





On the occasion of our 30th birthday, we asked creative citizens across the UK and Ireland to have their photo taken by their front door - holding or wearing something that conveys the creative activity they love.

Here are 30 of them . . .



Catherine Mugonyi

- Age: 40
- Lives in Blackpool
- Enjoys: Crocheting and sewing

I'm part of Knittaz with Attitude (KWA), a textile group that loves to make wild, bright and imaginative textile art while supporting our local community through awareness and fundraising.

I love KWA because it's full of cool creative people who really care about our town and each other. Meetings are an absolute blast and we always share lots of great food and brilliant chats; whether that's about textile projects or bigger issues that affect us all. I love making, but making with friends is even better.

Visit **[Aunty Social](#)** for more details.

Drumming and singing



Ron Batchelor

- Age: 78
- Lives in Ashton, Kent
- Enjoys: Drumming and singing

I play and perform with two groups in Canterbury, Maridadi and Owl Drummers, and sing with two community choirs.

It's hard to describe how these activities make me feel, but they do give me a purpose in life. This has always been the case since I retired, but in times of Covid and the restrictions imposed, they have been even more important when other leisure activities have been restricted.

Aerial dancing



Sophie Gray

- Age: 25
- Lives in Glasgow
- Enjoys: Aerial arts – pole sport, silks, hammock and hoop

I started aerial arts around three years ago and am part of the Pole Princess group. I joined on my own but after my first night I was surrounded by friends and family. It is such a great community and I have managed to connect with people all around the world through shows and social media.

Aerial is so good for your health. Not only is it great as a workout but whenever I'm having a bad day, you can guarantee I'll forget all of my problems as soon as I walk into the studio. It is such an exhilarating and freeing experience.



Nael Naim Fazal

- Age: 15
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: Fashion designing, arts and craft

I'm a member of I Design My Future At Rosetta Art centre. I love having the freedom to create anything I want and I love not having limits to your creation.

When you do something you love, it's not work anymore.

Making jewellery



Grace Payne

- Age: 96
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: Making jewellery

Jewellery-making provides a pastime/hobby which I can enjoy at my advanced age, being mostly not too strenuous as compared with other activities I used to enjoy. It also provides an opportunity to meet neighbours with whom I would not otherwise have contact.

Having exhausted all possible recipients of my jewellery amongst family and friends, I have had occasional sales of pieces, and over the past few years I have been able to contribute several thousand pounds to charity.

I often use recycled materials and the necklace I'm wearing here is made from old plastic containers, stuffed with the coloured netting from oranges/lemons. The necklace hanging over my arm is old CDs cut into pieces, drilled, and strung together, while the bracelet is made from the plastic binding you wrap around parcels.

Mehndi designs



Sabina Ahmed

- Age: 38
- Lives in Keighley, West Yorkshire
- Enjoys: Creating Mehndi designs

I enjoy creating Mehndi designs, not only on hands but on candles and frames. I love making designs, it's very therapeutic and very relaxing. Once you start you can also add sequences and glitter.



Tracey Davies

- Age: 62
- Lives inbetween Swansea and Carmarthen
- Enjoys: Textile art

I largely work with fabrics to make pictures but sometimes I include mixed media such as paper. I have always created but only recently have I realised that I am creative. I create for pleasure not financial reward.

I have been fortunate enough to learn from superb textile artists who have not only taught me technical skills, but also to be mindful of my surroundings - to see things properly such as the sky, clouds, sea, landscape and buildings.

I take a lot of photos and use these for inspiration, and I love experimenting and playing with fabrics. I find it both stimulating and relaxing, and enjoy knowing I have made something out of very little. I still have a lot to learn but that's what I love - the possibilities are endless.



Lewis Hou

- Age: 31
- Lives in Edinburgh
- Enjoys: Creative writing

I've always wanted to write more and found it difficult to get the time, but lockdown has been an opportunity to spend a bit more time reading again - particularly centring on more diverse characters - and that in turn has helped jog my imagination, put pen to paper and write.

When I do, the busy world stops and I feel like I can just pour myself into the words. Even if no-one reads it, I feel like it's some valuable time for me to reflect and create something.



Shanali Perera

- Age: 45
- Lives in Manchester
- Enjoys: Digital art

The artistic experience allows me to express and symbolise feelings about my illness. Art helps me to understand, accept, cope and communicate with myself and others.

By drawing what my pain looks like, it helps me to understand what's going on with me, how it affects me, how I perceive my pain and how it's impacting my lifestyle.

Art also offers a route to escape the restrictions on me and my lifestyle.

Using art to find meaning in what I am going through, and purpose by sharing it with others, empowers me. It is certainly empowering to have self directed creations when the illness is trying to disempower me.

Painting



Leopoldo Ayala

- Age: 69
- Lives in Dublin
- Enjoys: Painting

I am very flattered when people really like my paintings and proud because it means that I can be adventurous, useful and effective when talking about their expectations.

It also makes me feel connected to art and feel joy when people identify with the light, colours and beauty of their own interpretation found in my art. All of this makes me feel great satisfaction, because after the work of research and learning a new skill, I can then feel fulfilled when people find happiness and love in what I do.

