



# **Crafts Council: Embedding Craft in the National Centre for Arts and Music Education**

Proven Pedagogy. National Reach. Real Impact.

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# Welcome to the Crafts Council

## Why you should consider us a partner in your National Centre for Arts and Music Education plan.

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We are a national leader for craft, with decades of expertise supporting craft education. Our work spans policy influence, curriculum development, teacher support and large-scale national programmes, contributing to system-level change rather than isolated interventions.

We bring together schools, teachers, maker-educators and cultural partners to ensure craft remains a vital, inclusive and future-facing part of arts education — creating high-quality making experiences for children and young people.

Through Craft School (our nationwide schools programme) and Make First (our practice-based pedagogy), we directly support equitable access to arts learning, strengthening teaching quality, partnerships and learner progression in line with the ambitions of the National Centre.





Yinka Illoiri with students and teachers from the first Craft School challenge outside Crafts Council Gallery



# The craft education challenge

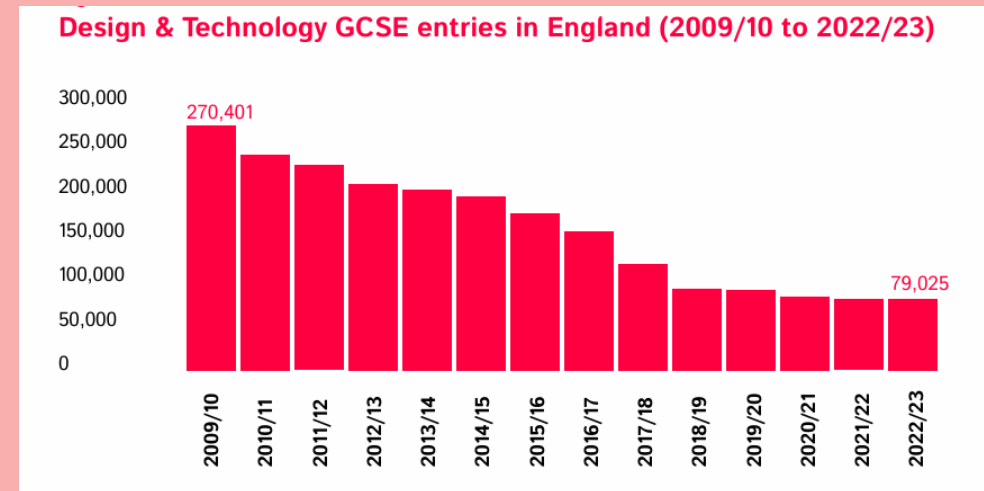
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DfE's ambition to ensure equitable access to high-quality arts education for 5–16 year olds, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, is both welcome and urgent.

Craft and making have become increasingly marginalised within a narrowing curriculum. Practical, materials-based learning has been squeezed by:

- reduced curriculum time and choice
- a sustained decline in making-related pathways (notably Design & Technology)
- gaps in resourcing and subject-specific teacher training

At the same time, there is growing recognition of the importance of creativity, inclusion and skills for the future. The challenge is turning this recognition into consistent, well-resourced practice that reaches all children and young people.



# Our response

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We have responded not with short-term projects, but with joined-up, long-term interventions that build infrastructure for change.

Since 2021, Craft School has provided a free, nationwide programme supporting schools to re-engage with making across phases and settings. Alongside this, we have invested in developing Make First, a robust, evidence-based pedagogy informed by:

- early years and practice-based learning
- anti-racist education frameworks
- decades of work with teachers, learners and maker-educators

Our work moves beyond advocacy into practical, scalable approaches that can support national reform.



*“Fighting for art, craft and design in the current education climate can be an exhausting and lonely quest so to be supported, encouraged and enthused through a programme like Make Your Future is so vital for teachers like myself. I feel invigorated by the CPD and ready to fight our corner with renewed vigour”*

*Teacher from Crafts Council’s Make Your Future project*



# How our work fits the new National Centre

The National Centre for Arts and Music Education presents a critical opportunity to embed craft-specific expertise within national structures.

We bring a ready-tested, adaptable model that aligns directly with the Centre's core aims:

- **Excellent teaching:** Make First offers a structured, evidence-informed pedagogy for practice-based learning that can underpin online CPD and teacher confidence.
- **Sustainable partnerships:** Craft School is delivered in collaboration with high profile national and regional partners. Our Craft UK network gives us the reach to offer a model that can be strengthened and scaled regionally.
- **Skills and progression:** Our approach supports children and young people to develop voice, confidence and identity as makers; tools such as Digital Badging can support recognition and progression.



