Craft and Making Education in Scotland Today

Strengthening Scotland’s craft sector through a review of the provision and development of craft education

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About the Author

Rosemary James-Beith is a freelance research and development consultant who has been working within Scotland’s cultural sector for over a decade. She recently completed an MSc exploring collaborative policy making within Scotland’s craft sector.

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In the Nations Brand Index, which measures a country’s national image and identity, craft is consistently one of the most recognised features of Scotland’s culture and heritage. Craft’s unique connection to Place adds significant value to local economies and makes powerful connections to tourism strategies. Craft skills and knowledge are also essential in maintaining Scotland’s unique material and cultural heritage and in illustrating its importance for future generations. The increased interest in craft, which emerged strongly during the Covid-19 pandemic was a continuing trend already evident in the new audience of younger craft consumers who are interested in a more ethical approach to consumerism, and a result of the growing awareness of the evidenced benefits of craft to wellbeing and mental resilience.

Craft Scotland, together with MAKE, is committed to raising awareness of the value of craft to ensure we attract and support talented makers in future, and to develop informed and engaged audiences. To safeguard continued development of the quality of craft skill, innovation, expertise and knowledge we have in the sector, pathways to careers in craft must be protected, and routes into craft must be supported to guarantee that we can develop a more inclusive, diverse and equitable sector. The craft sector in Scotland can make a significant contribution to our economy, our education sector and the health of our nation if its value and potential is fully recognised and supported.

Catriona Duffy and Lucy McEachan (Panel)
Irene Kernan (Director, Craft Scotland)
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Executive Summary

The MAKE Learn project is designed to strengthen Scotland’s craft sector, raise the profile of Scotland’s craft sector, and develop engagement with Scotland’s craft sector by a diverse audience and user group. It has been developed within the framework of MAKE, a manifesto for craft and a collective call for change, which sets out action points and recommendations that directly reflect the issues of makers living and working in Scotland.

MAKE Learn consists of two strands: a research paper, charting craft and making education across Scotland; and a Schools’ Pilot Project, which tests approaches in Scotland’s primary schools.

Research aim
The MAKE Learn Research Paper maps craft and making education happening across Scotland in primary schools, secondary schools, and beyond. From this, it identifies the key issues and makes recommendations to: best tackle inequality in craft education; change perceptions of craft; identify career paths; and facilitate new experiences and opportunities for all of Scotland’s young people.

Scope of research
For the purposes of this research, ‘craft’ is defined as both expressive art and technology, and involves hands-on use of a variety of materials, tools, and processes to produce objects. ‘Making’ is the active process of using materials and tools to produce objects, combining both low-tech and high-tech resources, and is characterised by its open-endedness and playfulness.

The research maps craft and making education in Scotland, and is primarily interested in activity that is active, ongoing, or has taken place in the last five years.

Methods
The research, which took place between November 2020 and May 2021, was conducted in four ways: desk research; surveys with makers, craft organisations, and teachers; online video interviews; and email exchange. The research was conducted digitally and remotely as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Craft and making education in Scotland today
With an estimated 3.2 million consumers of craft, the appreciation for Scotland’s internationally renowned sector is widespread and growing. Its future however is not assured. The effects of the pandemic on makers’ incomes are likely to be felt for years to come, and Scotland’s craft heritage is critically endangered.

Education plays a significant role in the overall character of the sector, but to date little has been known about its make up. Participation in craft is widespread, but it is not equal. Young adults aged 16-24 have the lowest level of participation in Scotland’s adult population. The 20% least deprived are 50% more likely to have taken part in craft than the 20% most deprived.

Craft and making in schools is reliant on the interests, experience, knowledge, and skills of individual teachers rather than national
policy or coordinated resources. Over half of teachers (52% of those surveyed) felt that craft was not a priority within the curriculum.

Craft is significantly under resourced, and this research found that teachers are increasingly spending their own money to buy materials and tools, and access professional development opportunities. 88% of teachers surveyed said that access to resources for materials and tools was a barrier to teaching craft in the classroom.

Teachers’ lack of confidence with the subject at primary school, the loss of peripatetic art teachers, reduced teaching time in BGE Art & Design at secondary school, and competing priorities with ICT and digital technologies in the Technologies curriculum have all contributed to reduce craft and making in the classroom. The effect is an increasingly de-materialised education.

80% of teachers surveyed felt that Continuing Professional Development training (CLPL - Career Long Professional Learning) would support them to develop their craft teaching abilities and capacities, and 60% felt that a peer network of teachers would reinforce this support. No existing national coordination of this exists in Scotland.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the gap in learning, with teachers highlighting the ‘heartbreaking’ lack of access to even basic craft materials for many pupils at home. Makers surveyed have had a complete lack of access to classrooms over the last year. Access to makers and craftspeople was the area that teachers felt would have the most significant impact, with 84% agreeing that it would develop their ability and capacity to teach craft.

Scotland has a strong and growing paid-for craft education offer, and although it has been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is showing signs of optimism; new initiatives and opportunities are launching as restrictions ease. 89% of makers surveyed had delivered or produced craft education activity including workshops, talks, studio visits, and classes.

Although the craft sector’s business models are diversifying, offering subsidised and supported opportunities to engage with craft and making, this offer is substantially only available to those who have the means to pay for access. This paid-for offer is playing an increasingly important role in talent development and funded tertiary education routes are reduced. Vocational training routes are also limited. Pathways and progression routes are not clearly identified or connected, meaning young people in particular struggle to understand how to get in and on in the craft sector.

Informal craft participation is growing in response to an increased appreciation for craft’s positive contribution to mental health and wellbeing. Professional makers are not always involved in the development and delivery of these opportunities when delivered by third-sector organisations and local authorities, which raises questions about the value placed on makers, and the perception of craft as an amateur hobby pursuit rather than a respected artform.

Projects remain small-scale, locally-focused, and short-term, leaving little behind in terms of documentation or evaluation. Access to funding and resources was seen as the biggest barrier or challenge to developing craft education in Scotland by makers, featuring in 50% of survey responses.

Overall, with no dedicated professional network for craft education, the sector is atomised and lacks strategic coordination. However individual makers are ambitious and optimistic about increased opportunities for collaboration and coordination in the future.

Craft and Making: Skills for Life, Learning and Work

By developing case studies, this research found that craft and making education is being delivered in ambitious ways across Scotland:

- unlocking learning across the curriculum;
- driving engagement in learning;
- building transferable life skills;
- contributing to attainment and employability;
- preserving Scotland’s material heritage;
- developing the future craft sector;
- supporting the next generation to respond to the climate emergency;
- supporting participants’ mental health and wellbeing

This activity is, however, fragile and mostly on a small scale; even the most successful initiatives will not continue without committed strategic support and investment.

‘Craft’s education is currently mostly extra-curricular and costly, therefore accessible to mainly a privileged demographic who have the financial means to access’.

- Maker

‘Craft activities have engaged some children who might otherwise not be engaged in other areas of the curriculum. The pride a pupil has in a handmade product made by themselves is a joy to see. I have had pupils continue their new skills home and start their own projects which is wonderful to hear about’.

- Primary School Teacher
Crafts' Unique Contribution to Learning
The MAKE Learn research found that there is growing evidence and appreciation, both in Scotland and internationally for craft and making education to contribute to the following priorities found within Scotland’s national education policy:

Creativity: Problem solving, resilience, individual curiosity, inquisitiveness, group work and communication skills—craft and making activates the head, heart, and hands, and can contribute to creativity skills and creative learning.

Interdisciplinary Learning: craft provides a unique bridge between Expressive Arts and Technologies curriculums, and can unlock STEAM learning – promoting creativity and attainment within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics disciplines.

Employability: hand skills and materials knowledge are important in a range of professional contexts. Creative careers, STEM careers, green jobs of the future, and skills to preserve Scotland’s built heritage are all developed through access to craft and making.

Learning for Sustainability: craft and making are in a unique position to support learners to develop the skills for life, learning, and work in a future that demands we respond to the climate emergency and shift our values relating to the way we use, reuse, repurpose, recycle, and upcycle materials.

Mental Health and Wellbeing: Craft is internationally recognised as a positive contributor to mental health and wellbeing, with the capacity to improve mood, reduce anxiety, contribute to feelings of happiness and calmness, and reduce social isolation. It has also been shown to provide respite from digital overload.

However, the connections between craft and making and learning, attainment, and employability are underdeveloped in Scotland’s cultural and education policy. Increasing awareness and appreciation for making’s contribution to education will support it to find a stronger position within the curriculum – ensuring a more equitable distribution of craft and making’s known benefits to all learners in Scotland.

Craft education secures the future of the craft sector
Learning about craft’s history and contemporary practice, as well as developing practical skills, materials knowledge, and experience of a range of craft disciplines can:

- Increase appreciation and awareness of craft across demographics;
- Increase lifelong participation, engagement, and consumption of craft that drives the sector forwards;
- Develop the skilled, talented makers of tomorrow – producing beautiful, useful things, and preserving and protecting Scotland’s material heritage.

A strengthened and coordinated educational offer can contribute to the future growth, strength and diversity of the sector, by both developing the audience and market, and the talent, of the future.

Conclusion
Craft and making education can contribute to efforts to build back education and support all learners to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic by:

- Contributing to learning and attainment across the curriculum;
- Improving mental health and wellbeing;
- Driving employability in a range of sectors;
- Developing capacities to respond to the climate emergency.

It can also protect Scotland’s unique craft heritage, increase appreciation for craft, and develop the talented, skilled makers of the future.

However, it is clear that the infrastructure does not yet exist to realise this potential. Without targeted intervention, the beneficiaries of craft and making will be increasingly un-diverse. Significant investment is needed in order to reverse the de-materialisation of education in Scotland’s schools, and to raise the perception of craft as a positive contributor to learning, attainment, and employability.

