



Crafts Council

Make:Shift:Do Case Study

Craft at Crosby One

Make:Shift:Do is a Crafts Council programme that works with makerspaces to co-create work with communities. In co-creation projects, people and partners work together to jointly develop and create, as opposed to conventional participation models which invite people to join in with the work of organisations or artists.¹ We recognise that true co-creation takes time to achieve; Make:Shift:Do projects are at different stages on this journey but aim to share their learning about the process.



Craft at Crosby One was a project initiated by project leaders Laura Mabbutt and Kathleen Smith, and aimed to work collaboratively with community participants at Crosby One Community Centre in Scunthorpe to establish a permanent makerspace.

In the initial phase of the project participants were invited to experiment with different materials and equipment, building their experience of craft so that they could take a more active role in shaping the future makerspace.

The Covid-19 pandemic and challenges around funding have prevented the project progressing into phase 2, which would have seen participants taking a more active co-creation role. Instead, Laura and Kathleen have designed new participation tools to reach out to vulnerable members of the

¹ This definition is borrowed from Battersea Arts Centre's Co-Creating Change programme



community. Here they talk about what they've learned about the challenging process of establishing a co-creation project.

INTRODUCTION

The Craft at Crosby One project aimed to set up a mobile making space at Crosby One Community Centre in Scunthorpe. The project aimed to work with members of the community to create a pop-up making space at the community centre that, with additional funding, could become a permanent fixture that would be led and managed by the local community. By working collaboratively with the local community we aimed to provide opportunities to experience and practice making, increasing their confidence, skills and sense of ownership over the project.

The project's co-creation aims were two-fold:

- Create a collaborative working relationship with the participants to explore their interests, build their skills and support them to take a lead in deciding what craft activities they wanted to do, and what could become a permanent part of the makerspace offer.
- In the longer term, the ambition was to turn the makerspace into a permanent part of the community centre that would be managed by the participants. This aim was contingent on further funding being secured.

Partners, context, audiences:

The project was based in Crosby One Centre, a multi-use community centre in Crosby, the most deprived area of Scunthorpe. The project was allocated a room to use as a making space, which would allow approximately 5 people to work together comfortably. Once the project proved popular, the group was allowed to move into the larger community hall.

We identified two main audiences; the community centre staff and volunteers, and the local community. As we were borrowing space from the community centre and were not based in the area, we were reliant on staff for help with recruiting participants and facilitating access to the space. We also needed to work alongside community centre staff to seek further funding for the continuation on the project.

The project aimed to engage adults within the Crosby area, but sessions were open to everyone and people often attended from the villages surrounding Scunthorpe, including a few home educating families. As the project progressed, more participants from the local community joined; once the project changed to a postal system, we were able to target their audience by posting craft kits out to people from a specific postcode area.



Who led the project?

Our role was to act as skilled mentors, providing advice and showing participants how to use the equipment and materials in the making space. We also worked with community centre staff to manage the logistics of the project (when sessions would be held, etc.) and to apply for funding to allow for the making space to become a more permanent fixture of the community centre.

What was delivered?

- Five sessions were delivered at the Crosby One centre
- 23 returning participants took part
- Sessions covered small metalwork (jewellery), machine sewing, rag-rugging, macramé, machine embroidery, aluminium dyeing, felt making, digital cutting, weaving, bag making, clay, pompom making, French knitting, loom flower making, recycled crochet, leather craft
- Following the COVID-19 lockdown, 12 craft kits were posted to participants (10 of whom were new to the project)

Co-creation Outcomes:

1. The project's first co-creation aim—of working with participants to build their knowledge of craft and help them lead decisions about what equipment they would like to see included in the makerspace—was partially achieved through sessions at the centre.

When in the smaller space, we asked participants what they wanted to achieve in the following sessions and brought along the required equipment. We were in the process of developing the confidence of the participants when we were able to move into a larger space, where we were able to include all of Making Up Your Street's equipment in each session to allow for real experimentation by participants. This opened up more possibilities for the participants and in turn, led to more time being spent on experimentation using a wide range of equipment. Having more choice inspired the participants to try new things and learn new skills but also slowed down the progress of the project as we wanted to give the participants the chance to explore all that was on offer before making decisions about what techniques they wanted to focus on and plan to provide future access to in a permanent makerspace.