Singing and gardening



Sylvia Linehan

- Age: 44
- Lives in Cork, Ireland
- Enjoys: Singing and gardening

My passions are singing and gardening - both are excellent hobbies for wellbeing and positive mental health.

During the recent lockdowns, it was unfortunate that singing in groups had to be cancelled. It was great to have an opportunity to sing online instead, but nothing beats the sense of community and belonging as singing with friends in a choir. Strong bonds are formed and there is always someone to share a laugh or a tear with.

I am lucky to be a member of two singing groups: Cork Operatic Society and Union Musical Theatre Choir, so it means we get to sing a wide repertoire of music. For now though, I will have to be content with singing to my plants as I potter in the garden!

Rock painting



Alison Doyle-Stevenson

- Age: 51
- Lives in Derby
- Enjoys: Rock painting

I like a wide variety of crafts and do a lot of work with fabric, applique, embroidery and painting. During lockdown, I made 250 scrub bags for the NHS, wrapped each bag individually and designed a card for it.

I was walking on a daily basis, so I started collecting rocks, cleaning them, painting them and returning them to the place they were located! I'm now a member of the Derbyshire Rocks Facebook group. It's rewarding creating art for others - it's like giving a little surprise to someone and it's even better when the recipient gives positive feedback.

Wheelchair dancing



Katie Goodwin

- Age: 40
- Lives in Oxfordshire
- Enjoys: Wheelchair dancing

I'm a member of West Oxfordshire Wheelchair Dance and am the National Representative for Para Dance UK.

I love being creative and dancing. During lockdown I've been doing a lot of kitchen discos. In particular, I love music and dancing with friends - I find it helps to keep you positive both physically and mentally.

Playing music and singing



James Moriarty

- Age: 27
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: Ukulele playing and community singing

Singing with others, and helping others to sing, provides me with a space to connect with people in new ways. Singing together removes many of the barriers which keep us apart in day-to-day life and I love being able to meet, know, and collaborate with people from all walks of life.



Shaida Ditta

- Age: 40
- Lives in Keighley, West Yorkshire
- Enjoys: Henna painting

I enjoy Henna/acrylic painting on candles, canvas, books . . . anything.

I love making patterns and designs, and my best work is when I have been in a creative mood and that's when the ideas just keep coming and I can't stop what I'm doing, even though there may be a mountain load of chores to be done!

DJing and dancing



**Creative
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Joseph Peciuch

- Age: 32
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: DJing and dancing

I enjoy taking part in the Adult Choreographers class and Thursday Ballet Technique at Magpie Dance Company. And DJing makes me feel happy because I like listening to the music and enjoy seeing people dancing in the middle of lockdown.



Trishna Singh

- Age: 67
- Lives in Edinburgh
- Enjoys: Knitting, painting, sewing, crocheting and creative writing

I was taught knitting, sewing and crocheting as a skill when I was younger – it was something we had to learn to make us viable as good housewives and mothers, so it became a chore for us.

But my husband passed away five years ago, and I've found crocheting very therapeutic. It's something I can concentrate on and not think about anything else. So there's a different use for it now, I'm doing it for myself just to get peace and it's helped me a lot.

When you get to a certain age you can sometimes think 'I can't do this', just because you've never done it. But I think actually you should just throw caution to the wind and say 'what the hell' – that's what I feel like now. I've dabbled in art and written poetry – you have to go one day, so you might as well try something else before you go!

Playing music



Louie Barby

- Age: 25
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: Playing the cello

I love making music, it gives me a purpose outside of my 9-5 job that allows me to express myself to my fullest extent.

Much of the music I make comes from improvisation, using effects pedals and loop pedals to create ambient soundscapes. Performing in this way is particularly cathartic, it allows me to be dramatic and escape from reality into a free-flowing trance.

Being creative makes me feel productive and fulfilled, achieving happiness and success on my own terms. Achievements are therefore not limited to finished products, but rather the act of creating itself.



Sylvie Belbouab

- Age: 41
- Lives in London
- Enjoys: Photography

I discovered photography as a teenager. I used to draw a lot and also perform as part of a drama club, and I find that photography is actually a mix of both - you draw with your camera and you are observing a performance unfolding in front of you.

I have diverse interests in different photography fields but my main one is portraiture and documentary. Photographs have the power to challenge stereotypes, viewpoints and enlarge minds. I focus very much on the area where I live because I'm very interested in the diversity of the London Borough of Newham and how communities support one another, especially during hard times.

[@gbs10_portrait](#)

[@stories_from_newham](#)



Christopher Seymour

- Age: 36
- Lives in Manchester
- Enjoys: Spoken word poetry

As well as being a poet, I also emcee in a group called 'The Deadkings'; where I feel very lucky to collaborate with fellow lyricists and DJs. I also host a Hip Hop night.

I find writing very cathartic. When I worked long days/nights in an intense environment, coming home and writing poetry helped me unwind, calmed my brain and helped me reflect. Now I use poetry to tell stories, unwind to help any anxieties and to prepare for teaching/performances.

Poetry and lyrics excite me, they can stop you in your tracks and make you listen differently, open your eyes, inform you, shock and inspire you.