The current picture speaks to the need to create shared ground for the craft and education sectors to come together to learn from each other, share best practice and resources, and develop ambitious collaborative projects, and talent development pathways. This needs national coordination, dedicated resources, and strategy.
Introduction
The **MAKE Learn** project was initiated in November 2020 in response to ambitions within the craft sector to strengthen craft and making education in Scotland’s primary schools, secondary schools, and beyond.

**MAKE Learn** has been developed within the framework of the **MAKE: Manifesto**, which launched in September 2019. It is guided by three key areas identified through the **MAKE Happen** event, which took place in October 2019:

**Education**
- Ensuring access for children and young people to making skills, and introducing children and young people to career paths within craft, art, and design;

**Digital resourcing and connectivity**
- Supporting networking, knowledge sharing, and skills development;

**Diversity and inclusion**
- Broadening the audience base, and ensuring routes into craft as a career are sustainable, open, and accessible to all.

**MAKE Learn** consists of two strands: a research paper, charting craft and making education across Scotland; and a Schools’ Pilot Project, which tests approaches in Scotland’s primary schools.

This research paper begins with an assessment of the current position of craft and making education within Scotland, before ascertaining the unique contribution craft and making can make to learning, and shared ambitions between the craft and education sectors. From this, key barriers and issues are identified, alongside the overarching benefits of craft and making education, opportunities for development, and a summary of the key findings.

Exemplar initiatives, projects, and programmes identified during this research accompany the report as a series of in-depth case studies, alongside a map of craft education in Scotland.

The report then proposes a series of recommendations to best tackle inequality in craft education, change perceptions of craft, identify career paths, and facilitate new experiences and opportunities for all of Scotland’s young people.

### What do we mean by craft and making education?

Craft has varied and constantly evolving definitions. No unifying definition at present creates a shared understanding across and between the education and craft sectors, which this research notes contributes to the current fragility of the landscape. Craft Scotland champions the design and mastery of materials by makers to produce items, that are representative of the uniqueness of idea, and express the creativity and skill of their makers.1 While Craft Scotland is primarily interested in contemporary craft, this research also includes traditional, heritage, and built craft that falls outwith their current remit.

Craft and making education incorporate both hands-on learning (learning by doing) and expert-oriented learning (learning the right way to do things), following the assessment of Hofverberg et al. in their analysis of craft education in Scandinavian countries:

‘Learning by doing involves DIY, taking time, self-direction, exploration, learning to take risks, resilience of learning from failure, not giving up, experimentation with materials, tools, ideas, synthesizing new technologies and approaches (quality is by-product of time and energy expended), [this approach] embraces innovation…’

Expert-oriented learning – learning the right way to do something, from a skilled and seasoned expert, learning from others, learning about good (best) materials, skills and techniques and appropriate tried and tested tools (quality is core), [this approach] embraces past traditions.2

The research is interested in the role of craft and making education in both supporting innovation and creativity across the curriculum: *learning through craft*, and in sustaining and maintaining Scotland’s unique cultural heritage and history, and developing the craft sector of the future: *learning in craft*. For the purposes of this research ‘craft’ is defined as both expressive art and technology, and involves hands-on use of a variety of materials, tools, and processes to produce objects. ‘Making’ is the active process of using materials and tools to produce objects, combining both low-tech and high-tech resources, and is characterised by its open-endedness and playfulness.3 This research is predicated on the belief that making is fundamental to the human experience, and the way we relate to and learn about the material world around us.

The research maps craft and making education in Scotland, and is primarily interested in activity that is active, ongoing, or has taken place in the last five years. The research includes formal education delivered as part of Scotland’s National Curriculum for Excellence in primary and secondary schools, and informal education and creative participation happening within community settings, both not-for-profit and commercial enterprise contexts.
The research for *MAKE Learn* was conducted between November 2020 and May 2021. An initial review of existing projects, education policy, and relevant literature was undertaken followed by a review of trusts, foundations, and public funding of craft education in Scotland. Communication with a range of education contacts, including Creative Learning Networks across Scotland, aided the development of the audit.

Between 20th January and 12th February 2021, an online survey with craft makers and organisations was distributed through the networks of Craft Scotland and MAKE. A total of 74 responses were received, with 21 of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas represented in the data.

A targeted survey for teachers, identified within the maker survey and Craft Scotland’s CPD networks, was then carried out. A total of 25 responses were received between 10th March and 27th April 2021. It is acknowledged that this small sample is not representative of the teaching profession. However, it does provide insight into key concerns, as well as existing engagement with craft and making, in 21 schools in 13 separate local authority areas.

Using the desk research and survey data, exemplar projects and services were identified. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken online, with 12 individuals involved in the development and delivery of those projects and services between March and May 2021. Along with email exchanges with a further ten individuals associated with the projects, these interviews formed the basis for the development of eight case studies.

Research into craft and making education internationally was supported by freelance researchers with local knowledge, as well as Craft Scotland’s international networks. An international snapshot case study was completed with this data.

Alongside the exemplar case studies, a craft education map of Scotland was developed in order to highlight the geographical spread and variety of existing craft education initiatives.

It should be noted that the research, which took place between November 2020 and May 2021, was affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Interviews were conducted remotely, using Zoom, telephone, and email exchange. The planning and managing of additional workloads related to pandemic safety measures, and adapted assessment approaches, has undoubtedly affected the level of engagement that was possible with the education sector. Craft education, both in schools and within community settings, has been affected by social distancing and lockdown measures, with several pre-existing projects cancelled, postponed, or significantly adapted. Some potential research contacts were unavailable due to furlough, or a change to role and responsibility.
Craft and making education in Scotland today

*Images (L-R)*
- Experimentation at a Craft Scotland CPD workshop on ceramics at Edinburgh Ceramics School. *Courtesy Craft Scotland.*
- Students from St Modan’s High School constructing a shelter on their school grounds using traditional craft materials and processes. *Courtesy St Modan’s High School, Stirling.*
The appreciation of craft is widespread and growing, with an estimated 3.2 million consumers in Scotland. This growth is being driven by younger consumers, who are connecting with craft’s ethical and sustainable values, recognising the importance of locally made products, and the contribution of craft to mental health and wellbeing and digital detox. Scotland’s internationally celebrated craft sector contributes economically, culturally, and socially, but its future is not assured. Recent research published by the Heritage Crafts Association highlights this fragility: Scotland’s material heritage is critically endangered. Urgent action is needed, or our collective history and future innovation capacity in the artform will be lost.

Participation in craft is widespread. According to the Scottish Household Survey Culture and Heritage Report, published in 2019, nearly one in six adults had taken part in a craft activity in the previous 12 months in Scotland. Participation in craft activity was the third most common cultural activity, after reading a book, and viewing performances online. However, this engagement is not equitable. The 16-24 age bracket has the lowest participation rate, one in 12, with craft activity only the 10th most common cultural participation type. The 20% least deprived adults were also over 50% more likely to have taken part in craft than the 20% most deprived. Little has been known about the landscape of craft education to date, and why this inequity manifests.

Craft Scotland notes that the negative effects of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on craft makers’ income streams and access to studios and workspaces are likely to be felt ‘for years to come’. However, the news cycle throughout 2020-21 has highlighted the ongoing increase in craft participation during lockdown, with many returning to old hobbies, or taking up new ones. Teaching, whether workshops or within formal education, is an established part of UK craft makers’ income streams.

Craft education, both formal and informal, plays a significant role in the overall character of the sector, and can contribute to the efforts to build back the sector after the pandemic. Yet, there has not been a clear picture of this activity across Scotland, nor has there been strategic national coordination or investment in developing it for the benefit of all.

‘Sometimes craft can be seen as “too difficult” or “too time consuming” in a way that painting is not, so it’s quickly avoided. That way of thinking needs to change’.
— Art & Design Teacher

‘There isn’t any [craft] unless a particular teacher has a personal interest in a craft area’.
— Primary School Teacher
Craft and making in Scotland’s schools: A de-materialised education

In schools, craft and making education is reliant on the skills, knowledge, interests, and confidence of individual teachers rather than national strategy or coordinated resources. Unlike Scandinavian countries, there is no dedicated ‘craft’ curriculum and no mandated teaching hours. A ‘horizontal logic’, which provides for local decision-making and flexibility in the way Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence is interpreted and delivered, results in a complex and varied offer of craft and making-skills education nationally.

Craft is inferred to be included within the Curriculum for Excellence Art & Design Benchmarks, without reference to craft disciplines, or the work of professional makers. This is unlike England where NSEAD has advocated for the explicit inclusion of craft within Art & Design subject guidance. In the BGE phase of secondary school, Art & Design teaching time has reduced to just 50 minutes per week in many schools. Reorganisation of the curriculum towards physical health and wellbeing, including PE, dance and healthy eating initiatives, fails to acknowledge the mental health and wellbeing contribution of expressive arts subjects. The survey research found that craft is actively ‘avoided’ within Expressive Arts, in favour of 2D drawing and painting, seen as ‘too time-consuming’ and ‘too difficult’ to deliver within shortening teaching periods.

The loss of peripatetic arts specialists at primary school level has contributed to a loss of craft learning opportunities in the BGE phase, with both makers and secondary teachers acknowledging that by the time pupils choose subjects for their higher phase it is almost ‘too late’ to introduce basic craft techniques. Makers visiting schools have witnessed poor hand skills; children aged 12-13 unable to sew on a button, tie shoelaces or cut in a straight line. It is concerning that pupils do not have the opportunity to develop these basic life skills in primary school through craft activity.

Craft’s position within the Technologies curriculum is marginalised as it becomes increasingly synonymous with ICT and digital technologies, focused on seeding ‘internet-economy’ business practices in the educational landscape. This comes on the back of falling uptake of Technologies curriculum choices in the higher phase, with Morrison-Love noting a 47% drop in pupil uptake in the first year of Design and Manufacture, compared to the number of pupils sitting the last year of Intermediate Product Design and Standard Craft and Design.

