

# A Career in Craft

**Above**

Francisca Onumah is a Ghanaian-born silversmith who works with sheet metal. Her work featured in the 2022 exhibition *We Gather* at Crafts Council Gallery and is held in the national collection for craft.

Photo by Owen Richards.

**Crafts Council has put together this careers pack to bust some of the myths about craft careers.**

**Craft generates £3.4 billion for the UK economy each year, with the contribution of the wider creative industries now growing at twice the rate of the UK economy. Makers and people with craft skills are found in all industries and, research suggests, are unlikely to be replaced by automation.**

**A career in craft may seem like a far-fetched ambition but British craft has never been so sought after and craft skills are revolutionising industries from aerospace to architecture.**

# Jobs in the Sector

## Where are craft jobs?

- Makers and people with craft skills work in jobs across the creative industries. 1 in every 15 jobs in the UK are in the creative industries. The creative industries include sectors like design, fashion, games, film & TV - and crafts.
- There are nearly 2.5m jobs in the UK creative industries – up 15% between 2019 and 2023. That's more jobs than in construction and nearly twice as many as in finance & insurance.
- The creative industries are worth £124 billion to the UK economy. That's more than the whole of the construction industry. Their value has grown in size by 50% since 2010.
- There are twice as many self-employed people working in the creative industries than in the wider UK economy.
- The craft sector has huge potential to grow, with the number of people buying craft objects increasing from 11m in 2006 to 38m in 2020. Sales of craft objects were worth £3 billion to the UK economy in 2020.
- Forecasters predict that there are strong employment prospects for 'artisanal employment' such as craft. Craft-based technical skills are likely to resist automation and they will be higher-end – and more expensive – than in the past.

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**1 in 15**

jobs in the UK are in the creative industries

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**2.5m**

jobs in the UK creative industries

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**£124b**

creative industries' worth in the UK economy

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**38m**

people buying craft objects in 2020

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### Right

Textile artist Christian Ovonen is known for his use of bold colours and lavish textures. In 2022, he was awarded the Brookfield Properties Craft Award.

Photo by Alun Callender.



# Craft Skills Across the Economy

## Craft Businesses

## Craft in the Creative Industries

## Beyond the Creative Industries

Ceramics

### Silvia K Ceramics

Located in the heart of Brighton on the south coast of the UK, Silvia K's ceramics studio produces tableware ranges that are sold in the UK, Europe, Canada and America.

### Craven Dunhill Jackfield

Bespoke ceramic tiles for the interiors markets. The main factory is located on the original site that Craven Dunhill founded in 1872 at the Jackfield Tile Works in Ironbridge, Shropshire. The second factory is situated in Burslem, Stoke – right at the heart of the North Staffordshire 'Potties'.

### Whichford Pottery

make flowerpots using hand-throwing and hand-pressed methods – exporting worldwide.

Glass

### The London Glassblowing Studio

London Glassblowing is one of Europe's most prominent studio glass galleries, providing workspace for glass artists alongside a gallery to sell their work.

### LSA International

Contemporary bar and tableware. Founded in 1960s London, when Janusz Lubkowski and his wife Ewa were inspired to approach Terence Conran at Habitat with traditional, brightly-coloured enamelware from their native Poland.

**Matt Durran** is a glass artist who has collaborated with researchers at the Royal Free Hospital to create glass moulds for tissue engineering.

Metal

### Cox London

Sculptors and artisans Christopher and Nicola Cox founded Cox London in 2005. They lead a team of specialist technicians in their London studio and workshops, creating furniture and lighting in bronze, silver, wrought iron, blown glass and stone.

### Cod Steaks

Multi-disciplinary design and construction company specialising in bespoke 3D solutions for film, TV, PR, exhibitions and retail. From their workshop facilities in Bristol, Cod Steaks handle projects of every scale – from one-off props to full-scale theme park and visitor attraction builds.

**BJS** apply their experience as silversmiths and electroplaters to biotechnology, medical and counter-terrorism industries.

Wood

### Benchmark

Furniture makers Benchmark work with a team of 70 craftspeople from their workshops in Berkshire and Dorset. They work with leading architects and designers on high-profile commercial projects as well as their own furniture collection.

### High House Production Park

Building sets and scenery for the Royal Opera House.

**Bentley Motors'** wood workshop use traditional woodwork skills to create luxury car interiors.

Textiles

### Harris Tweed

Harris Tweed has been traditionally woven by the islanders of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. Today the luxury fabric is still handwoven on the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist and Barra using locally-produced yarn.

