Creative Spark – Helpful resources for creative careers

Creative Calling - Creative Careers

Creative Spark is a centre for creativity and innovation in Dundalk, providing dedicated training and workspace facilities for new and established enterprises, creative practitioners, students and community groups in County Louth and the wider region. Our work spans three interconnected areas:

- Space: studios, coworking, FabLab, Print Studio, ceramics and darkroom facilities.
- Supports: courses, residencies, mentoring, accredited programmes and community projects.
- Clusters: creative networks and partnerships across education, enterprise and culture.

1. Courses and Training Across Creative Spark

Creative Spark offers a broad programme of creative, technical and enterprise courses across its facilities: HQ in Muirhevnamor, the Enterprise FabLab, the Print Studio & Darkroom, ceramics studio and Downtown Hub.

Creative Skills and Art Courses

These courses introduce young people and adults to hands-on creative practice:

- **Ceramics (Adults)**
  A 10-week course introducing hand-building, wheel throwing, glazing and finishing, suitable for beginners and improvers.
- **Painting (Adults aged 16+)**
  Weekly classes focusing on colour mixing, composition and painting techniques in acrylics and oils.
- **Creative Club (Children 8–13 years)**
  After-school art club introducing ceramics, printmaking, painting and entry-level digital fabrication, using professional art materials and techniques.
- **Sewing Machine Projects & Sew Creative for Kids**
  Sewing and fashion design classes for young people and adults, building practical making skills, confidence and design thinking.

- **Printmaking Courses (Introduction to Printmaking, Screen-printing)**
  Ten-week and short courses covering monoprint, dry point, collagraph, woodcut, cyanotype, and screen printing on paper and fabric, offered through the Creative Spark Print Studio.
- **STEAM Creative Camps**
  Summer and seasonal camps in drawing, laser cutting, 3D printing, printmaking, t-shirt printing and book arts give younger participants a first taste of studio practice and creative careers.

Current and upcoming courses are listed on Creative Spark's events and training pages:

- Training & events: https://creativespark.ie/events
- Course announcements and blog: https://creativespark.ie/blog/posts/check-out-our-range-of-courses

2. Work Experience, Internships and Placements

Creative Spark provides multiple routes into structured work experience and placements, spanning creative practice, event support, digital fabrication and coworking operations.

School and Youth Placements

- **Transition Year (TY) and Secondary School Work Experience**
  Creative Spark hosts TY and secondary students for short placements, allowing them to rotate between:
    - Print Studio & Darkroom (visual arts, printmaking, photography)
    - Ceramics Studio (3D material practice)
    - Enterprise FabLab (digital fabrication and STEAM outreach)
    - Downtown Hub (coworking, events and podcasting).

Typical route:

- Students discuss interest with their TY coordinator or guidance counsellor.
- Schools contact Creative Spark to explore available placement weeks and focus areas, fill out form https://wkf.ms/4dOwXJu

Further and Higher Education Placements

- **PLC and Further Education (e.g. art, design, media)**
  Creative Spark offers workshop access, projects and placements for PLC

students through the Print Studio, FabLab and community projects; arrangements are normally initiated by course coordinators.

- **Institute Placements (e.g. Dundalk Institute of Technology)**
  Through a Memorandum of Understanding with DkIT, Enterprise FabLab regularly hosts computing, engineering, design and creative students for assessed placements, with competencies evaluated via formal supervisor reports.
- Students apply through their institute's placement process, and the institute's Placement Office or academic supervisor liaises with Enterprise FabLab to match students to suitable roles fablab@creativespark.ie

3. Guides and Information About Roles in Creative Industries

Creative Spark helps young people understand the diversity of roles that exist in the creative sector and how to prepare for them.

Examples of Roles Within Creative Spark

- **Visual Artist / Printmaker / Photographer** – using the Print Studio and Darkroom to produce work, participate in exhibitions and engage in the Artist-in-Residence programme.
- **Creative Tutor / Workshop Facilitator** – delivering courses in ceramics, painting, sewing, printmaking, creative club and digital fabrication.
- **FabLab Technician / Technical Manager** – maintaining digital fabrication equipment, assisting with prototyping and supporting learners on technical projects.
- **Hub Manager / Community Manager** – supporting remote workers, creative entrepreneurs, and Springboard learners; organising creative careers events and networking sessions.

By engaging with courses, workshops, residencies and placements, young people can experience these roles in action and understand which skills and qualifications they might want to pursue.

Networks and Events

- **Entrepreneurs' Network Mornings, AAEX, Louth Craftmark Designers' Network.** Creative Spark-connected networking and peer-learning groups in Dundalk that bring together entrepreneurs, visual artists and designer-makers to share practice, build connections and strengthen the local creative ecosystem.
- **Cruinniú na nÓg & Culture Night**. Public-facing creative events coordinated from Creative Spark that showcase street art, workshops and talks, giving young people insight into public art, curation and event production.

4. How Young People Can Use These Resources

To help young people navigate Creative Spark's offer, we suggest the following steps:

1. **Explore introductory courses and clubs**
    - Join Creative Club, Sew Creative for Kids, beginner ceramics, painting or printmaking courses to build confidence and discover personal creative interests.
2. **Attend events and open days**
    - Visit Creative Spark events, exhibitions and festivals (e.g. free workshops, Cruinniú na nÓg**,** Culture Night, symposia) to see different creative careers and talk to practitioners.
3. **Seek work experience and placements**
    - Use school TY schemes, PLC placement modules and college work placement programmes to gain experience in the Print Studio, FabLab, Downtown Hub or wider Creative Spark projects, complemented by direct enquiries to Creative Spark.