Technologies has undergone significant revision, redesign, and reconfiguration to increase the criticality of the curriculum, connecting to the ‘social, moral, ethical, aesthetic and environmental issues, as well as technical and economic aspects of all technological activity past, present and proposed’. Despite this, craft’s treatment within the curriculum is utilitarian in nature, removed from the expressive qualities found in the Art & Design curriculum, and more closely associated with employability in skilled trades than other curriculum areas.

Education is increasingly dematerialised, prioritising creative thinking, whilst reducing resources for materials, tools and equipment that support disciplined skill development. 88% of teachers surveyed felt that lack of funds to buy materials and tools was a barrier to teaching craft, while 72% found teaching time to be a barrier. This research found that teachers are increasingly spending their own money to provide basic resources to teach craft in the classroom and access professional training.

Research into the Expressive Arts at primary level found that confidence and prior training or experience in specific skills, materials, and processes are the biggest factors determining practice in the classroom. Charles Byrne notes that ‘few teachers were comfortable with teaching and assessing children’s progress in subjects in which they themselves did not profess expertise’. Within technologies too, lack of confidence is contributing to low levels of teacher engagement, with McLaren noting that, at primary school level, ‘Technologies education does not manifest widely... across Scotland’.

The majority (80%) of teachers surveyed felt that Career Long Professional Learning training (CLPL) would support them to develop their craft teaching abilities and capacities, and 60% felt that a peer network of teachers would support them. No networked peer-learning or information sharing mechanism currently exists nationally, and there is no national coordination of related teaching materials. Professional development opportunities are limited, and access is dependent on locally-determined budgets and time commitments.

While there is a wealth of craft equipment held within Scotland’s schools (60% of teachers surveyed have access to sewing machines, 56% ceramics kilns, and 52% work benches), this is uneven across craft disciplines. Only one teacher had access to a glass kiln, and one to a loom. A lack of resources for materials, technical knowledge, time, and confidence with equipment, also means that pupils do not get the benefit of these assets when they are available.

Teachers’ lack of confidence is underpinned by a lack of strategic investment and training as a result of craft’s relative status within the curriculum. Over half of teachers surveyed (52%) felt that craft was not a priority within the curriculum. This is exacerbated by craft’s low priority within the creative learning agenda: craft is absent from the relevant section within the Culture Strategy for Scotland, and is not prominent within Creative Learning Networks.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the gap in learning, with teachers highlighting the ‘heartbreaking’ lack of access to even basic craft materials for many pupils at home, with those most deprived affected the most. Makers surveyed have had a complete lack of access to classrooms over the last year, with informal art and craft clubs and Arts Award activity stopped as a result of pandemic restrictions. This comes on the back of reducing engagement between the craft and education sectors in schools.
Opportunities for makers to engage with schools have contracted over the last three years, with 20% of teachers stating that they have been unable to support any activity delivered by makers over this period. Overall, the majority of projects detailed in the maker survey were locally specific, short, and provided one-off or taster experiences, using words like ‘introductory’, ‘encounters’, and ‘visits’. Most left little behind in terms of documentation, evaluation, or learning resources that could be shared with either their peers in the craft sector, or with teachers and learning practitioners in the education sector.

There are notable exceptions to this. Paisley Museum explored weaving heritage in the area with sustained engagement with over 200 primary school pupils over six weeks as part of a longer-term Paisley Weavers project.22 The Association of Goldsmiths has developed a repeatable learning resource called Silver of the Stars. With support from Edinburgh City Council and National Museums of Scotland, they linked with a touring Crafts Council exhibition to work with over 450 participants. This resource has been active since 2007 and remains accessible online.23 ShetlandPeerieMakkers and Ostrero’s Making Circles (both explored in-depth within the MAKE Learn case studies) are the only currently active examples continuing to work at scale in a sustained way with schools, with over 300 and 1100 participants respectively (although its noted that Ostrero has launched a digital delivery approach responding to schools closures, and ShetlandPeerieMakkers’ knitting tuition was on hold until September 2021).

Activity that can be completed at desks, has minimal mess, and not affect the set-up of classrooms, are more readily brought into schools than other disciplines: 50% of makers surveyed working in wood or in furniture had never worked with an educational partner, compared to 15% and 12% of those working with jewellery and textiles respectively.

Access to makers and craftspeople was the area that teachers felt would have the most significant positive impact, with 84% agreeing that it would develop their ability and capacity to teach craft.

‘I think you need a collective knowledge in a school, or it all depends on that one person. If that person develops the craft resources, then leaves, the resources become redundant. There needs to be a way of grouping craft-skilled teachers, so they can be called upon by those without the skills/knowledge. I think every Art teacher is keen to do and learn more craft. The enthusiasm is there but the supportive structure is not’.
- Art & Design Teacher

‘There isn’t money for anything other than paint and paper’.
- Art & Design Teacher

‘Local schools struggle to find the time to include craft in the curriculum. I do still provide occasional workshops in the classroom or teachers CPD sessions, but much fewer than I used to’.
- Maker
Quality craft participation and talent development: inaccessible to many

Scotland has a strong and growing paid-for craft education offer. The majority (89%) of makers and craft organisations who responded to the MAKE Learn makers survey had delivered or produced craft education activities, including workshops, talks, classes, and studio visits. On average, for those that delivered craft education, it accounted for more than one-third of their or their organisation’s work in the last 2 to 3 years.

Over one-third of those delivering craft education activities have found this work completely stopped during the last year as a result of pandemic restrictions. A further third have found that work reduced – using words like ‘severely’ and ‘drastically’. Nearly half (48%) have adapted or changed their offer, moving classes online, producing craft at home packs, digital resources, and video content. Several makers note that increasing and adapting their educational offer has had the effect of increasing sales of their work and enabling them to reach new audiences.

There is evidence that this sector is optimistic about its future as restrictions ease, with new initiatives such as Edinburgh’s Craft-Ed promoting a ‘one-stop shop for contemporary craft courses’, and Camban Studio Aberdeen offering a year-long online programme in techniques such as drawing with stitch, eco printing, and botanical embroidery. This, alongside the significant rise in the number and variety of UK-based commercial craft at home packs and kits, and television coverage of craft, evidence an increasing awareness and demand for hands-on craft experiences, as found by The Market for Craft in 2020. The experience economy relating to craft is a significant growth area for the future.

Delivered in private studios, publicly funded cultural venues, and higher education institutions, this paid-for offer plays an increasingly important role in the talent development of the sector. SAAS funded tertiary craft education qualifications (excepting Jewellery and Textiles, which continue to be offered across Scotland) have reduced in the last decade. City of Glasgow’s Glass Art HNC is the last course of its kind, and there are no publicly funded dedicated ceramics qualifications since the demise of The Glasgow School of Art’s undergraduate programme in 2011, although ceramics and glass is offered within Aberdeen’s Gray’s School of Art Three Dimensional Design course at BA level. Vocational training routes also remain limited. Structural issues mean those in the craft sector, characterised by high levels of sole-traders and microenterprises, are unable to access government-backed schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships.

Applied Arts Scotland’s Shared Creative Modern Apprenticeship Pilot Scheme has started to address this, but lack of awareness of routes into the craft sector for school leavers means the sector is losing entrants at a critical point in the talent pipeline. Upland’s Modern Makers programme, included in the case studies, which has been running since 2014, is a notable example of good practice supporting groups of young people to work...
closely with professional makers over long periods, developing business acumen and confidence alongside technical skills. Capacity for participants is low, however, and Creative Director Amy Marletta acknowledges that the onwards pathways and progression routes across the sector are not clearly identified or strategically connected, resulting in unclear destinations.

The craft sector’s business models are diversifying, providing increased educational opportunities for a range of participants. Archipelago Folkschool run an adult residential boatbuilding offer, whilst also supporting youth clubs across Scotland to build model boats through a Creative Scotland grant-funded programme. The Central Scotland School of Craft in Dunblane offers artisan workshops in a range of craft disciplines for crafters of all abilities, whilst offering fully subsidised places for local residents, aiming to ‘address the issue of rural inequality when it comes to creative learning’. Vanilla Ink in Glasgow and at The Smiddy, Banff operate a Community Interest Company, reinvesting income from their jewellery-making classes to support social enterprise activity with local groups and charities. At its core, however, craft education remains an exclusive offer: accessible to those that have the financial means and confidence to participate.

Those in the craft sector want to share their skills, experience, and knowledge with others, but they struggle with a lack of confidence, the means to develop teaching skills, and the resources to step away from production. This is further contributing to the loss of heritage craft skills in Scotland, and a narrowing of development opportunities for the next generation of contemporary craft makers.

Within community settings, informal craft education and creative craft participation is widespread. It has grown in response to the increased awareness and appreciation of craft’s contribution to mental health and wellbeing—even more so in the last year, with free craft packs providing access to materials a notable development nationally. Professional makers and craft organisations are not always involved in the development and delivery of these learning opportunities. This raises issues about the quality of what is being delivered, as well as the perception of craft as an amateur hobby pursuit, rather than a respected artform.

Organisations delivering informal craft education, which do involve professional makers, struggle to raise funds to realise their ambitions and, as a result, projects remain small-scale, locally-focused, and short-term, leaving little behind in terms of documentation or evaluation. The research found no coordinated funding for craft participation or education, with funding more readily available to pilot and test approaches than to develop and sustain them. 50% of makers and craft organisations surveyed felt that access to funding and resources was the biggest barrier or challenge to developing craft education in Scotland.

