Youth consultation for Crafts Council

Abigail D'Amore
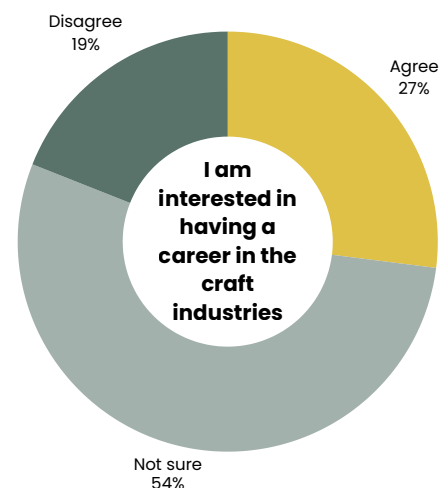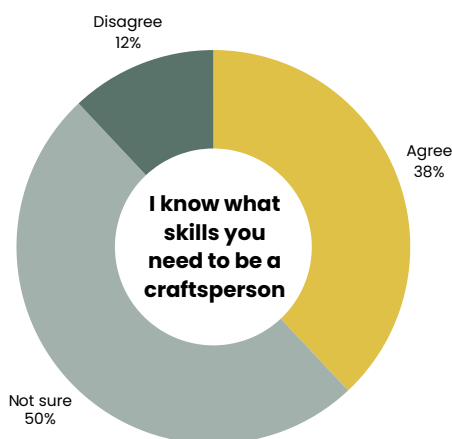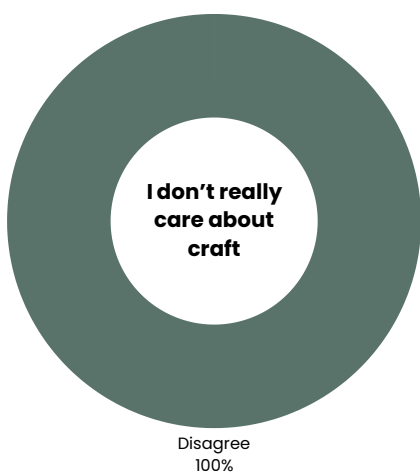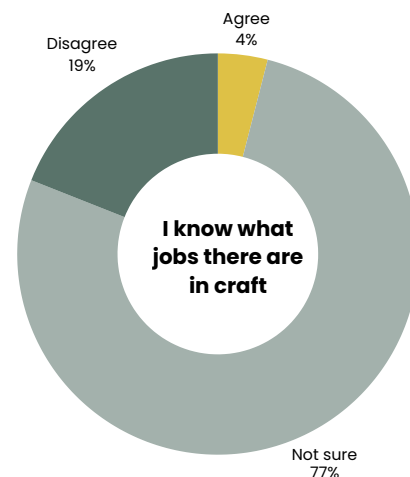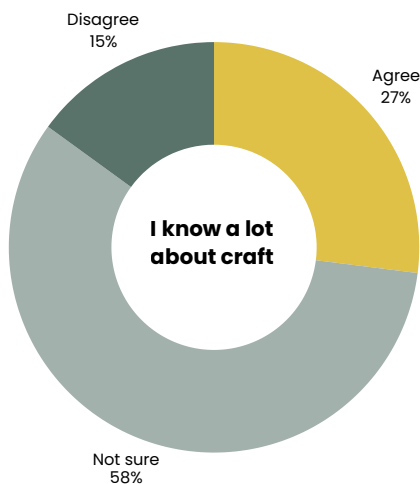
November 2025