### Isabel Fletcher

Isabel works for architecture practice Squire and Partners as their in-house textiles designer.

### Professor Julian Ellis

A technical textiles specialist who uses machine embroidery to engineer automotive components and medical implants.

## Running Your Own Business

**Although there are opportunities in all kinds of businesses and industries that use craft skills, many makers will opt to run their own businesses. There are a number of different forms that a business can take, but most small businesses start life as one of the following –**

**Crafts Council support and champion UK craft businesses throughout every stage of their journey.**

### Sole Trader or Freelancer

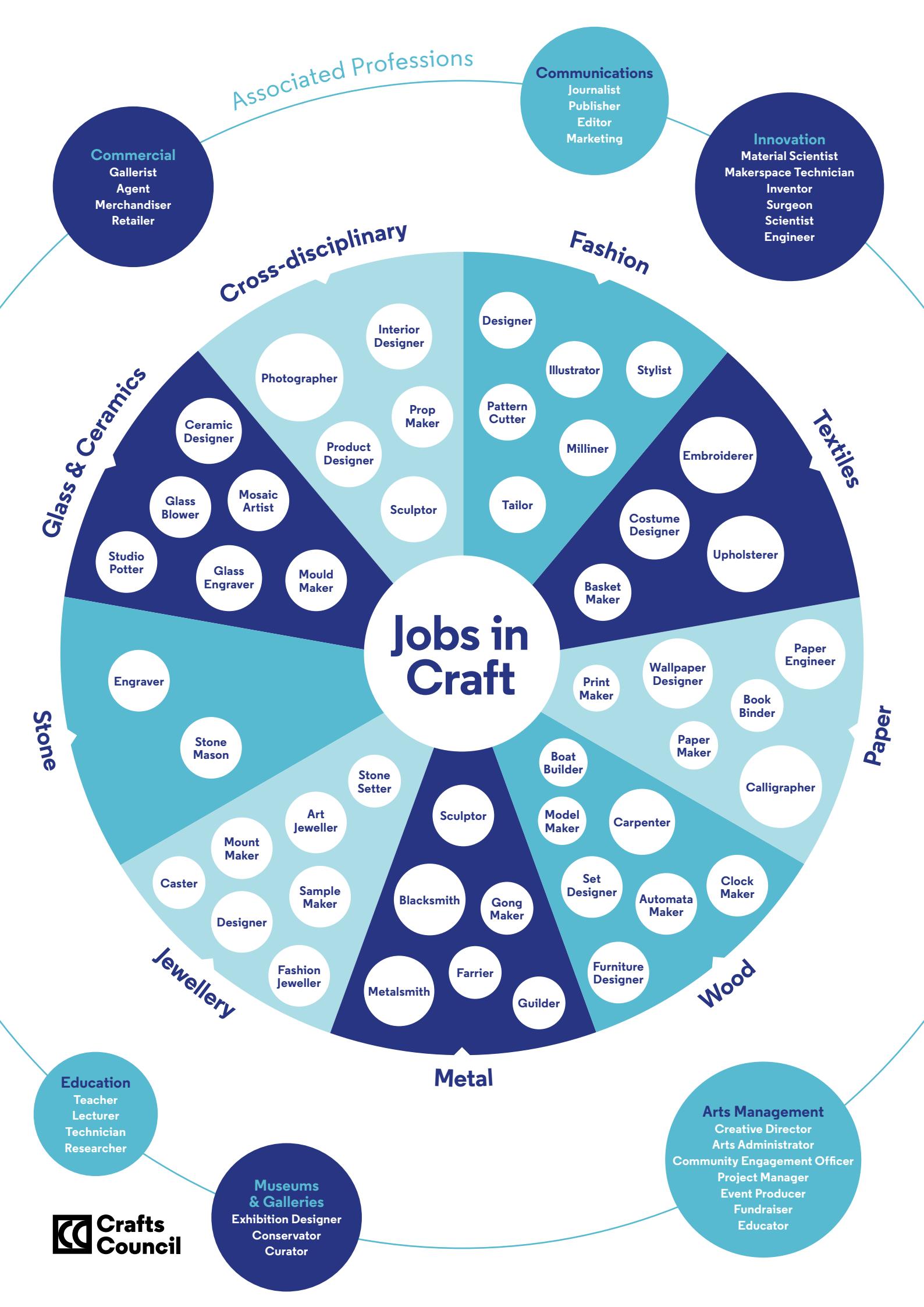
This is the simplest way of starting a business. You will need to advise HMRC that you are self-employed for tax and National Insurance contributions – they can provide you with guidance about how to do this. Control of the business will be entirely yours and you will be responsible for all management decisions, but you will also be liable for any debts you incur.

