheme: no one is priced out.

Sunday Sessions put emerging musicians on stage with a house band in original performance, giving young children their first experience of live music and drawing new audiences into The Vale. Two annual community days, in spring and autumn, have become anchor events in the calendar — arts, crafts and music, and a chance for local talent, families and cultural partners to come together.

This year new puppets, costumes and large-scale performance works took shape here before travelling into festivals, town centres and public spaces across the UK.

Audiences say it best. When asked to describe their experience in three words:

**Exhilarating.
Inspiring. Uplifting.**

**Exciting. Incredible.
Motivating.**

**Amazing. Fabulous.
Memorable.**

I really liked the involvement of the venue's samba group in the performance — great to have that link to the wider work at The Vale.

Audience feedback, Mr Wilson's Second Liners + GG Youth Bloco 🗨️

What a great first gig! My daughter uses a wheelchair and I had worried how accessible live music would be for her. From the helpful telephone conversation in advance to parking and accessing the venue, everything was made simple for us. My daughter had the best experience we could have hoped for. We will be back.

Audience member, Kyla Brox Band 🗨️



Juba do Leão performing at The Vale

Sustainability: staying means investing.

This year we put solar panels on the roof, an EV charger on the street and an electric van on the road, while a hydro project takes shape and carbon literacy training equips the whole team to play their part in the transition to net zero.

We've continued investing in the place we've chosen to call home — improving the building, developing new skills and reducing our environmental impact for the long term.

The electric van and the new EV charger are already cutting emissions on every trip to a gig or festival. The hydro project is next — still seeking investment, but already taking shape on the land behind The Vale, alongside solar generation we've already expanded on site.

A new partnership with You Matter Saddleworth links hydro energy to volunteering and new skills, and Our Space is turning the land around The Vale into gardens and growing space, through permaculture skills sharing.

Almost nothing here goes to waste: the Good As New initiative gives costumes, props and puppets a second life, and a Donation Bank passes retired materials on to artists, schools and local groups

Everyone in our team and every regular freelancer will complete carbon literacy training by the end of 2026. We share what we learn, too, as active members of GMAST (Greater Manchester Arts Sustainability Team), and by publishing our sustainability pledges and progress for anyone to see.

By 2027, planned solar PV expansion and battery storage will enable The Vale to generate as much electricity annually as it consumes, significantly reducing reliance on grid electricity and supporting our transition to a more sustainable cultural centre.





Movement workshop with Ruth Asidi

Community programmes: nobody is left out.

Outreach works both ways. Some weeks people find their way to The Vale; other weeks we find them first.

On a cold Wednesday morning in January, The Vale opens its doors to anyone who needs somewhere warm to be at Wednesday Welcome. For many, it's as much about connection as warmth — one strand of what we increasingly call creative health: using making, moving and being together to support people's confidence and wellbeing, not just their skills.

Other weeks, with support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we take the work into communities instead — working with partners including West African Development, Dipak Dristi, Khush Amdid and The A Team, an autism support group, to bring Carnival arts into communities and settings that might not otherwise encounter them.

Our Space brings volunteering and food growing together on the land around The Vale.

Through Heritage Connections, funded by Historic England, we also helped people find a place in local cultural life. At Milltown Cloggies, generations came together to design and make new costumes. With Stalybridge Carnival Committee, volunteers learned to make puppets, perform and crew the parade. Our Open Heritage Lab workshops offered a first step into volunteering, with many participants now taking on regular roles at local events.

This project has helped us see a future for Milltown Cloggies that feels both rooted in tradition and open to new people. We've welcomed new faces, shared skills across generations, and feel more confident than ever that what we do will carry on.
Milltown Cloggies 🗨️

However people arrive, the welcome is the same. We design every programme to be flexible, with support for a wide range of access needs. Free and subsidised places, travel support and pay-what-you-can pricing help ensure that cost is never the reason someone misses out.

Our Space brings volunteering and food growing together on the land around The Vale. Skills are shared, and friendships made. Our community can enjoy exploring their connection to nature, drawing links between national and international sustainability projects through visits and skills exchange opportunities.

When worlds combine

Bringing the world in

Growing people

Rooted in place

The numbers

The numbers

Carnival Magic at Lightpool, Blackpool Tower Ballroom

Global Grooves remained financially stable throughout the year, with a strong mix of grant funding, fundraising and earned income helping us exceed our income targets and deliver a modest surplus of £1,355 in 2025–26.

This surplus was reinvested in the continued development of The Vale and our key artistic assets. Financial stability has let us deliver core programmes while investing in the infrastructure long-term, community-led cultural development needs.

Unrestricted income was **£796,850**, against unrestricted expenditure of **£789,511** — an unrestricted surplus of **£7,339**. Restricted income was **£283,836**, against restricted expenditure of **£289,820** — a restricted deficit of **£5,984**.