Methodology

We worked with 26 students from Birmingham Ormiston Academy (13 x Year 13 and 13 x Year 12 students) across two 1.5 hour workshop sessions. During the Year 12 session, some students were only able to participate during the first 30 minutes, therefore not all young people completed all tasks. The following consultation methods were used:

| Method	Description	Purpose
Human survey	Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements relating to their perception/opinion of craft/craft careers	To understand participants' starting perspectives.
Modelling / drawing	Participants were invited to create a response to 'what does craft mean to you' using play dough, lego or drawing (or a combination). Participants then volunteered to describe what they had created and why.	To access personal views and opinions on 'craft' without direct questioning.
One word summaries	Participants were asked to summarise their response to 'what does craft mean to you' in individual words, written on sticky notes and clustered with other responses. Participants could share more than one word if they chose.	To refine thinking, and to start to gather consensus within the group.
Fact rating	Participants were presented with five facts on crafts/craft industries taken from the Crafts Council schools brochure and asked to rate their interest in theseon a scale.	To introduce participants to some key facts in a purposeful way, and to gauge a 'temperature check' of what sorts of headlines/messaging appealed to them.
Job rating	Participants were presented with the 'Jobs in craft' wheel of the Crafts Council schools brochure and asked to put marks in any of the job 'circles' that interested/intrigued them. Participants were then asked to note down the top 3-5 jobs that appealed onto sticky notes.	To introduce participants to jobs that exist in the crafts industries, and to understand which job areas appealed to them.
Design task	Participants were tasked (in pairs or individually) to design a flyer that promotes (a) craft and (b) craft industries to other young people. They were asked to consider language, balance of visuals/text and what might appeal to/catch the eye of other young people. They then were asked to describe their flyer to the rest of the group, who then provided feedback on particular elements that appealed.	To gain insight into the content / text that could go into Crafts Council marketing material, and the ways in which young people talk/think about promoting craft/craft careers.

Human survey results

I know a lot about craft
- Disagree 15%
- Agree 27%
- Not sure 58%

Anybody can be involved in craft
- Agree 100%

I know what jobs there are in craft
- Agree 4%
- Disagree 19%
- Not sure 77%

I don't really care about craft
- Disagree 100%

I know what skills you need to be a craftsperson
- Disagree 12%
- Agree 38%
- Not sure 50%

I am interested in having a career in the craft industries
- Disagree 19%
- Agree 27%
- Not sure 54%

All participants agreed that anybody can be involved in craft, and they all showed interest in craft themselves. There was more uncertainty about how much they know about craft, including a high level of uncertainty about what jobs exist in craft, what skills you need as a craftsperson and whether they were interested in having a career in the craft industries.

This exercise could only be repeated with the Year 13 group at the end of the session due to the Year 12 group having to leave prematurely. However, at the end of the Year 13 session there was a dramatic increase in understanding - with 100% agreeing that they now know a lot about craft, 100% agreeing they know what jobs there are in craft; 92% agreeing they know what skills they need to be a crafsperson and 85% saying they are interested in having a career in the craft industries.