There is little community of practice, with no dedicated professional network enabling peer-learning, gap analysis, or shared evaluation. Over 40% of makers surveyed answered ‘no’ when asked if they were part of any network that supported craft education in Scotland. For the 60% of respondents who were part of networks, they ranged from Applied Arts Scotland (11%) and Craft Scotland (8%), to Upland (5%), Heritage Crafts Association (5%), and engage (4%). A plethora of practice-specific networks and associations were also referenced, with many only relevant to one or two individuals surveyed. The craft education sector is atomised and lacks strategic coordination. However individual makers are ambitious and optimistic about increased opportunities for collaboration and coordination in the future.

‘I’d like to work more collaboratively with others in the maker community. We need to shake up the national strategy in delivery of this essential part of the school curriculum. At the moment our subject area is too fragmented and many opportunities to share expertise are lost. Education Scotland and ScotGov need to radically overhaul their vision for our subject domain and inject some new thinking into this approach. Teacher training has an important role to play too. Priorities need to be reassessed and an open and transparent dialogue started and encouraged’.

— Technologies Teacher
Scotland’s Craft Voices

‘Making an object from start to finish promotes a sense of achievement. Craft making encourages concentration and dexterity in children, and three-dimensional creative expression. Crafts allow imaginative forms, limited only by the materials used. Making craft gives children the opportunity to use and understand tools. Craft offers so much experience and expression in colour, form, materials, texture’. Hazel Hughson, Core Team Leader, ShetlandPeerieMakkers

‘it’s all about beauty and creativity and inventiveness. And I think that’s the kind of antidote to the very screen focused learning that we have. And that we need to have. I’m not saying we should go back to it all being by hand or anything, but I think the more screen focused education becomes, the more important it is that craft is in there as a balance, so that we don’t lose all those hand skills’. Mary Michel, Co-Director, Ostrero

‘People put craft on the lower pecking order of pretty much anything in the education system, and yet, again, it has the ability to do everything. Especially in that interdisciplinary role. So much can be learnt through craft: maths, geography, science, you know, every technique and every subject can be taught through it. And I think what’s great about it is that it’s a fun way of learning as well’. Tanwen Llewelyn, Learning Programme Coordinator, Craft Scotland

‘I think that young people have got so much to benefit from, from being exposed to craft, it opens their eyes up to educational opportunities, allows them to identify that there’s an alternative to academic studies. Some of the pupils who are not doing well, academically, they’re not engaged in school, and all of a sudden [through the glass art project], there was something that they could identify with. There’ll be many pupils who will identify that craft gives them another means of achieving an outcome from school that will actually support them in life’. Steven Graham, glass artist / Larbert High School Glass Art Project

‘We need more than academics across Scotland. And too often, I think, practical skills are seen as a secondary or lesser option. I know, it was certainly the case when I was growing up, that, you know, certain people channelled in an academic route, and certain people channel down a more vocational route. And there was a disparity in esteem between those. I would hope that those days are behind us. And I would hope that it would be acknowledged that somebody wants to work with their hands, or somebody wants to get engaged in craft, or do more practical things, then that really is a very, very valid choice. And that they should be supported to do so. And that it’s a necessary thing as well, because we need people who can build things, we need people who can make things, we need people who can craft and manufacture and make beautiful, useful things’. Brian Wilkinson, Learning Activity Manager, The Engine Shed, Historic Environment Scotland

‘We need to know how to repair things, understand how things are made, and how to take them apart again and reuse all the bits. That knowledge is being lost… So many objects today are designed to be unfixable so you have to buy a new one. [Making Circles] is about getting children to think about that, to think about how and why things are made and how and why they themselves might be able to design, make and use them better. And in that way, cut down on waste and use the world’s resources better’. Mary Michel, Co-Director, Ostrero

‘It’s how people used to learn – crafts didn’t used to be crafts they were what we did to sustain our lives… it’s everywhere. So let’s make it everywhere in education.’ Layla Tree, Textile Workshop Leader, Garvald Edinburgh

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Craft’s unique contribution

- Modern Makers participants work with maker Sam Booth to construct a wooden bird hide. Courtesy Colin Tennant.
The MAKE Learn research found that there is growing evidence and appreciation in Scotland and internationally for craft and making education to contribute to the following priorities found within Scotland’s national education policy:

**Craft contributes to creativity**

Craft and making provides an established contribution to creativity skills and creative learning; a prominent national priority in education “fundamental to the definition of what it means to be a ‘successful learner’” in the Scottish education system. The Creative Learning Plan published by Creative Scotland in 2013, responds to mounting evidence of the changing nature of work, and the risks of outsourcing and automation of jobs from a fast-moving technological shift. Creativity is identified as a key skill sought by employers in the 21st century, contributing to learners’ ability to respond to change, mitigate uncertainty, and innovate.

According to Wong: “the process of intimately working with materials enhances cognitive capacities, including self-efficacy and control over the creative process, as well as motivation to overcome obstacles”. A review of education design within the Nordic countries found “[c]oncrete work, with materials and tools and equipment is crucial and allows the pupils to be creative and think individually”. Crafting is also one of the foundations of ‘discipline’ within the Five-Dimensional Model of Creativity, used by the OECD in their assessment of schools’ creativity and critical thinking.

Closely aligned with the creative learning agenda is Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states that ‘every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’. Productive ‘making’ and craft participation for children can ensure participation in a significant aspect of Scotland’s cultural life, arts, and cultural heritage.

Despite this established link, the craft sector has not been closely involved in the development of Scotland’s Creative Learning Plan, nor was it included in the Creative Learning section within the Scottish Government’s Culture Strategy for Scotland published in 2020. The link between creativity skills, creative learning, and craft and making is underdeveloped within Scotland’s educational and cultural policy. Strengthening and further evidencing this connection provides an essential component of creating a shared space where the craft sector and education sector can come together.

**Craft unlocks interdisciplinary learning, attainment, and employability**

There is an overall national aspiration to improve the provision of high-quality interdisciplinary learning opportunities in Scotland, described as being ‘at the heart’ of the Curriculum for Excellence, whilst also acknowledged to not yet being fully embedded or ‘habitual’ in practice nationally. Education Scotland’s recent thought-piece on the subject states:

‘Discipline specialization has been the driving force for centuries of educational effort, but it is polymaths, generalists and “T” thinkers with interdisciplinary thinking who are required across the board to make sense of ever more complex and global issues’. It is noted that in early years and primary contexts, interdisciplinary approaches to learning are easier to support, while curriculum inflexibility at secondary level, focused more directly on preparation for senior phase assessment, makes interdisciplinary approaches ‘problematic to plan and deliver’ with interdisciplinary learning and group work having no mechanism for assessment within the SQA.

In prioritising interdisciplinary learning at a national level, the Scottish educational system is providing a route to challenge and reverse a century of concerted efforts to ‘separate thinking from doing’ and draw together the critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills with the making skills, hand skills, materials knowledge, and discipline that underpin and complement them. Indeed Bill Lucas, in his assessment of the Five Dimensional Model of Creativity, asserts ‘[a]s a counterbalance to the more intuitive side of creativity, there is a need for knowledge and craft in shaping the creative product and in developing expertise’.

With the ability to combine physical skill and cognitive ability, and be expressive and useful, craft and making can unlock new, unexpected connections across the curriculum. It has been proven to contribute to attainment across the curriculum, building creativity and life skills, communication, problem solving, and resilience. Craft education can support interdisciplinary learning, and provide a unique bridge between Expressive Arts and Technologies disciplines (STEM to STEAM), contributing to learner engagement with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Teachers who do engage with craft and making are positive about its contribution to learning, and are ambitious to grow this area of work. This is particularly noted for pupils with additional support for learning needs, with craft and making activity in the classroom supporting them to build confidence and self-esteem, as well as increase attainment. Makers highlight the high levels of enjoyment and engagement in learning from pupils, when participating in craft and making activity, particularly those who have previously struggled with more academic content.
Research shows that hand skills and materials knowledge are important in a range of unexpected professional contexts: ensuring surgeons have the dexterity to sew up patients; contributing to creativity skills; paving pathways into STEM careers and the green jobs of the future. St Modan’s recent collaboration with The Engine Shed, detailed within the case studies, demonstrates the ability of craft education to foster the skills needed to preserve Scotland’s built heritage.

Currently, craft is viewed as an extracurricular activity. There is a lack of understanding or appreciation of its contribution to attainment and employability. Strengthening this appreciation through encouraging greater interdisciplinarity will support it to find a stronger position within the Scottish education system.

Craft can support Scotland’s learners to respond to the climate emergency

Our relationship to the material world around us has changed rapidly in the last century. No longer are we intimately involved in making our world, heavily reliant on out-of-sight mass production. As a result, our values have changed, and we consume more. We create high levels of waste, lacking skills and understanding in how to mend, repair, recycle, and upcycle because we do not see the potential of materials around us.

Craft and materials knowledge and exploration can play a critical role in supporting Learning for Sustainability, connected to a reconstructionist pedagogy, which problematises materiality, and where the ‘purpose of education is to continuously remodel society, its politics, ideologies and values’. Making Circles, which introduced over 1100 pupils across Scotland in classes P4-S3 to circular economy principles, is evidence that craft and making education can help develop the capacities to respond to the climate emergency. Govanhill Bath’s Rags to Riches project is another example centring sustainability and upcycling skills through craft and making activity.

Education Scotland recognises Learning for Sustainability to be a ‘curriculum entitlement’ and the Scottish Government has put artists and practitioners at the heart of supporting ‘communities to visualise and understand the impacts of climate change’ within the Culture Strategy for Scotland.

The emerging awareness of a burgeoning green economy, and the related green jobs to power it, is highlighted in the Edge Foundation’s recent report on anticipated skills shortages in the UK, stating that there is a ‘need for the Curriculum to prepare the future workforce, with increasing focus on sustainability and climate change driving future innovation in this area’. Concerns over loss of jobs to automation, are tempered with optimism over the potential of trends towards environmental sustainability driving employment and economic development in the future.