### Partnership

If you want start your business with one or more people, you could form a partnership. In effect, this is the same as a sole trader, but with all partners sharing responsibility for managing the business.

### Private Company

You could set up a private limited company to run your business. You must appoint directors to run the company (this can be you), and register (or 'incorporate') it with Companies House.



# Routes into Craft

We know from talking to lots of craft professionals that there isn't just one route into your career – some courses focus more on practical skills whilst others include more theory.

## GCSEs

Craft skills are taught through Art & Design and Design & Technology GCSE courses. Taking one of these options at GCSE will help you to develop the hands-on skills you can build on at A-level

## A-Levels

An A-Level in Art & Design or Design & Technology will help you to develop your creative and technical skills. Both are two-year courses assessed through a combination of coursework and exams.

## Art & Design Foundation Diploma

A one-year bridging course that helps students make the transition from secondary education (e.g. BTEC or A-Levels) to a specialist art and design education.

It also allows students to explore a range of specialisms before choosing their specialised degree course. These might include drawing, painting, fashion, textiles, installation art, printmaking, graphic illustration, craft and 3D design, or fine art.

## BTEC

BTEC qualifications have a vocational focus and students work on assignments based on real-life scenarios throughout the course. They might also undertake work experience. BTEC is available at Levels 1, 2 and 3, with Level 3 being equivalent to A-Level.

## T-Levels

This is a relatively new qualification – aimed to be an alternative to A-Levels but with a focus on vocational skills. A Craft & Design 'pathway' is being developed as part of the Creative and Design 'route'.

**"Taking a creative subject such as Art & Design or Design & Technology at school will help you to be adventurous in investigating the potential of art, craft and design. These courses provide opportunities to explore a wide range of hands-on designing and making skills, introduce innovative materials and technologies and could offer a pathway to progress further onto creative Further and Higher Education courses and a career in the UK Creative Industries. These courses can also encourage observation and experimentation for other subjects in school and facilitate better student mental health and wellbeing."**

**Gareth Wadkin**

Senior Lecturer for BA(Hons) Printed Textiles & Surface Pattern Design  
Leeds Arts University

## Top Tips

Attending university open days will allow you to see studio spaces and facilities, and let you ask students about their study experience.

Visit end-of-year exhibitions of student work to get a feel for the courses.

Most creative art courses will ask to see a portfolio of your work when you apply.

## University

Universities across the UK offer craft-related courses. You can browse the list of courses available on the UCAS website. Depending on your interests, you may consider –

### An Art & Design BA

You will explore a range of art and craft disciplines before specialising in a particular area

E.g. *Art & Design* at University of Leeds

### A 3D Crafts BA

You will cover a range of disciplines but with a focus on 3D making

E.g. *3D Design and Craft BA (Hons)* at University of Brighton

### A BA in a specialist craft discipline

If you have a passion for a particular material or discipline, you may want to choose a specialist craft course.

E.g. *Artist Blacksmithing* at Hereford College of Arts, *Fashion Textiles: Embroidery* at UAL, or *Artist, Designer, Maker: Glass & Ceramics* at University of Sunderland

## Apprenticeships

A paid entry-level job with a training element. Apprentices must work with an employer for at least a year, learning how to do a real job.

### Apprenticeships currently have three core elements:

- A National Vocational Qualification
- A Knowledge Based Qualification
- Functional Skills, covering English, Maths, and Information & Communication technology (ICT)

# Work Experience in Craft

Work experience and volunteering can be a great way to gain insight into a particular industry and make new connections. If you're interested in working in a particular discipline, you might look for work experience where you can work alongside a maker with skills in that area. You could also look for work experience in different parts of the craft sector by seeking opportunities in galleries, museums or education.

## Top tips

Start by exploring the craft organisations and businesses in your area. These might include small and larger craft businesses, makerspaces, studio spaces, universities, galleries and museums.

Larger organisations might advertise work experience opportunities on their websites, but for smaller ones you might have to make a speculative application. Send a copy of your CV along with an email introducing yourself, explaining what kind of work experience you're looking for and what your key skills are.

If an organisation or business offers you a work experience placement, set up an initial meeting so that you can discuss expectations, see where you would be working, and get to know each other.

Craft businesses can be very small (sometimes only one person!) so it can be challenging for them to offer work experience. You might have to contact several people before you find someone who is able to help.