What does craft mean to you?
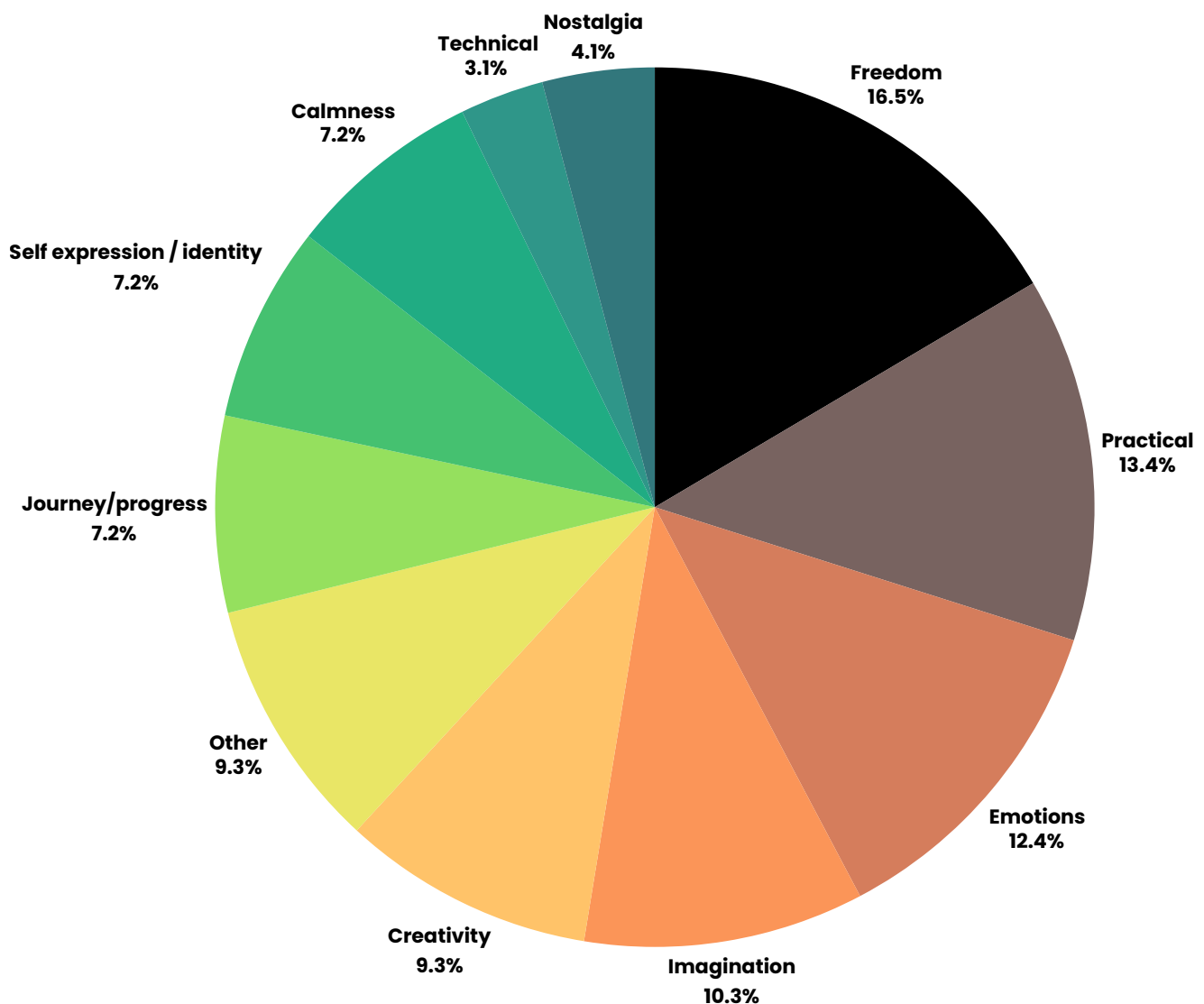
Participants most connected crafts to a sense of **freedom** mentioning escapism, playfulness, being unrestricted and without limits. They also described craft through the lens of **practicality**: being handmade, tactile, intricate, precise, detailed, useful and a labour of love. Others related craft to **emotions**, citing happiness, joy, pride and passion, while one noted an association with 'confrontation'. Some linked craft to **imagination**, with one participant connecting it to dreams.

For others, craft embodied **creativity**, involving exploration, presenting things in new ways and thinking outside the box. Many shared that craft is a way of **expressing yourself** - your feelings, values and identity - and that it allows you to be unique. Several participants associated craft with **calmness**, describing it as pressure-free, low-maintenance, therapeutic, peaceful and natural activity.