Materials knowledge gained through making skills, together with creativity skills that explore innovative applications and problem-solving processes, puts craft and making in a unique position to support learners to develop the skills for life, learning, and work, in a future which will necessitate a response to the climate emergency and the shifting values of material culture that this will demand. There are obvious alliances to be made with ethical and sustainable design cultures, and the push for greater use of outdoor learning across the curriculum (as recommended within the recent ICEA report).
Participating in craft contributes to mental health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing is a national priority, and viewed as foundational to supporting both skills development and the human capital required to navigate a fast-changing world. The overall focus on physical health and wellbeing in the Curriculum for Excellence (which to date has increased time and resource for Dance, Physical Education, and healthy eating initiatives), is shifting rapidly within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, with rising awareness of the significant mental health and wellbeing needs of Scotland’s learners and teaching staff.

Craft is internationally recognised as having a positive influence on mental health and wellbeing for those who practice it, providing a site for mindfulness and meditative experience. Practising knitting has been shown to have therapeutic qualities, with the capacity to improve mood, reduce anxiety, and contribute to feelings of happiness and calmness, as well as reduce social isolation. Susan Luckman notes the wellbeing benefits of both individual and social participation, identifying craft’s ‘key role in enhancing the quality of life of those who participate in its practices’. The Arts and Health Inquiry report found that participation in crafts provided mental health and wellbeing benefits to children during hospital stays, and increased confidence and reduced feelings of isolation for new mothers.

Informal craft participation is being funded and developed nationally with the express aims to contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing, showing increased alignment between funders and the craft sector on that basis. There are notable examples that are successfully contributing to the health and wellbeing of our communities. Developed and delivered during lockdown in 2020, Outpost Arts’ Making Space for Crafts, has evidenced positive effects on participants’ wellbeing, with craft providing ‘constructive creative outlets to manage stress, depression, and low mood’. Vanilla Ink The Smiddy Banff Make in Metal project, delivered in collaboration with Aberdeenshire Community Learning and Development, has shown improved mental health for young participants struggling with anxiety through silversmithing activity outwith the school environment. Garvald Edinburgh has shown improved mental health and interpersonal capacities in its community of adults with complex learning disabilities through engagement with textile crafts.

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A weak connection

These connections and contributions are underdeveloped in Scotland’s cultural and education policy. Recent research, using Taking Part data from England, shows that school participation in arts and culture is not marked by the same socio-demographic stratification as out of school engagement. For this reason, in school opportunities to engage meaningfully with craft and making must be prioritised alongside informal participation in community settings, in order to provide equitable access to the established benefits of craft and making.

Increasing awareness and appreciation for craft and making education’s contribution to learning, attainment, and employability will support it to find a stronger position within the curriculum – ensuring a more equitable distribution of craft and making’s known benefits to all learners in Scotland.

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Craft education secures the future of the craft sector

Craft and making education has the ability to develop a range of capacities and skills that can contribute to employability, as evidenced above. Craft and making education can also provide meaningful and rewarding employment (and self-employment) on its own terms, a claim strengthened by the Market for Craft Report’s optimistic picture of a growing craft sector. Employment within the Craft Sector and related fields can contribute to the Scottish Government’s commitment to supporting all of Scotland’s young people aged 16-24 to find employment, education, training, or volunteering. Judgements about career aspirations are already limited and heavily gendered in children as young as seven, and whilst Art & Design was found to be the favourite subject of 22% of 7-11 year olds in the UK, related jobs did not appear when asked to draw a picture of their dream career, suggesting awareness of creative craft careers, and those associated with them in fields such as art and design, are not manifesting within primary school.

Although there has not been a specific craft sector review of the workforce demographics, the recent PANIC! report and subsequent work on inequalities in the creative and cultural industries, has shown that employment and progression is not equitable, favouring those that have the means to support themselves to undertake unpaid work, pay for tertiary education, and already have the confidence and cultural capital to ‘make it’ in the sector. It’s clear that the craft sector needs to consider the pathways and progression routes that enable the development of the next generation of craft makers and artists, and indeed craft educationalists, to become more diverse and inclusive. The acquisition of technical skills, knowledge, and experience, is foundational to developing the craft sector of the future, raising awareness of the possibilities for progression, as well as diversifying the creative output.

Another concern within the craft sector, is the risk of losing key aspects of our shared cultural heritage, without targeted interventions to develop the skills and awareness of the next generation who will need to care for it. Mary Lewis, of the Heritage Crafts Association states:

“If we allow endangered crafts to disappear then we seriously diminish the opportunities for future generations to create their own sustainable and fulfilling livelihoods based on these skills”.

The Heritage Crafts’ Association Endangered Crafts Red List notes urgent action is required to protect and maintain the craft heritage of the UK. A number of Scottish-specific crafts were recently added in 2021; Shetland lace knitting, Highlands and Islands thatching, and sporran making are critically endangered, and even kilt-making on the endangered list.

Learning about craft’s history and contemporary practice within education can also build appreciation and critical engagement, supporting both the audience and market for craft to continue to develop. While other creative sectors and artforms have pursued large-scale initiatives that support audience development and creative participation, with a focus on taste cultivation, audience education, and outreach, the craft sector in Scotland has not, to date, had a coordinated national response. With limited publicly-funded venues showing craft, and the sector dominated by sole-traders and microenterprises, the sector has not found critical mass as yet to sustain this area of work. This is particularly notable in relation to equalities, diversity, and inclusion, where craft falls behind other art forms and creative industries in Scotland that have received greater public investment to develop accessibility, support diverse talent, and address inequality of representation.

Craft and making education in Scotland’s schools is not equitable, and therefore routes into professional craft and making are not equitable. Without action, the talent pipelines into the sector will favour those that have the means and confidence to access paid-for craft education outside of school, resulting in an increasingly un-diverse craft sector. Accessible learning and engagement with craft and making outwith school is not able to deliver at scale or geographical reach currently to counteract these barriers. Makers lack the confidence and ability to share their knowledge and skills with others, contributing to a decline in heritage crafts. The craft sector risks narrowing its demographics, contributing to a less dynamic and innovative sector, as well as failing to realise the potential benefits that craft and making offer to learning, attainment, and wellbeing.

A strengthened and coordinated educational offer can respond to these issues, contributing to the future growth, strength, and diversity of the sector by developing both the audience and market, and the talent, of the future.
Scotland’s Craft Voices

‘How are we going to develop future craft makers? If we’re not doing any of it, when are they going to find out about it? Is it going to be kind of tokenistic? It needs to be embedded when you’re young. That’s when you get the joy and it takes root. I just feel quite fearful if we don’t have these things embedded, what’s going to happen?’

Caroline Swift, Textile Workshop Leader, Garvald Edinburgh

‘There’s somewhere in the region of half a million traditional buildings in Scotland. And they need looked after well into the future, if we want the built environment to remain well looked after and, you know, construct the sense of place that we have in the character of our built environment to stay the same, then we need to maintain that skills base, we need to maintain the traditional building skills and traditional craft skills base’.

Brian Wilkinson, Learning Activity Manager, The Engine Shed, Historic Environment Scotland

‘I do have a real, genuine fear for some of the crafts that we’ve got. And it requires a fast response. Even if it’s a case of some prototyping initiatives. Just to tease out what does and doesn’t work. I have been involved in a lot of this type of work at a national government level before in my previous life, I know that these things can move quite slowly. And we don’t have time, you know, if we take too much time our history’s lost’.

Steven Graham, glass artist / Larbert High School Glass Art Project

‘Art and craft is seen as something that’s nice to have, but not really a priority, a lot of the time, when actually, you know, it is entirely possible to make a career out of art and craft. I think this still very much, that idea that it’s not a proper job… it’d be really good, from my point of view, especially in schools, if people were given the opportunity to do more art and craft, and also that there was a business element taught into that so people could see that it [a craft career] was actually viable’.

Lisa Rothwell-Young, Jeweller
Conclusion

- Teacher participating in a Craft Scotland CPD workshop on ceramics at Edinburgh Ceramics School.
- Millinery with Sally Ann Provan, part of Craft Scotland’s CPD workshop series.

Both Images: Courtesy Craft Scotland.
Craft and making education can contribute to efforts to build back education and support all learners to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic by:

- Contributing to learning and attainment across the curriculum;
- Improving mental health and wellbeing;
- Driving employability in a range of sectors;
- Developing capacities to respond to the climate emergency.

It can also protect Scotland’s unique craft heritage, increase appreciation for craft, and develop the talented, skilled makers of the future.

However, it is clear that the infrastructure does not yet exist to realise this potential. Without targeted intervention, the beneficiaries of craft and making will be increasingly un-diverse. Significant investment is needed in order to reverse the decline in craft and making in Scotland’s schools, and to raise the perception of craft as a positive contributor to learning, attainment, and employability.

Despite notable examples of good practice, the access to craft and making, physical engagement with materials, their histories and properties, is not equitable. With rising participation in paid-for craft education opportunities for those who have the means and confidence to access the increasing offer, the existing picture is likely to entrench inequality of access and participation. Those most disadvantaged or excluded in society continue to be the least able to engage, and the informal craft education sector, lacking coordination and strategy, is not yet able to develop work at scale or geographical reach to counteract these inequities.

Informal craft and making education, particularly within the not-for-profit sector, needs to be strengthened and networked, with greater esteem and support given to experienced and skilled makers in its delivery. This can support it to deliver on its promises of bringing the agreed benefits of craft and making to diverse participants in an inclusive way.

In the paid-for craft education sector, there is a need to appropriately support makers so they can transfer the knowledge, skills, and experience they have developed over years of professional practice, to a wider and more inclusive range of participants.

Within schools, access to materials and tools, professional development, and peer-learning, is reliant on the interests and commitment of individual teachers, rather than supported as a strategic priority across Scotland. This means that, again, access to craft and making, and their acknowledged benefits to learning, life, and employability, are not equitable for Scotland’s learners.