2. This project's second co-creation aim of working with community members and staff at the centre to establish a permanent makerspace has not yet been achieved, partly due to the COVID-19 outbreak having cut the project short, giving us less time to develop the project with the participants and the staff at the centre.



Establishing a permanent makerspace would also require additional project funding. We were able to connect with a contact at the centre whose plan was to work with us to help put in future funding bids for the continuation of the project in conjunction with Crosby One Centre. Our efforts to achieve more funding have not been successful up to this point and the progress of the project and communication with the centre was interrupted by the COVID 19 lockdown.

We feel we would need another 6 months - 1 year to work with the centre staff and the participants to develop a project that we could hand over fully.

Key learning and recommendations:

Working collaboratively with participants:

Be led by your participants' interests. Delivering the workshops made us understand the importance of following the group's own interests. We carried this principle when we shifted to sending participants personalised postal craft kits during the lockdown. Participants filled out a form either online or via post, allowing us to prescribe a kit that suits their interests, abilities and how they want to work. This helped us maintain a sense of collaboration with participants when we weren't able to work together in person.

Try and think about everyone, not just about the people who are already attending or are known within the community. The adaptations that we have made to the project due to COVID-19 have made us realise that we had a gap in our thinking around our wider collaborative practice. We were concentrating on people in the community who could get out to an event. We missed thinking about the people who couldn't get out of their homes, and who might need our project more than the people who can get outside. We have learnt from this and have developed a whole new strand to reach this audience, trialling a postal craft kit, which was well received. We are now writing funding applications to continue our research into this way of working.

Project infrastructure:

Working in partnership with an existing organisation can be challenging because you are not in charge of the space. As the Crosby One Centre is not our building or organisation, we were reliant on the community centre for many of the logistical parts of the project such as session times and dates, unlocking rooms etc. which sometimes caused difficulties.

Do as much research as possible using existing contacts to work out the community relationships and any problems that we could have to deal with. It's important to be clear about partners' expectations from the outset and be open about any problems that are occurring as the project



develops. We have got ourselves into some confusing situations during this project as we didn't thoroughly research the existing relationships within the community and how these would affect our project. After the project began, we learned that the other local community centre had plans to create a makerspace and tensions had existed between the two centres.

Create regular opportunities to check in with the participants and venue to make sure everyone is on the same page. During the beginning of the project there was a lot of enthusiasm from the centre but some of this dwindled once the project was underway and staff became understandably busy with other matters, which made it difficult to plan for the eventual handover of the project.

Give 6 months to a year to get the project running and then gradually start the transfer of the project over to the group. Building relationships with partners before the delivery phase would have allowed us to create a deeper connection with the local community, learning the history, forming relationships and planning logistics more effectively. Time limitations had a significant impact on the potential for creating a sustainable makerspace within the project, as the schedules of the Crosby One Centre and the artists did not always connect, meaning the project took longer than expected to get up and running. We feel we would need around 6 months - 1 year to work with the staff and participants to be able to hand over the project fully. Having funding in advance to support the running of the makerspace in the medium-term (e.g. for six months to a year) would help to secure the commitment of partners and participants.

Secure funding before starting each project to cover the costs of our time, materials and equipment that will stay at the location to carry on the maker space. During our last day at Crosby One before the lockdown, we met with staff at the centre to plan for the future of the space and the resources needed to sustain it. Unfortunately, this process was then put on hold due to COVID-19, so as yet there is no solid plan to continue the makerspace. We have learned recently that another centre close by is setting up a makerspace and so setting one up at Crosby One centre seems to be counterproductive, we met the other centre over Zoom to talk about how our two projects could co-exist and complement each other in future rather than duplicate our offers.

What tools, techniques and infrastructure did the project develop to enable continued co-creation work with communities?

We have used our learning to create a strategy for replicating the project in another community. We created a checklist to help community groups understand the concept of a makerspace and what they will need to do to help us make the project more effective for them. This shared understanding



will help us work with the participants to create a makerspace that fits around their unique needs.

We have also put in place processes for working collaboratively with people who can't leave their homes. This uses instructions, kits and materials delivered in the post to enable people to work from home. Instructions are in a paper format and a mobile phone number is available for contact so that internet access isn't a prerequisite for people to use the kits. A zine helps people find out where to learn more in the local area, get materials and equipment and learn about artists working in the craft specific to their individual craft kit.

To maintain contact with participants, we have a phone that people can text if they become stuck, a regular zoom meeting to connect with other makers in the community and a phone-based group where people can message each other.