



myplace
support team

Crafts

Introduction

Acquiring a craft is acquiring a skill for life. It can be far more than just an enjoyable hobby for your leisure hours though. Once you put your hand to making something you explore new possibilities, discover hidden talent you may not know you had, and possibly open a door to a new career. This briefing provides some useful pointers and advice on running craft sessions within your **myplace** centre.

How to use crafts

Crafts is the art of making things. Forms include ceramics, glass, graphics, iron and stone, jewellery and silversmithing, textiles and leatherwork, toys and woodturning. And it's big business – craft is now the fourth-biggest sector in the UK, generating more than £3 billion for the economy each year.

The Crafts Council is the national development agency for contemporary crafts in the UK. It believes that engaging young people in craft through formal and informal learning is vital to the future of a vibrant sector that seeks to attract a diverse range of innovative, creative thinking and practice. Through increasing understanding of and engagement with contemporary crafts, the council aims to increase demand and strengthen the sector. Its ambition is to create a national public event to inspire people around the country to get actively involved in making and seeing craft – so here's your opportunity to get involved,

Many young people enjoy having a go at arts and crafts activities, such as making collages, painting, drawing, making models or sticking and gluing things.

Craft sessions can be run on a regular basis. They offer a great way of trying out a variety of crafting methods in a fun and stimulating environment. It might be something the young people have never come into contact with before, or it may be things in which they can improve and develop craft skills they've already learnt.

Sessions are a good way for young people to interact and socialise with their peers, through fun activities. Some craft activities are likely to be designed so that they can have a go, on an individual basis, at things themselves. But there are also likely to be group craft experiences too, where everyone contributes to a project.

The latter approach is great for building up social interaction with young people and for them to learn about team work, sharing and cooperation. It's also a wonderful achievement for them to be involved in a group project and they're likely to feel very pleased with their contribution, however small or large.

“We believe that the continual development of skills is vital to enable the sector to thrive.”

Rosy Greenlees,
Executive Director, Crafts Council

Taking part in art and craft activities can have significant benefits. It improves coordination and boosts their confidence in their own abilities, and is a good way to relieve stress.

Unlike some other activities in **myplace** centres it doesn't require any special qualifications or facilities to run craft courses, just enthusiasm and a suitable room (and somewhere to keep the materials). They are also relatively inexpensive to get started with and run. You're offering workshops and sharing skills, rather than offering young people a qualification, and those attending will do so for pleasure. But a certificate of attendance and achievement (designed by the young people as part of the programme perhaps) will probably go down well.

An action plan to tackle the growing skills crisis in the heritage and contemporary craft sector, the Craft Blueprint, has been launched by the Crafts Council and Creative and Cultural Skills, the Sector Skills Council for the creative and cultural industries. Among a range of initiatives it calls for:

- › work with partners to ensure that craft has a profile within national education initiatives;
- › support for the development of teachers of craft;
- › support for the development of craft practitioners working in schools and with young people; and
- › encouragement for schools to host visiting craft practitioners regularly.

For schools substitute **myplace** centres and you have the start of a programme.

“We'd like to see more people given the opportunity to develop their skill in craft as well as an increased awareness of the various career opportunities. That should include the development of apprenticeships.”

Tom Bewick,
Chief Executive of Creative and Cultural Skills

“Whisper this quietly but craft ... it’s quite cool you know. For so long regarded as the poor relation to both industrial design and fine art, the value of things that have been made by hand is being radically reassessed.”

Grant Gibson,
Editor, Crafts

Action planning

Young People

Get young people involved in planning sessions. What crafts do they enjoy? Encourage them to find out if any local crafts people will run workshops or taster sessions at the **myplace** centre.

Making a Difference

Taking part in a craft activity can appeal to less academic or sporty young people and give them a real sense of achievement when they individually or as a group produce materials. They can receive a certificate for their work. Consider putting items on temporary or permanent display in the **myplace** centre.

Vision and Values

Craft activities sit comfortably with the principles of informal education. Everyone can be involved and learn skills like team work, sharing and cooperation. Young people can boost their confidence in their own abilities and feel good about achieving something.

Practicality

Crafts can easily be offered alongside other activities. They don’t necessarily require much by way of resources or space, or special qualifications to run a programme.

Tools, ideas, exercises:

Discuss in the group all the different types of craft activities you can think of. List these on a flipchart and then, through discussion and small group work, create a league ranking of the most interesting to least interesting, as far as the group is concerned. This will call for some negotiation between group members but stress there are no absolute right or wrong answers – it's down to personal preference as to whether you prefer jewellery making to ornamental ironwork.

Having agreed on some of the craft areas that the group is most interested in see if they are able to identify someone locally working in these areas who will be prepared to talk to them further and show them how they go about their craft. It may be that you need to arrange several visits.

Perhaps get the group to arrange a trip to a good craft collection to stimulate debate – lots of regional museums have good collections. The Crafts Council website gives a good list at www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collection-and-exhibitions/public-craft

Links and further guidance

Seek inspiration from the Crafts Council website at www.craftscouncil.org.uk. This has a list of what's on including exhibitions, fairs, courses and events, from glassblowing to print and patchcraft. There's an e-bulletin you can subscribe to as well to keep up to date. For news, opinion and a little bit of gossip from the world of contemporary craft subscribe to Crafts Magazine or follow it on Twitter and Facebook. See www.craftscouncil.org.uk/crafts-magazine/ for details

Research has shown that 'the nature of craft education and the skills that it engenders are more widely applicable to areas of work, and everyday life, than a purely vocational view might suggest ... Craft education appears to impart new styles of thinking, acting and problem solving to its students, which may be more appropriate than traditional learning systems, in our changing culture' (New Lives in the Making, Crafts Council, 1998).

See in particular the downloadable documents Benefits to the Learner of 21st Century Craft; How do we define 'Craft' and Craftivism: the art of co-production.

The Crafts Council's Participation and Learning team is working with partners around the country to create a national programme of participation projects. Use the Craft Directory to locate new and established makers, galleries and more.



Creative & Cultural Skills is the Sector Skills Council for the creative and cultural industries. Its remit includes Craft, Cultural Heritage, Design, Literature, Music, Performing Arts and Visual Arts across the UK. If you work in the craft sector, you can support its Craft Blueprint by:

- › joining in raising awareness of craft skills issues;
- › become a delivery partner for one or more recommendations in the Craft Blueprint;
- › invest in the delivery of the Craft Blueprint;
- › contribute to a review of craft qualifications; and
- › employ an apprentice as an entry-level employee in your organisation.

For further information contact engagement@ccskills.org.uk
Find out more at www.creative-choices.co.uk

The National Society for Education in Art and Design is a leading national authority concerned with art, craft and design across all phases of education in the United Kingdom. It offers, for a single subscription, the extensive benefits of membership of a professional association, a learned society and a trade union. Find out more at www.nsead.org

Craft Club is the national campaign in schools that is reviving craft learning in the younger generations. Founded by the Crafts Council in 2009 in partnership with the UK Hand Knitting Association and the Women's Institute, it is linking skilled volunteers with schools so that young people have the chance to learn about craft and have access to excellent teaching. By offering advice, training, resources, and support to inspire teachers, young people and volunteers, it has successfully been setting up clubs across the country. Over 200 are now established. It's easy to get involved. Register online at www.craftclub.org.uk to access the resources you need to get started, and email knit1@craftclub.org.uk if you need any help.

Hobbycraft, the arts and crafts superstore, has a range of materials and publications available from its website at www.hobbycraft.co.uk The site also lists hundreds of free craft project ideas. See www.hobbycraft.co.uk/Pages/Ideas