Composing music



Duncan Fraser

- Age: 62
- Lives in Bedford
- Enjoys: Composing music

My composition often starts with noodling on the piano in the half light, either as self-soothing or with a particular person or occasion in mind. It feels intimate, gentle, spiritual, calm but also wracked with which note should go where!

It's the work of 'flow', when you have an idea it takes over the mind - I'll be full of ideas and everything else becomes seen through that lens.

Up-cycling clothes



Lotte Rosevear

- Age: 19
- Lives in Bristol
- Enjoys: Up-cycling clothes

I find it's important for me to have a creative outlet in my day-to-day life in order to keep my mind stimulated and as a way to express myself.

It's for these reasons that I am drawn to up-cycling my clothes, due to the endless possibilities and techniques that are on offer - whether sewing, painting, knitting or crocheting.

Another appeal for me is the ability to make my style unique as well as to avoid fast-fashion in an effort to be mindful of the ethical and environmental impact of the fashion industry.

Dancing



Courtney Conteh

- Age: 29
- Lives in Stoke-on-Trent
- Enjoys: Dancing

I enjoy lots of different creativity - from creative dance and drama to a bit of singing and writing, but I love to dance. I love the joy it can bring to so many people, and I believe everyone should dance once in a while - it's a great way to socialise, a fun way to make friends and it's great for learning new skills.

I'm part of an all-male creative group called the Up Men, led by performance company Restoke. We want to encourage men to talk about their mental health and to get rid of toxic masculinity. I loved performing in my first show with Restoke, and I highly recommend people do get involved in performance. You don't have to be a performer, just get involved in something and raise some issues. Art and the performing arts have the power to change the world for good. So get involved and let's get creative!

Playing music



Fin Ross Russell

- Age: 24
- Lives in Edinburgh
- Enjoys: Playing the violin

Although I don't find as much time for it as I used to, the violin has always been a key and important part of my identity.

It's nice to play a musical instrument that has both a classical and modern feel to it and I love trying to play modern pop songs whilst practicing. It's particularly fun to play alongside other string instruments to create a more complete musical experience.



Lisa Blair

- Age: 29
- Lives in Edinburgh
- Enjoys: Digital and traditional drawing and painting

I enjoy creating something beautiful and tangible, that is purely for me and no one else. I find a theme to explore and then go on a search for inspiration, which leads me to find art from many wonderful artists and photographers.

I draw because I want to and not because I feel obliged to, and that is a very liberating feeling when I feel overwhelmed by life and work.



Insaaf Mohammed Hammou

- Age: 71
- Lives in Belfast
- Enjoys: Sewing, embroidery, knitting and cooking

I'm part of the ArtsEkta art route collective. Creating crafts has helped me psychologically, with my mental wellbeing and provided me with numerous opportunities to socialise and meet different people. Every day I feel safer, more stable and able to build my confidence back.

And my passion for cooking began at a very young age in Syria, when I observed my mother, a skilled cook, preparing various foods for us. So I started cooking until I became the best cook in the family!

Poetry



Aysar Ghassan

- Age: 45
- Lives in Coventry
- Enjoys: Poetry

I love writing poetry. I don't think you have to be a trained writer to enjoy writing - I'm certainly not. I love the possibilities contained in unwritten poems and the adventures that writing allows me to go on.

I've met lots of wonderful people through sharing my poems. Writing continues to offer me opportunities and I feel very lucky to have it in my life.

Singing



Laura Jazmyn

- Age: 18
- Lives in Tredegar, South Wales
- Enjoys: Singing

I love to write music and perform. When I'm writing new songs it makes me happy and gives me tingles of excitement in my stomach when I can see a song that has so much potential to develop.

I released my debut EP Ride or Die a month ago on all major streaming platforms and on CD through SWND records. I have enjoyed every second of the hard work to create something that's mine and other people will enjoy and I cannot wait to create more in the future!



Creative
Lives

Drawing and painting



Michael Hack

- Age: 56
- Lives in Cardiff
- Enjoys: Drawing and painting

I'm a member of the Get Drawing Whitchurch group. When I'm drawing or painting, it's a place where mind and coordination come together, and a place where you can get totally lost and escape, where time is irrelevant.

I enjoy the creative journey, where there is a definite outcome but never quite as planned.



**Creative
Lives**

Playing music



Stephanie Phillips

- Age: 47
- Lives in Bristol
- Enjoys: Playing violin

I play violin in The Fantasy Orchestra. When I first discovered the orchestra, I hadn't played for 20 years. I'd put the violin away after I left school but missed the lovely feeling of playing together and performing to others in a group.

I feel like I've gained a family of 80 people! We are all ages from 20s to 60s, all have different experiences of playing (recent starters to professional players) but what we share is a sense of fun and enjoyment together.

We play such a range of different music, Bowie, Hendrix, Morricone for starters and we dress up in all manner of fancy dress! We always give it our best shot and get the audience singing and dancing along.

Thank you to all our wonderful creative participants!

To share YOUR creative life with us, send your photo,
information about yourself and why you love your
activity to **info@creative-lives.org**





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