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**Alongside my studies I was always proactive in seeking opportunities to develop new skills, and I was able to take up life drawing lessons after school at a local community centre. When I was 15 I also found a local woodcarver based in Tamworth and spent the next two years visiting him once a week to learn sculptural wood carving. The skills and knowledge he taught me enabled me to see a future career in the making industries.”**

**Sophie Huckfield**  
Artist and Engineer

# Finding a Work Placement with a Maker

**Designer-maker Andy King is a founder of King and Webbon, where he and his team create contemporary furniture using a carefully-selected palette of natural hardwoods alongside innovative materials for colour and texture.**

**He has answered some questions to help you with the process.**

## Q: What's the best way to make a speculative application to a maker? What should you include in an application email?

Don't start with 'hi there' and follow with a blanket email / letter with no relevance to the maker's practice. Make it personal and address it to a specific person.

Demonstrate that you've done some research into the maker. Tell them what pieces of theirs you like and why, and why you want to work alongside them.

Briefly describe what you've studied or are studying and demonstrate your enthusiasm for it.

If you supply a CV, make it punchy and not wordy. Try to tailor it to the maker you're contacting.

Similarly, avoid writing an email that appears as a wall of text. Break it down into paragraphs and be concise – your reader will thank you!

## Q: What should be agreed at the beginning of a placement?

Consider what skills you'd like to learn and express this at the beginning. These might be specific techniques or processes, learning how particular machines or tools are used, or developing your design style.

Communicate how long you envisage undertaking the placement for, and perhaps say if you like it after that, you might be keen to extend it.

The maker is investing their time and experience in you. The more you learn, the more valuable you become, so if the placement goes well, there's a good chance the maker will want to keep you on if they have the capacity to do so.



## Q: How do you get the most from a work experience placement?

Enthusiasm, curiosity and paying attention are really infectious and help show you're genuinely interested. I really love it when people make suggestions that contribute to the design and making process – you may have ideas that the maker hasn't thought of and would love to know.

Suggest something you might like to make during your placement. It can be something you work on in your own time, or in quiet times during the placement.

Be punctual, attentive and avoid looking at your phone all the time! If you prove yourself useful, you'll go down a storm.

## Q: What are the benefits of offering work experience to a young maker – for you and them?

If a young person is keen to learn, seeing them develop and start to become more autonomous is very rewarding for the maker. The maker can start to undertake more work and increase their output, and will be so thankful you're there.

The young person will get to see how design and making can work as a business, and have a great time learning in a friendly environment.

**Above**  
Andy King in his studio.  
Photo courtesy of the maker.

# Top Tips from Craft Professionals

We asked craft professionals to share their top tips for a stellar career.

**Listen to your passions and your strengths. This will keep you motivated in your career. Be aware of the choices that are available to you to develop your craft, do your research and always evaluate what you do and what your next steps are. Learning within a craft career never stops, so always be aware of how you can continue your development. Be an individual, carve your own path and be prepared to be dedicated and self-motivated in your work.**

**Laura Slater**  
Textile Designer

**Seek out an apprenticeship with a craftsman running a successful studio. An apprenticeship will give you the opportunity to experience all aspects of working in craft, the good and the bad, and to discover if it really is the career you want, without making too much of a financial commitment.**

**Matthew Warner**  
Ceramicist

**Be proactive and enthusiastic. Knock on doors and make contact with people you would like to learn from. Seek as much work experience as you can in the area that you would like to explore.**

**Theresa Nguyen**  
Artist Silversmith

**Working freelance has its own set of challenges and you have to be very organised with regards to invoicing, filing your tax return and budgeting your money to make sure it lasts between irregular payments.**

**Amber Butchart**  
Fashion Historian

# Find Out More

Visit [www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk) for:

- Careers advice including job profiles and case studies
- Business development support
- Opportunities listings

On Instagram?

Follow [@young.craft.citizens](https://www.instagram.com/young.craft.citizens) for:

- Craft related opportunities
- Apprenticeships and training schemes
- Craft exhibitions and workshops
- Advice and guidance for young people
- News from our network of Young Craft Citizens

**Here are more great career websites sharing jobs and opportunities:**

→ [artshub.co.uk](http://artshub.co.uk)

Lists jobs and opportunities across the arts

→ [discovercreative.careers](http://discovercreative.careers)

Profiles of creative career pathways across the sector

→ [creativeaccess.org.uk](http://creativeaccess.org.uk)

Opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds

→ [artsjobs.org.uk](http://artsjobs.org.uk)

Arts Council England's jobs and opportunities page

→ [culturehive.co.uk](http://culturehive.co.uk)

A resource library for cultural professionals