# Make First

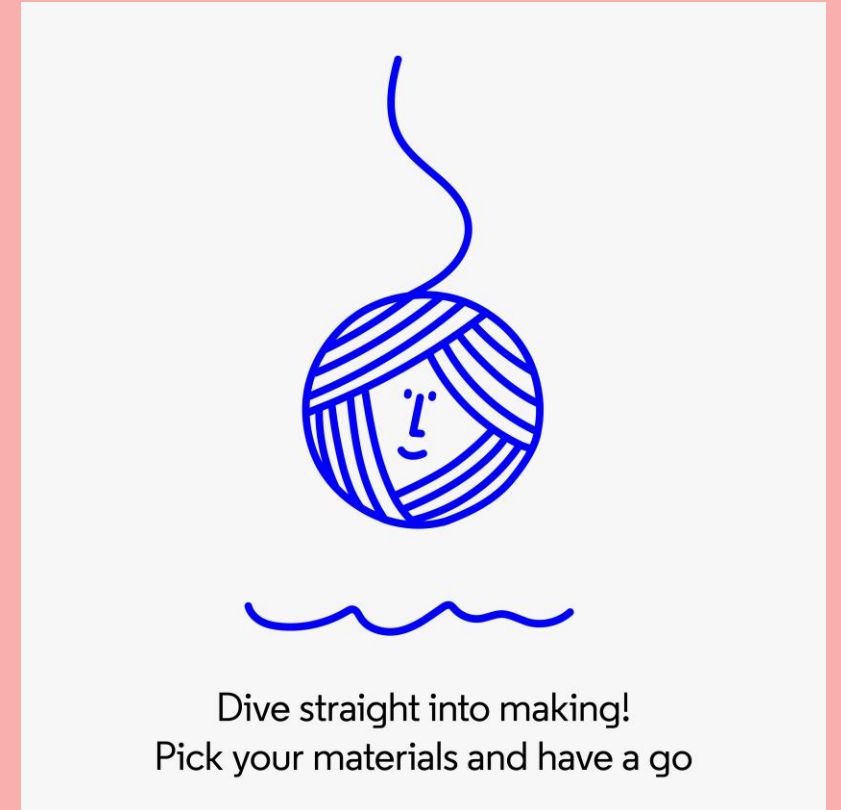
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Make First is our signature approach to learning through craft. It is learner-driven, material-first and process-led, encouraging children and young people to:

- dive straight into making
- experiment, tweak and tinker
- take risks, fail and try again
- develop their own voice and identity as makers

Make First values embodied and haptic learning — knowledge built through interaction with materials and the physical world — and supports sustainability, resilience, collaboration and joy in learning.

It offers a powerful alternative to outcome-driven models that dominate current assessment frameworks, while remaining practical for classroom delivery.



# What we can offer

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We offer the National Centre a coherent craft education ecosystem, rather than a single intervention. This includes:

- a nationally recognised, scalable pedagogy for high-quality teaching (Make First)
- a proven national schools programme infrastructure (Craft School)
- deep expertise in inclusive, anti-racist and practice-based learning
- tools that support equitable recognition and learner progression (Digital Badging)

Together, these enable materials-based, 3D and embodied learning to be embedded meaningfully across schools, teacher training, cultural partnerships and policy — ensuring craft is not lost within broader “arts” provision.

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# Teacher Training

We provide specialist professional development rooted in real craft practice, supporting the National Centre's ambition for a high-quality online CPD offer.

Our approach supports teachers, trainee teachers and maker-educators to:

- understand and apply Make First principles to their context
- build confidence in material-led teaching
- move away from prescriptive demonstrations towards learner agency
- articulate the value of process-based learning
- rekindle their own creativity and playfulness

Reflection is an integral part of our offer and is supported through recognition tools such as Digital Badging - providing teachers with a tangible progression framework connected to Make First.



Teachers at a CPD session. Photo: Faith Rubia



*83% of Craft School teachers reported an increase in their confidence delivering craft activity*

*92% of teachers rate Make First as good or very good, highlighting its influence on both teaching strategies and student learning*

*100% of teachers planned to integrate craft into future teaching following participation in Craft School*



# Schools and young people

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For schools and learners, our offer centres on equitable participation and meaningful recognition.