Some viewed craft as a **journey**, reflecting personal progress from childhood to now in a non-linear way. Others found craft **nostalgic**, evoking childhood memories, while one critiqued the "historical infantilisation" of crafts. A smaller group linked craft to **skill**, referencing craft professions such as carpentry. Additional responses associated craft with innovation, admiration, everyday life and one described it as a 'feminine tradition'.
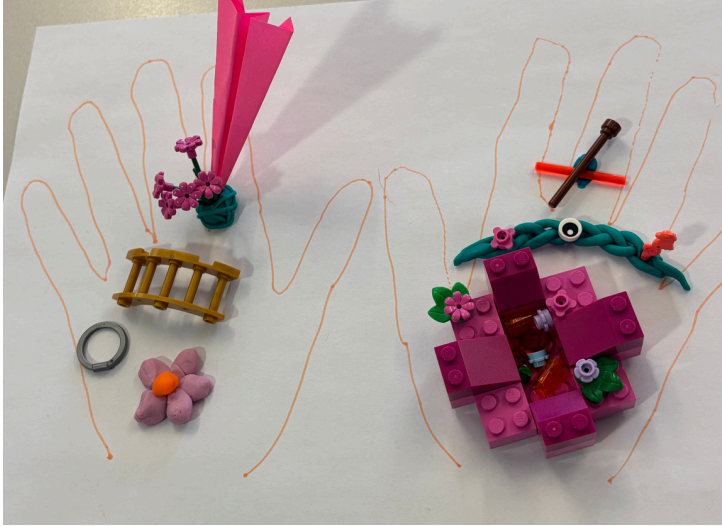
"For craft I thought of the aisles in hobbycraft and the different types of craft, so I've got a ball of yarn, a paper plane cause it's the only origami I can do, a crochet chain with crochet hooks. Then this was meant to be a pot but it turned out as a box full of treasures, then an embroidery hoop. There's a lot of attention to detail in craft and there's loads of little surprises in it. And I traced my hands because I think craft is an art of the hands."

"I did a jellyfish because I like jellyfish, but I think craft is a good way to let your mind run and you don't need to think about it - you can just do whatever comes to your mind. And it's not as big a commitment as doing a painting you can just do it."
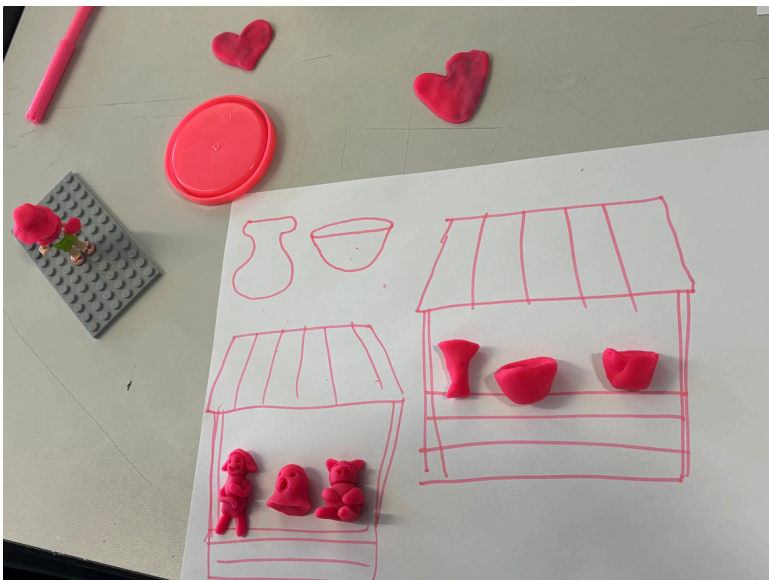

"I took it more literally. To me craft is market stalls and handmade goods that are more purposeful than arts. But I did love hearts because a lot of use will have had crafters in our lives like grandparents, mums that sort of stuff. And you get made things and it's definitely a token of love. And I did some jewellery on this lady."

"I just drew a smily face person because doing crafts makes you happy, it's therapeutic."

"I made a worm because I associate craft with childhood and I felt it was quite childish. I remember spending a lot of my childhood cause my grandma is quite into crafts, I always did craft days together with her. So I associate it with childishness and fun."
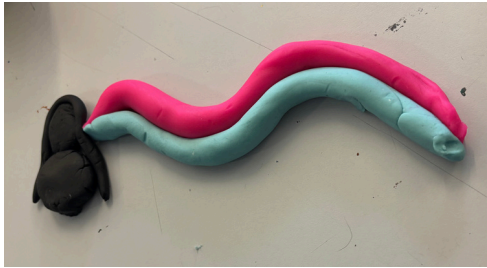
"I took it as an internalisation of creative flow, so I did a person with creative flow coming out of them."