Despite the established benefits of craft to provide respite from digital overload, and improve mental health and wellbeing, craft and making has not developed significantly under the pandemic restrictions beyond pockets of activity. There is concern that the low status of craft and making in the classroom has seen it fall further behind over the last year, and without strategic support, may never recover its limited position, let alone develop further.

There is a lack of awareness and appreciation in the education sector of craft and making’s capacity to contribute to the learning, attainment, and employability of learners, placing it in competition with other subject areas that have heretofore been bolder about their contributions in this area, notably the STEM disciplines and digital technologies.

This is exacerbated by unclear pathways and progression routes for those that want to develop professionally, particularly for school leavers wishing to enter practical or vocational training. Despite these challenges, there is optimism that the perceptions of craft and making within formal education can be improved when they are aligned with the employability agenda. This relies on developing targeted resources for schools that illuminate the lived experience of professionals who have engaged with craft and making in their professional journeys. Strengthening the way craft and making is taught within schools, by increasing its interdisciplinarity, is also a response to negate its current marginalisation.

It is clear that driving nationally-distributed and sustained improvement to craft education in Scotland’s schools will rely on generating the interests, enthusiasm, and skills of the teaching profession, as they are both the core deliverers, and the gatekeepers, providing the craft sector with access to contribute.

The current picture speaks to the need to create shared ground for the craft and education sectors to come together to learn from each other, share best practice and resources, and develop ambitious collaborative projects. This requires national coordination, dedicated resources, and strategy.
Next Steps

In order to strengthen the perception and position of craft and making in education, and realise the MAKE Learn ambition to ensure a quality craft and making education for everyone in Scotland, the report commissioners call for the following commitments to be made:

1. Create a shared vision and strategy to tackle the negative perception of craft and making in education through a strong, progressive stakeholder coalition, drawn from both the craft sector and the education sector;

2. Challenge the dematerialisation of formal education in Scotland’s Schools by investing in craft and making in the classroom;

3. Shout louder about the positive educational and wellbeing benefits of craft and making through sharing documentation, research, and evaluation;

4. Bring the craft and education sectors together in meaningful and productive collaboration;

5. Identify and share good practice widely;

6. Map and strengthen educational, vocational, and professional pathways, and progression routes;

7. Commit to set and realise ambitious Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion targets.
The *MAKE Learn* map is an online directory of current craft and making education activity in Scotland, beyond the school setting, which is accessible via the MAKE website (makemanifesto.com).

Compiled as part of the *MAKE Learn* research (2021), it aims to make visible the network of craft and making education activity, taking place across the country.

Head to the website (makemanifesto.com) to explore education projects by location and type and get a snapshot of craft and making education, beyond the school setting, in Scotland.

Craft and making is being delivered in ambitious ways across Scotland, unlocking learning across the curriculum, driving engagement in learning, building transferable life skills, contributing to attainment and employability, preserving Scotland’s material heritage, developing the future craft sector, and supporting the next generation to respond to the climate emergency.

By developing case studies, this research found that:

Through hands-on making in the classroom, Ostrero’s *Making Circles* Project has introduced 1100 children from P4 to S3 across Scotland to circular economy principles.

With over 300 participants, *ShetlandPeerieMakkers* is protecting the future of Shetland hand knitting, facilitating intergenerational knowledge and skills exchange in primary schools across the Shetland Islands.

Embracing a whole-school approach, and embedding a glass artist in teaching the curriculum, Larbert High School unlocked STEM learning and creativity skills, and developed new relationships with its community.

Working with skilled professionals from The Engine Shed (a part of Historic Environment Scotland), St Modan’s High School students have gained accreditation and developed traditional building craft skills that can contribute to maintaining and protecting Scotland’s historic buildings.

Whilst working on live projects with professional makers as part of Upland’s *Modern Makers* programme, active since 2014, young people in rural South West Scotland have developed contemporary craft, enterprise, and business development skills.

Through regular engagement with textile crafts, members of Garvald, Edinburgh’s community with complex learning disabilities, have not only benefitted from mental health and wellbeing improvements, but have increased their skills, confidence, and capacities.

In Craft Scotland’s *Continuing Professional Development* programmes, teachers have been supported to develop their confidence, ambition, and creativity, through participating in hands on making sessions led by professional makers.

Producing jewellery as part of Vanilla Ink *The Smiddy Make in Metal* project in Banff, young people struggling within the school environment have achieved Dynamic Youth Awards and improved their mental health and wellbeing.

And internationally, craft and making is being used as a core part of learning and teaching to drive learner engagement, attainment, creativity skills, employability, and to build the capacity of the craft sector to safeguard its heritage and secure its future.

You can read more about each of these case studies on the following pages.
MAKE Learn case studies

Making Circles: Crafting a more sustainable future in Scotland’s schools

‘I think more people should know about the circular economy and try to reuse things they might throw away’. – Making Circles participant, Rosie M, P7

Making Circles creative learning workshops have been taking place in schools all over Scotland since 2018. Working with professional makers, 1100 children from P4 to S3, across 30 schools have been given the opportunity to design and create prototype products using circular principles. The project was developed by Ostrero, which was set up in 2016 to raise awareness of the Circular Economy and its importance to Scotland’s economic and environmental wellbeing. With a background in design and making and experience leading creative learning in schools, Co-director Mary Michel had seen first-hand the disconnect many young people were experiencing with the materials around them. It led her to develop Making Circles, driving learning about the circular economy through designing and making. Delivered in classrooms over a half-day, participating children must experiment, test, problem solve, craft and collaborate with their peers and the project’s lead makers. They are invited to find solutions to combine and connect materials into new products whilst ensuring they can be disassembled for reuse and recycling in the future.

A range of stakeholders, including teachers and Edinburgh City Council Arts & Creative Learning team contributed to Making Circles’ development, ensuring that it met the needs of the Curriculum for Excellence, was impactful, appealing for teachers, and could be adapted for a wide range of ages and stages. Two professional makers, silversmith Bryony Knox and clay-artist Mella Shaw, worked closely with Ostrero’s Mary Michel to develop and deliver the creative learning activity.

Making Circles is unique in Scotland’s craft education offer because of its scale and geographical reach, with over 30 schools participating across Scotland since its launch. Its roll out has been supported through close collaboration with Craft Scotland, which supported the makers’ roles on the project, and National Museums Scotland, which hosted two displays of pupils’ work created through the activity. The project highlights the unique capacity of hands-on making experiences, with materials to contribute to Learning for Sustainability in Scotland’s schools, supporting the next generation to develop the skills and thinking needed to respond to the climate emergency, as well as providing opportunities to develop skills for life, learning, and work.

‘I love the way this fires children’s imaginations and starts getting them to see things like drinks cans as materials they use to create something special rather than as waste to be thrown away… Seeing the joy of a child as they finally manage to plait that handle or make that tin windmill was just wonderful. Hopefully this project will help spark some budding inventors too’. – Bryony Knox, silversmith and lead maker, Making Circles

In 2021 Ostrero have developed a free digital resource, Making Circles Online, and schools workshops restarted in September.

Making Circles is an initiative of Ostrero, supported by Artemis, Creative Scotland, Craft Scotland, and The Edinburgh Trades Fund. Ostrero would also like to thank The Making Circles Steering Committee, National Museums Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce, Borders Scrap Store, and the schools – all the pupils, teachers, and support staff who inspired them with their grasp of designing for a circular economy.

IMAGE
-A participant creating jewellery at one of the Making Circles creative learning workshops. Courtesy James Robertson.
Make Learn case studies

ShetlandPeerieMakkers: Craft education for the future of hand knitting in Shetland

‘I feel privileged to have the opportunity to work alongside the bairns and get out much more than I ever put in. The look on their faces when they finish their project is amazing. Some make garments for younger family members and have such pride when they finish. We build up a strong bond with the bairns and still have this years later’. – Amanda Pottinger, volunteer knitting tutor and core team member

ShetlandPeerieMakkers is an ambitious initiative to develop the unique hand knitting culture of the Shetland Islands and inspire a new generation of knitters to take up the craft. It aims to support knitting groups in every community in the Islands, hosted by local primary schools. It is an investment in the future of Shetland’s valuable creative industries and cultural tourism. It provides space to develop life-long transferable skills for the participants, and has far-reaching positive benefits for both the volunteer tutors and wider Island communities through its intergenerational approach to delivery.

Shetland is home to an active and industrious community of knitwear businesses, designers, knitters, spinners, weavers, and dyers. Its textiles are known for their colourful patterns and fine lace. Brough Lodge Trust, established to restore the historic Brough Lodge on the Island of Fetlar, initiated ShetlandPeerieMakkers in response to a community consultation which acknowledged the urgent need to support the future of Shetland hand knitting. The withdrawal of compulsory hand knitting within schools in 2011, alongside a longstanding decline in intergenerational home-based knitting in the region, inspired a radical rethink about how these skills could be transferred.

Started as a pilot project with seven hand knitting groups in 2014, this initial phase supported the development of the SockBox and SockBox Recipe, a complete resource containing all the required information and materials to pass on hand knitting knowledge and skills to children. The project has since been rolled out to more than 24 locations, with 330 children participating in over 500 knitting meetings between 2017 and 2020. Knitting tuition happens in free lunchtime and after school sessions in primary schools the length and breadth of Shetland. The project has been delivered by 150 volunteer knitting tutors. Working in small groups with a high ratio of tutors to participants enables children to receive dedicated support to set and realise their individual creative ambitions, learn from mistakes, and build confidence, and resilience. Over 85% of children participating, the majority aged 10-12, have been able to knit a piece in Fair Isle or lace after just 10 sessions.