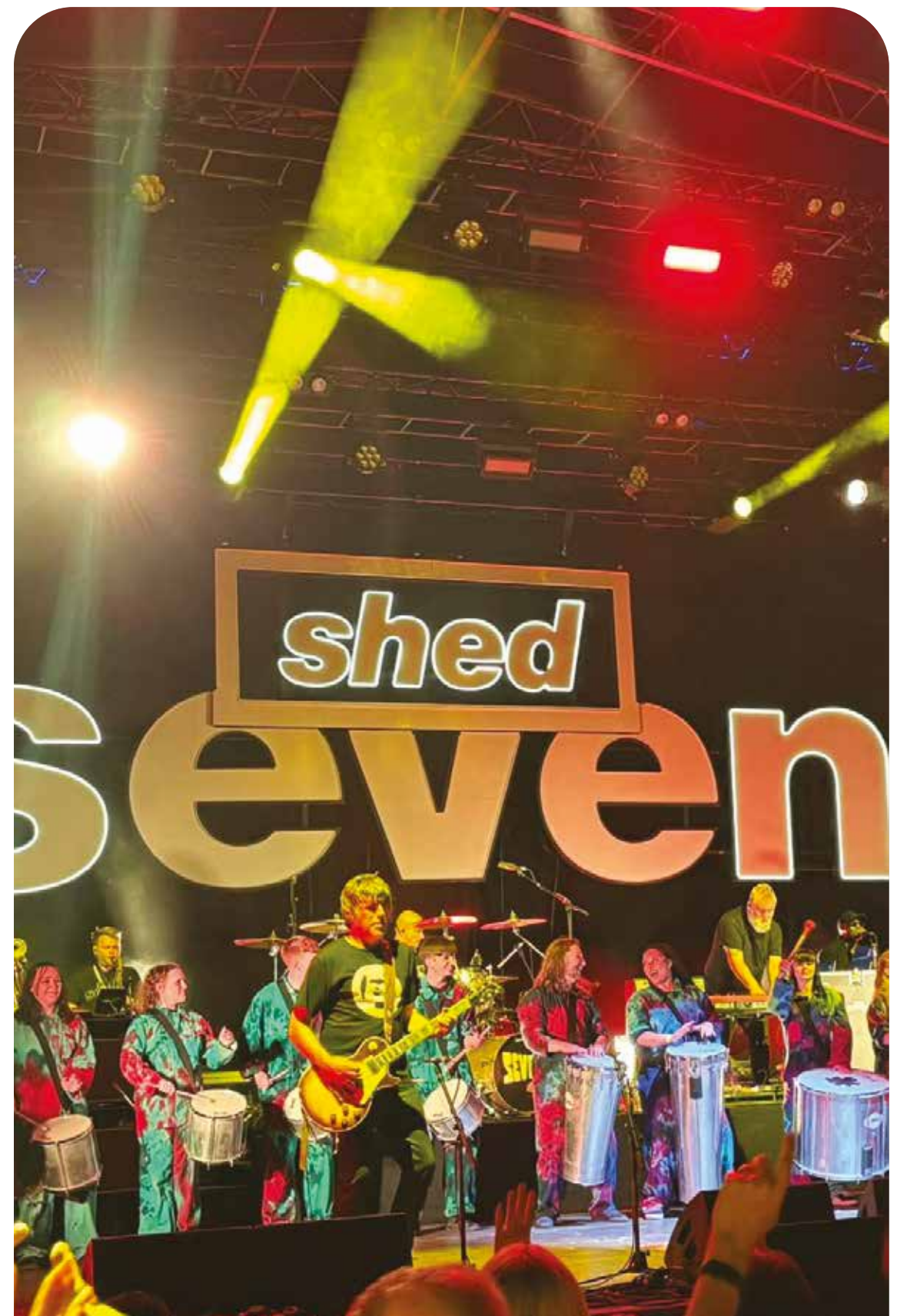
Total funds at year end were **£1,999,457**: unrestricted funds of **£1,999,450**, restricted funds of £0, and share capital of £7.

Reserves policy: We aim to hold between three and six months of core expenditure in free reserves — enough to cover short-term funding gaps, meet our commitments, and, in the worst case, wind the Society down responsibly. Based on 2024/25 costs, that puts our target range between **£239,793** and **£479,568**; free reserves stood at **£245,861** — within target, toward the lower end.

Our situation has changed since that policy was set, we now hold significant capital assets, a larger team, and more complex contracts, in a market still finding its feet after the pandemic, with real uncertainty around future earned income. Our priority for the year ahead is building reserves toward the upper end of our policy, by growing income from fees, venue hire and commissions.



Percussion workshop with Guga Santos





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Society number 7807



BA Better World