"I made a house in a jungle with a fence because I think crafting sort of starts when you're a child. And it doesn't have to be realistic, doesn't have to be in proportion, it's more about using your imagination physically."

"Craft gets infantalised a lot, it's associated with women and feminine people, so I wanted to do something more classical. And I just like making paper cranes and I thought it blended well."

"I think of carpentry. I've got carpenters in my family so I think of building, that stuff. So I've done wood planks, scaffolds, a wrench."
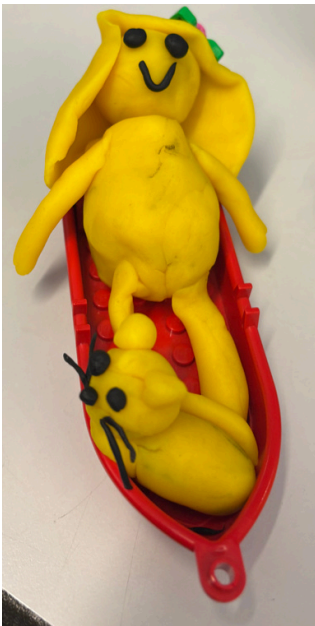
"I made myself and a cat in a boat because crafting is a journey that you go on, so you need the boat to get around."

"I did a flower because I think craft is a very natural expression of yourself so I did a flower. "

"I did a flower and a circle thing, I did chocolate and a monster, cause I think it's sweet things, childlike things, things like into the mind but peculiar and a bit unhinged actually. So when people are doing crafts there doesn't have to be any limitations or rules - so she's going into her mind."
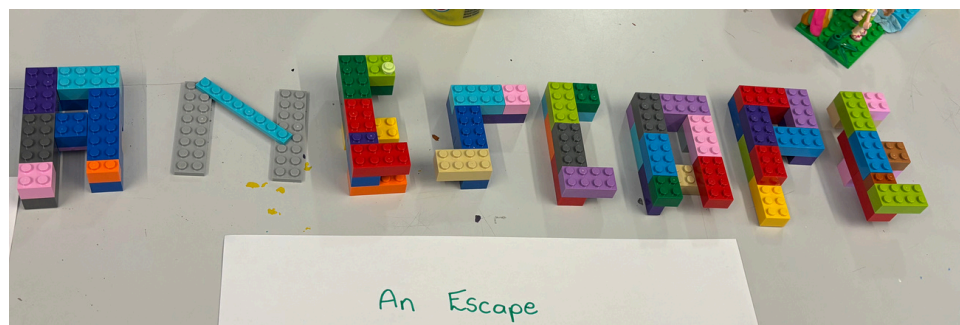
"I did a garden because I love to build things and I think craft is about building things from nothing and letting your imagination go, and it is childlike."

"It's about finding new ways to do things that are already familiar."


"To me it means thinking outside the box, and if you don't and you're not creative you're just stuck in a place of boringness."


An Escape

"I used lego to create the word escape because to me craft is like an escape from reality."