The project demonstrates that craft education can support learning across the school curriculum. Interpreting and creating complex patterns develops numeracy, problem-solving and creativity skills. The experience has been shown to benefit participants’ ability to focus during the school day and schools have reported improved handwriting and manual coordination. Small groups working together encourage the development of interpersonal and verbal communication skills, building friendships that support the wellbeing of both participants and volunteers. Connections between young people, and skilled, knowledgeable makers, as well as the wider creative industries activity on the Shetland Islands, has also built awareness of craft career pathways.

This approach, which costs around £10,000 annually, shows that craft education can be delivered at scale and quality in cost-effective ways. ShetlandPeerieMakkers is preparing to re-start its activity in schools in September 2021, after a hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

The ShetlandPeerieMakkers project is supported by Shetland LEADER Programme 2014-2020, private donations, London fashion house Alexander McQueen, in-kind materials from Shetland-based yarn producer Jamiesons of Shetland, and Brough Lodge Trust.

Image: A ShetlandPeerieMakkers pilot knitting group share their work. Courtesy ShetlandPeerieMakkers.
MAKE Learn case studies

Larbert High School Glass Art Project: unlocking learning and attainment

‘Many of the pupils who worked in the project had relatively low opinions of their artistic abilities however all embraced what to them was a unique and very stimulating opportunity. Working with new tools and materials allied to the fact that they individually and collectively created work which is still on display and is enjoyed by staff and pupils alike, was very rewarding. Many of the pupils I work with face many educational challenges but the pride and enjoyment of making and creating unique pieces of art was an invaluable activity and 80% of the pupils selected Art and Design subjects in S2’. – Gary Balfour, Additional Support Centre teacher, Larbert High School

A 14-week partnership project in 2019, between craft artist Steven Graham and Larbert High School, embedding glass art and hands-on making at the heart of the curriculum, has resulted in transformational benefits for the school, its pupils, and their relationships with the wider community. Glasgow-based glass artist Steven Graham (in-glass.uk) initiated the project in response to growing concern about the future viability of Scotland’s last dedicated college-level glass course. From consultation with teachers two critical priorities emerged: the need to ensure accessibility for all pupils; and sustainability, schools were struggling to access materials, tools, equipment, and share learning across the teaching staff. Following an enthusiastic response to initial workshops, Steven targeted Larbert High School to trial his approach. He worked closely with the Headteacher, an Art & Design teacher, and Additional Support Centre teacher to develop the learning activity.

Over a school term, glass and glass artists were foregrounded within Art & Design classes from S1 to S6. Pupils developed research skills and took part in design tender processes. Pupils cut their own glass, and used the school’s kiln to fuse glass, learning about glass’ chemical properties, its melting point and limitations. Advanced Higher pupils in S6 explored glass as an architectural fabric, through the work of contemporary British glass artist Brian Clarke. They made glass casts, developing skills in 3D modelling, plaster moulding, and investment casting. All participating pupils took part in a ‘Glass-go’ trip visiting St Mungo’s Museum glass collection, Glasgow Cathedral’s stained glass windows, and Trades House, where they learned about the history of trade associations as well as experiencing an exhibition by the Scottish Glass Society.

Activity in the classroom led to the development of community partnerships with local charities, including Strathcarron Hospice, entrepreneurship initiatives to make and sell glass ornaments, and the installation of pupils’ creative work into the school environment. This included a stained-glass window developed by an S1 additional support for learning class, and another representing the school’s crest produced as part of a Developing the Young Workforce STEAM day organised by the school. The project foregrounded craft’s ability to engage all ages and stages of learners in STEM material, whilst providing opportunities to develop creative thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.

While the City of Glasgow College Art Glass course has been saved from cancellation, it was reduced in scope from an HND to an HNC and remains in place only if there are sufficient students enrolling. Steven’s time at the school was volunteered, something he acknowledges that few craft artists would be able to emulate. Steven’s experience highlights the fragility of the existing infrastructure and gaps in talent pathways and progression routes: until his intervention pupils he engaged with were not aware of glass as a medium, and didn’t know to go looking for it as a career option.

Steven would like to thank all the teachers and pupils at Larbert High School, the staff and residents of Strathcarron Hospice who took part, and those that donated materials to support this project.
MAKE Learn case studies

St Modan’s High School and The Engine Shed: Construction craft qualification develops the talent to preserve Scotland’s built heritage

‘If we want to ensure that our historic buildings can survive, going forward and be cared for and maintained going forward, then we need to ensure that young people are coming through who are inspired to take on a career with traditional buildings, traditional materials, and that requires young people going into traditional craft careers’. – Brian Wilkinson, Activity Manager for The Engine Shed, Historic Environment Scotland

During the school year 2018-2019, students from St Modan’s High School in Stirling participated in a project to design and construct a shelter on their school grounds using traditional craft materials and processes. Through an SQA accredited qualification and dedicated professional support and training from The Engine Shed team (part of Historic Environment Scotland), the pupils gained valuable technical knowledge and vocational skills, broadened their understanding of careers within the construction industry, all whilst contributing to the preservation of Scotland’s unique craft heritage.

The Engine Shed serves as a central hub for building and conservation professionals and the public. Housing a learning and visitor centre, it aims to encourage a greater understanding of traditional building materials and skills – and to inspire future generations to continue to care for Scotland’s built heritage. Since opening in 2017, The Engine Shed has been developing its programme of formal and informal learning and outreach. Training and apprenticeships, school workshops, teaching resources and family days, all offering hands-on opportunities to engage with traditional crafts supported by skilled craftspeople, from masonry and woodworking to blacksmithing and iron casting.

St Modan’s High School were an ideal partner to trial the Construction Craft and Technician National Progression Award (NPA), as they had been investing heavily in their school, building workshops and construction spaces for vocational learning and craft training. Within the course Historic Environment Scotland took on the role of client, setting a brief, budget and schedule. Conservation staff delivered a tailored vocational learning experience that reflected a professional construction project, using the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) plan of work. Eight pupils from St Modan’s S5 and S6 took part, initially developing a grounding in traditional building crafts and their use in construction. The group went on to design and test their approach through the use of CAD drawings and model making, guided by an architectural technician. The project then supported the participants to develop craft skills in carpentry, joinery, brickwork, roof tiling and stonemasonry, as it moved into the construction phase.

Having highly skilled professional makers and craftspeople leading the sessions was an enormous benefit to the young participants’ learning, and they gained technical skills and knowledge, as well as insight into possible career pathways and progression routes. The resulting shelter is a lasting reminder of the achievements of the participating pupils. Six of the eight students completed the qualification, and all those participating were offered apprenticeship interviews with Historic Environment Scotland. Around half of the pupils who took part in the project are now hoping to pursue an apprenticeship in a craft trade. The pilot will continue at St Modan’s High School, as well as being extended to a further two schools in the area. Historic Environment Scotland are in the process of exploring further opportunities to deliver this qualification with schools in Scotland in 2021 and beyond.

The Engine Shed is part of Historic Environment Scotland (HES), supported by National Heritage Lottery Funding. HES would like to thank everyone at St Modan’s High School and Skills Development Scotland who helped make this project possible.

IMAGE
– Students from St Modan’s High School constructing a shelter on their school grounds using traditional craft materials and processes. Courtesy St Modan’s High School, Stirling.
MAKE Learn case studies

Modern Makers: Craft talent development supports the next generation of contemporary craft makers in rural Scotland

‘Modern Makers was an invaluable experience that has shaped my future educational experiences. I enjoyed the project and meeting new people my own age. Upland were very considerate of school hours and exams were very careful to work around everyone’s schedule. I would recommend it to any young person looking for a future in a creative subject’. – Modern Makers participant, 2018

Running since 2014, Modern Makers builds young aspiring makers’ awareness of what is happening across the rural South West of Scotland and supports them to develop practical craft skills. The project, run by Upland, gives participants aged 15-25, working in small groups of four to six, real life creative projects to work through. Participants work together over a six-month period, supported by established makers. As the visual art and craft development organisation for Dumfries and Galloway, Upland CIC support artists and makers to develop their work and connect to audiences. Their programme includes artist residencies, mentoring, talent development, and the delivery of Spring Fling Open Studios – an annual event featuring up to 100 makers and artists annually, welcoming local, national and international audiences into studios, workshops and galleries across the region.

The Modern Makers project has supported five cohorts to date. Young people worked with maker Sam Booth in his Echo workshop to research, design, construct and site a wooden bird hide within an RSPB reserve. Slipware potters Fitch and McAndrew supported young people to develop skills in ceramics, with studio visits to potters across the region, leading to the production of their own tableware that was used to host a shared meal. Participants were taken through a live costume design process from concept to performance with Alex Rigg and his company OceanAllOver, fitting dancers, producing garments and acting as wardrobe assistants at live events. Three lead makers, Pamela Grace, Hugh Bryden and Colin Blanchard, supported participants to develop a wide range of skills in printmaking, covering etching, lino cut, drypoint and letterpress techniques. In 2021 Jeweller Lisa Rothwell-Young led a hybrid-format Modern Makers, supporting participants to develop their own jewellery through a mix of online tuition, short instructional videos, and in-person 1-2-1 support. Lisa combined technical skills with sessions on professional skills needed to succeed in the craft sector as a maker: business development, branding, marketing, online selling and promotion.

‘It’s actually really quite amazing to see how the groups progress from start to end… they get pushed out of their comfort zone because they are in a live situation… the participants are invited into the makers’ worlds, they become part of a team, so they get a certain amount of trust put on them, and they’re respected within that, which I think is really important’. – Amy Marletta, Director, Upland

The project helps bridge the gap in craft education between leaving school or college and apprenticeships or further education, a gap that can be even harder to access in a rural setting. It’s an important practical grounding in the realities of practicing as a maker, that can help inform the young participants’ choices in what to study or pursue as a career. Acknowledging that many young people lack the confidence, awareness or experience to apply to participate in Modern Makers, Upland are exploring new ways to provide introductory opportunities to engage with contemporary craft, including engaging directly with schools to provide makers talks. An exhibition of work produced as part of the project since 2015 is planned to coincide with Spring Fling in 2022.