Craft School creates space for all young people to engage in making — in classrooms, clubs and home learning — while Make First ensures that:

- process is valued over product
- cultural identity and lived experience are welcomed
- learning is joyful, collaborative and exploratory

We celebrate participation and skills development without competition or exclusion, supporting confidence and sustained engagement.



***“It has had a significant impact on my classroom practice. I have been able to give the learners much more creative freedom, and access to techniques and materials I have never used before. It has allowed me to consider the process rather than the finished product more carefully and to be learning alongside the students all the time.”***

***Teacher taking part in Craft School***

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# Maker connection and progression

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Our work strengthens the connection between learning, identity and craft practice.

By positioning learners as makers — not just students — we support confidence, language and continuity across education, community and future pathways. This approach helps young people understand how craft learning connects to further study, creative careers and participation in the wider creative economy.

Our commitment to this is seen in our long-term partnership with Discover Creative Careers where we have worked to challenge preconceptions about what a career in craft looks like. We have delivered careers information, advice and guidance with access to professionals at all stages of their career.



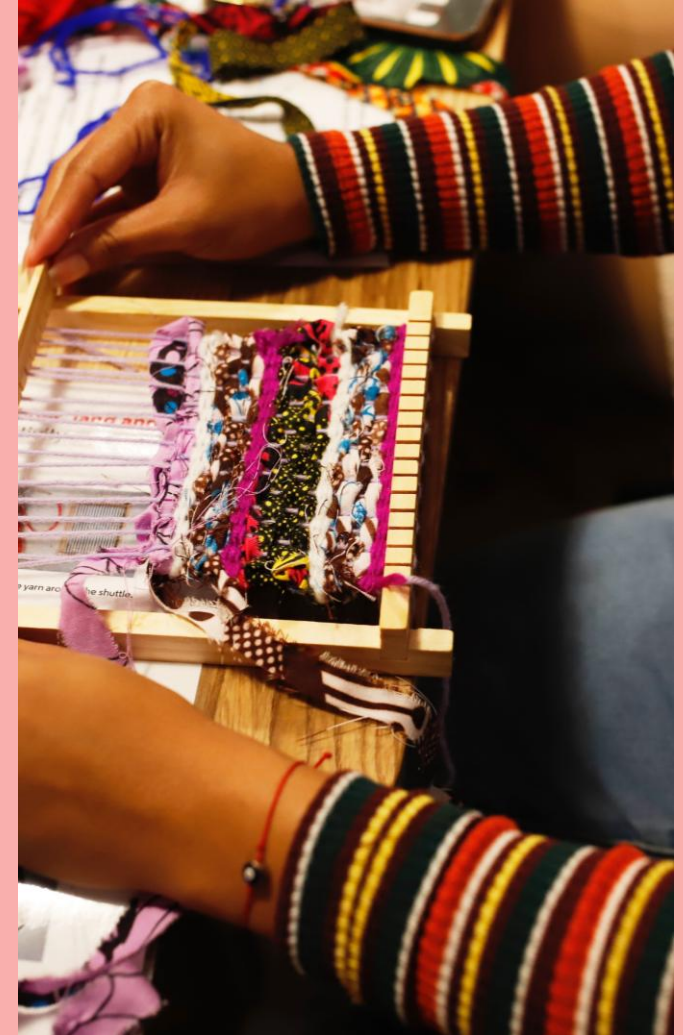
# Industry and Cultural links

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We work at the intersection of education, craft and the creative economy. We connect people with the transformative power of craft – to create opportunity, support careers and strengthen the UK's craft ecosystem.

Our approach supports:

- Conversation with industry, education & policymakers
- clear articulation of skills developed through making
- greater visibility of practice-based competencies
- fairer, skills-led pathways into creative work



## Policy influence

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We are an active contributor to national conversations on curriculum, assessment and creative education. Our place on the Creative Industries Council allows us to directly influence policy – representing the needs of the sector.

Our work responds directly to:

- calls for a more inclusive and representative curriculum
- the need for subject-specific training and resources
- recognition of non-linear, practice-based learning

Through the National Centre, we see an opportunity to further embed craft education expertise into policy development, implementation and evaluation, supporting long-term reform.





**We invite conversation with partners to explore how we can work together to embed craft at the heart of creative education reform.**

**Together, we can:**

- **strengthen national craft pedagogy**
- **support teachers and learners at scale**
- **ensure making, materials and embodied learning are valued within future education systems**

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