"I did it with lego so that it was beyond the door here is full of creativity with no boundaries because that's the point for me of art. There's so many eras, artists, forms of art that nothing can hold you back with it. Over here it's like expressing yourself through art - the person is all colourful."
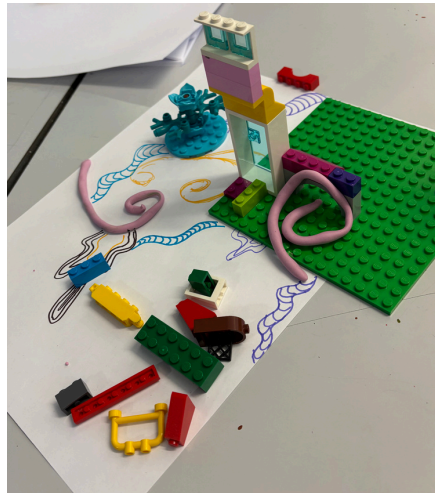
"I don't really know what this is I just think being passionate, different, creative, unique and showing how you feel through your art."
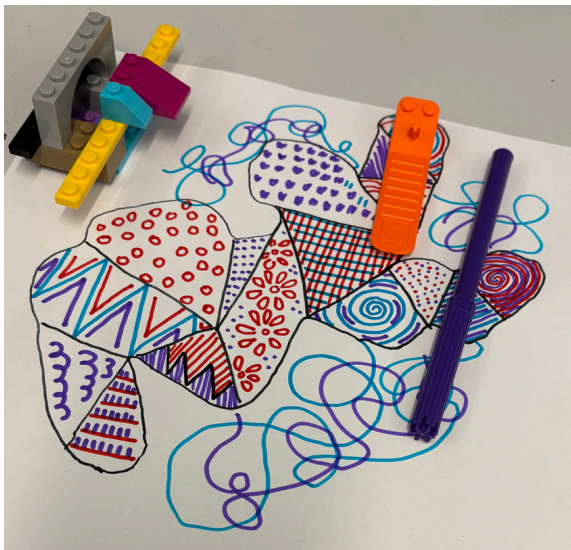
"So I think the main thing is just having a go, so I don't really use lego or stuff so I just placed some lego in random places, drew an outlines, filled in the stuff and I thought that would be quite nice to do."

"It's a boat symbolising the travelling through different stages and the progress through art."

"Mine symbolises creativity and playfulness as that's what comes to mind when I think about craft - letting yourself be free and not caring too much about what you're doing."
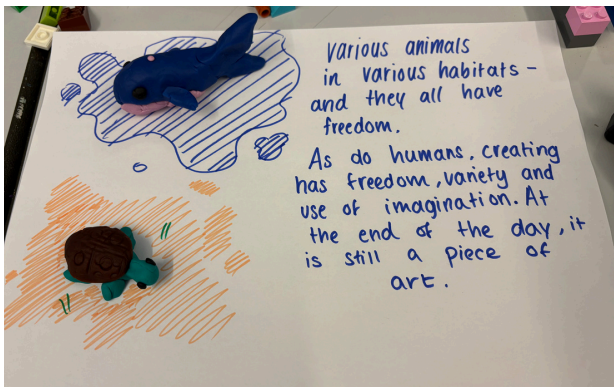
> "I used animals to symbolise craft because different animals with different habitats symbolise freedom. And with craft you don't need a theme or anything specific it's just letting yourself be free with whatever you make and at the end of the day it's something you have crafted and is an art piece."

> "I made a scene where people are hanging out and it could be like imagination and doing what they think."