Modern Makers 2021 is funded by The Holywood Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Creative Scotland.
Garvald Edinburgh: Craft provides meaningful work, community and wellbeing for people with learning disabilities

‘I enjoy weaving, it’s quiet and I can concentrate more, I feel smiley, happy and proud. I get good experience from the staff helping to show me how to do weaving. I’m so happy they show me new things’. – Kieran Thompson, Garvald member, May 2021

For over 50 years, Garvald Edinburgh has centred craft at the heart of its services for adults with learning disabilities. Now working across four buildings in Edinburgh and Mayfield, they offer daily workshops in textiles, glass, ceramics, painting, woodworking, baking, confectionary, and more. Through Garvald’s inclusive service, members undertake meaningful work to produce their own high quality craft products for sale. They benefit from being part of an established and supportive community, that celebrates creativity and encourages personal development.

Craft and making is embedded at the core of the organisation’s philosophy. Their approach has its roots in Rudolf Steiner’s work in curative education and social therapy which began in the early 1920s. An Austrian philosopher and educationalist, Steiner (1861 – 1925), had a particular interest in and appreciation of the educational benefits of handwork and handcraft.

Textile workshop leaders Caroline Swift and Layla Tree include a range of textile crafts in their work: embroidery, weaving, felting, knitting and crochet. They draw on their experience as trained textile designers to adapt projects to suit the varied needs and abilities of the members, who range in age from school leavers of 17 to those in their 60s. Garvald celebrates and supports all individuals’ abilities and creativity.

“We map projects to a member’s skill level. We can look at the types of materials that they use, we might use a thicker yarn, bigger needles and we might keep it quite simple with plain weave, and a couple of shafts. We find that some members with autism are very skilled at working with complex pattern ... Autism in this setting is not a disability, it’s a massive ability, they [people on the autistic spectrum] can make fantastic weavers.” – Caroline Swift, Textile Workshop Leader, Garvald Edinburgh

Part of a culture of respect at Garvald, the members are valued as craft artists and encouraged to view the workshops as their place of work. High quality natural and locally-sourced materials are used, and members are supported to engage with the wider crafts sector through selling events. They were featured alongside 50 professional craft artists, makers and designers at Edinburgh’s Glow Scottish Design Fair at the Dovecot in 2019, raising over £2000 in sales.

Unlike many short-term craft education opportunities, Garvald provides space and time to develop craft skills and knowledge over a long period, which has shown improved members communication skills, confidence, and physical dexterity, lowering their anxiety, and developing their creativity. Craft, say the staff, is supporting members to not only maintain their abilities, but improve them.

Witnessing the health and wellbeing and educational benefits of craft daily within their work, Caroline and Layla are passionate about increasing inclusivity within the craft sector and ensuring everyone has access to high quality craft education from an early age. They want to develop opportunities for their members, many of whom have far exceeded the notional 10,000 hours it takes to become ‘experts’, to contribute to craft education in Scotland’s schools, and in the community.

Garvald Edinburgh is a registered Scottish Charity and would like to thank their members and staff.
Make Learn case studies

Craft Scotland Teachers’ CPD: unlocking craft innovation in the classroom

‘Learning easy ways to create bold design on fabric has given me more confidence and excitement in bringing this skill into the classroom... I have already bought transfer ink and freezer paper so I can start experimenting, and hopefully introduce senior pupils to these techniques right away for their design projects... I will be able to teach my pupils more skills and more confidently introduce them to printed textiles, which will hopefully inspire more to continue with this throughout their school/future’.
– Art & Design teacher, CPD Participant 2018 (Printed Textiles)

Craft Scotland has been supporting teachers to participate in hands-on craft continuing professional development (CPD) sessions, led by professional makers, since 2017. Prioritising this activity has supported teachers to build confidence with materials and techniques, learn from each other, unlock their creativity, and innovate. It has inspired new ways of using craft in the classroom. Craft Scotland, the national development agency for craft in Scotland, understands that investing in teachers is critical to increasing the accessibility of craft and making for all of Scotland’s learners. It is part of their mission to build audiences for craft, support the next generation of makers, and raise the profile of craft’s contribution to Scotland’s cultural, economic, and social wellbeing.

Before starting the CPD activity Craft Scotland hosted an information session to learn more about teachers’ needs, interests and expectations. These conversations with Art & Design teachers from Edinburgh highlighted that teachers were hugely excited and enthusiastic about participating in craft-focused professional development activity and had pupils eager to incorporate craft into their learning, but they were struggling with common issues: a lack of time to dedicate to developing their knowledge and skills, lack of confidence in how to best support pupils, and lack of resources to access materials and tools in the classroom.

Between 2017 and early 2020 Craft Scotland delivered 11 CPD sessions including ceramics techniques with Glen Clydesdale and printed textiles with Kim Gunn, both of Edinburgh Design School, silversmithing with Bryony Knox, bookmaking with Lucy Roscoe, and millinery with Sally Ann Provan. 61 teachers from Edinburgh and the Lothians participated. Sessions were subsidised to make them accessible, costing £25-45 per session. The CPD programme was developed with skilled and professional makers who had insight into the teaching profession and could introduce innovative ways to think creatively about the limitations of space, time, materials and tools within the classroom. Teachers’ feedback highlighted the enjoyment of the sessions, with newfound confidence, skills and knowledge having immediate effects on their thinking in the classroom and their ability to support pupils’ learning.

The CPD programme provides a unique bridging role between the education sector and craft sector. This has unlocked innovative thinking in the classroom and supported teachers to make the most of the often underused craft resources and equipment they have available to them such as ceramic kilns, immediately benefitting pupils. This work has informed a greater focus on engaging with teachers in Craft Scotland’s partnership learning projects such as Meet Your Maker with Historic Environment Scotland. Spin-off projects have emerged between participating teachers and makers. As a result of participating, makers are also better equipped to consider curriculum connections and practical constraints when working with schools. Craft Scotland is delivering a digital CPD offer in 2021 and are committed to developing this area of work in the future, exploring opportunities to expand the geographical reach and subject disciplines they work with.

Craft Scotland is funded by Creative Scotland, The William Grant Foundation, and Baillie Gifford.

Banff Make in Metal:  
Craft supports young people’s mental health and wellbeing

“It can really help with mental health. It helped me because one week my dad was quite ill. Being in the workshop for three hours I didn’t think about any of that stuff. It relaxes you and it’s very therapeutic.”

– CLD-referred project participant

Close collaboration between Aberdeenshire’s Community Learning and Development (CLD) Department, and Vanilla Ink The Smiddy in Banff, has supported mental health and wellbeing benefits for young people in the region. Between 2017 and 2019 a programme of hands-on, workshop-based craft education called Banff Make in Metal encouraged those struggling within the school environment, or after leaving education, to build confidence and set their own learning outcomes. Working in small groups to experiment, play with materials, tools, and equipment, the project enabled the young participants to develop skills in problem-solving, collaboration, managing risk, and creative thinking. It led to new awareness and interest in creative careers and improved mental health and wellbeing.

The Smiddy, once a blacksmiths workshop, lay derelict for over 30 years until Aberdeenshire Council rebuilt the workshop as part of Banff’s regeneration programme in 2018. Now it’s the home of Vanilla Ink The Smiddy - a Social Enterprise bringing silversmithing and jewellery opportunities to disadvantaged Young People in Scotland with the philosophy to Educate, Inspire and Empower. A total of 26 participants aged 15-24 took part in the Banff Make in Metal pilot scheme, recruited through targeted invitations by CLD, referral from school guidance teachers and an open call through Vanilla Ink’s networks. 1-2-1 introductions to the workshop space before the project started, ensured young people felt supported and comfortable within the venue and enabled the project team to meet individual access and support needs: the group included individuals with dyslexia, autism, social anxiety and depression.

Working with resident silversmither Megan Falconer, the group were introduced to the silversmithing industry and the local history of Banff silver. Participants learnt how to work with basic hand tools: files, saws, pliers and blow torches. They soldered spoons, raised a bowl from sheet metal, designed and made rings, learned how to set stones, experimented with etching and casting techniques, and carved jewellers wax. They learnt about the scientific properties of metals, their melting points and positions in the periodic table. Organised into four blocks, each block consisted of four weekly three-hour sessions, totalling 48 hours of contact time. Each participant was supported by the CLD team to use Youth Scotland’s Dynamic Youth Awards to set goals, articulate their personal achievements, and build self-awareness and communication skills. All the participants achieved their individual ambitions, building self-esteem, confidence and improving wellbeing, as well as technical craft skills. These developments enabled them to consider futures for themselves in creative careers that had previously been inaccessible or out of reach. The results were obvious to the CLD staff who supported the project:

“I’ve seen their confidence grow. When they are in the workshop they are smiling and chatting with each other in a way I’ve not seen them behave in school. I could work with them for a year and still not see that kind of change in them.”

– CLD Worker

Vanilla Ink The Smiddy and the CLD team acknowledge the benefits of this way of working and are committed to continuing this collaboration, exploring ways to bring these opportunities to more young people in the area.

Banff Make in Metal was made possible with support from Aberdeenshire Council’s Opportunities for Young People grant scheme.
Craft and making is being used as a core part of learning and teaching to drive learner engagement, attainment, creativity, skills, and employability. Education in craft and making is also being used to enable the craft sector to safeguard its heritage and build the skills and capacities needed to drive its future.

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References


You can find out more about each of these case studies at makemanifesto.com
Craft and Making Education in Scotland Today

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This document is one of a set of three MAKE Learn research documents titled ‘Craft and Making in Education in Scotland Today’:
Research Report | Key Findings | Recommendations

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