> "I made this because art means the world to me and art reflects life and much like the world art brings us all together into a community."
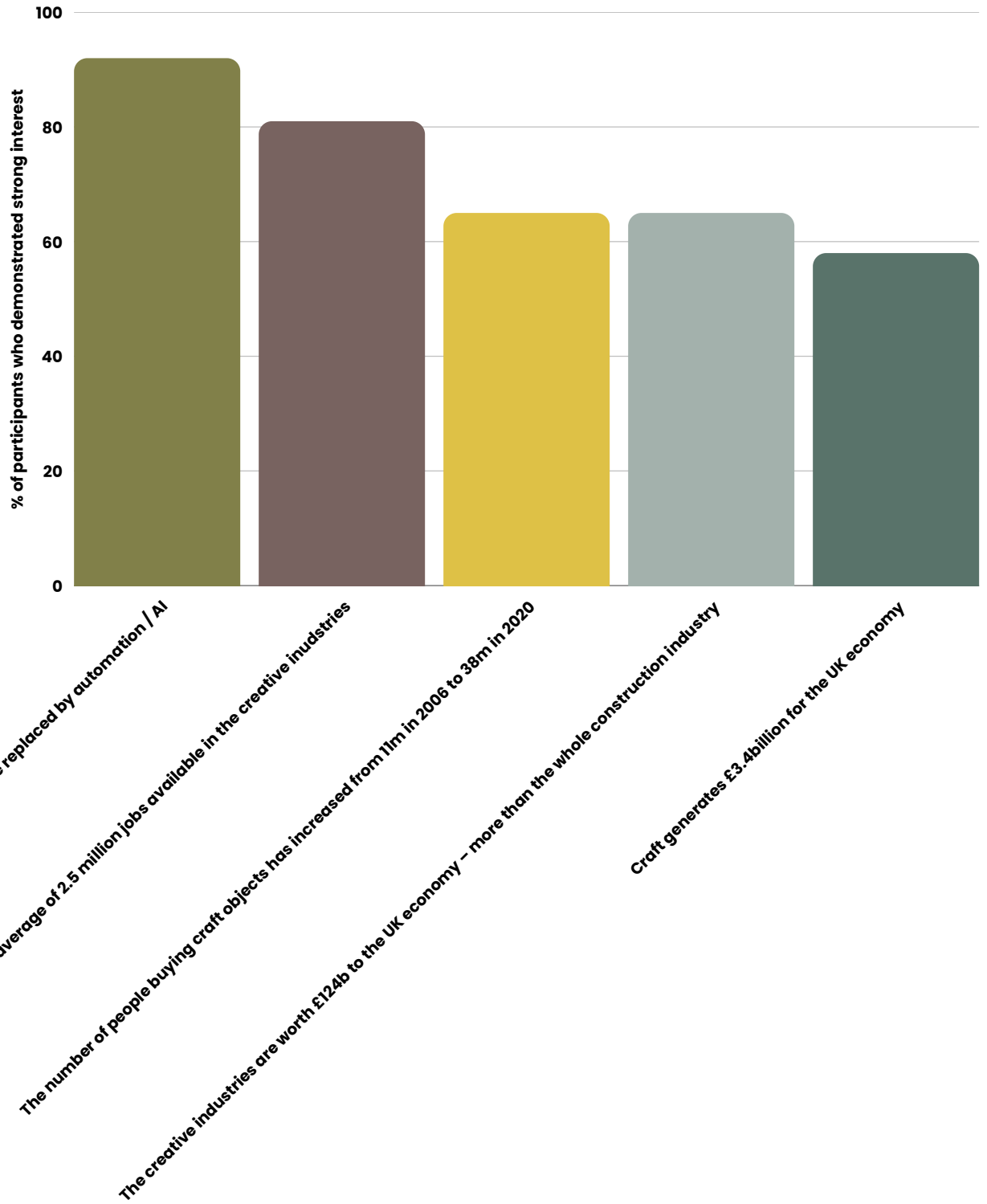

> "Mine is like, art can just be random so I just did a bunch of random stuff."
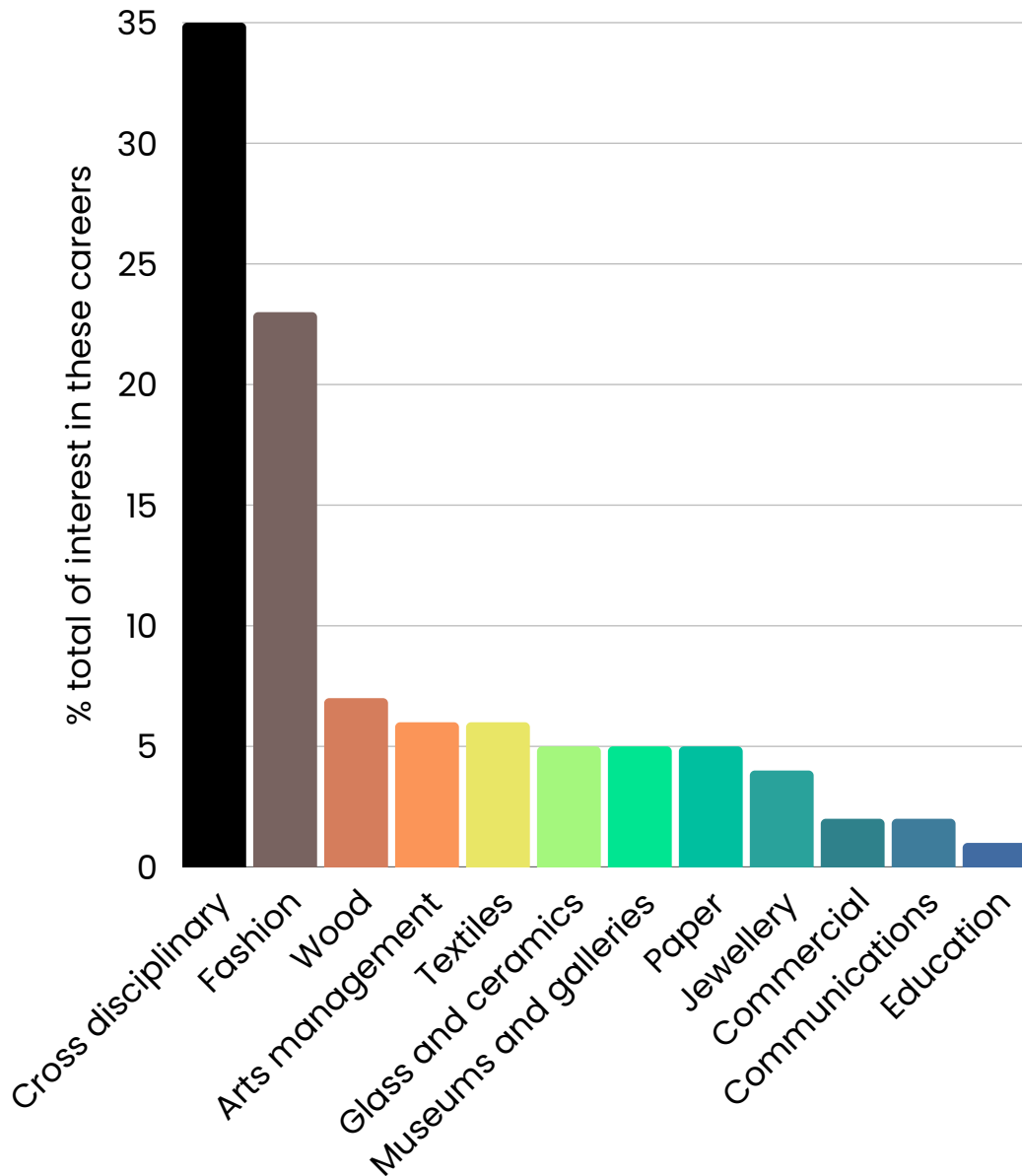

> "I don't know what this is but that's the point. I just let my imagination go. I guess it's a vehicle so it can be technical as well as fun and a hobby, it can be used in real life."

What facts about the crafts industry most interest young people?

Levels of interest in facts about the crafts/creative industries

Y-axis: % of participants who demonstrated strong interest (0 to 100)

Bars:
- People with craft skills are unlikely to be replaced by automation / AI — ~92
- There are an average of 2.5 million jobs available in the creative inudstries — ~81
- The number of people buying craft objects has increased from 11m in 2006 to 38m in 2020 — ~65
- The creative industries are worth £124b to the UK economy – more than the whole construction industry — ~65
- Craft generates £3.4billion for the UK economy — ~58

# What craft careers interest young people the most?

Specific jobs that interested participants within these thematic categories were:

- **Cross disciplinary:** Photographer; designer; interior designer; prop maker; sculptor; product designer
- **Fashion:** illustrator; stylist; fashion designer
- **Wood:** set designer; carpenter
- **Arts management:** creative director; project manager
- **Textiles:** costume designer; embroiderer
- **Glass and ceramics:** mosaic artist, studio potter
- **Museums and galleries:** exhibition designer; curator
- **Paper:** book binder; print maker
- **Jewellery:** art jeweller; fashion jeweller
- **Commercial:** art dealer; gallerist
- **Communications:** marketing
- **Education:** lecturer.

The following are the 'flyers' that participants created to promote craft and the craft industries to other young people. The explanation of their design is shared, as well as any constructive feedback provided by other participants.
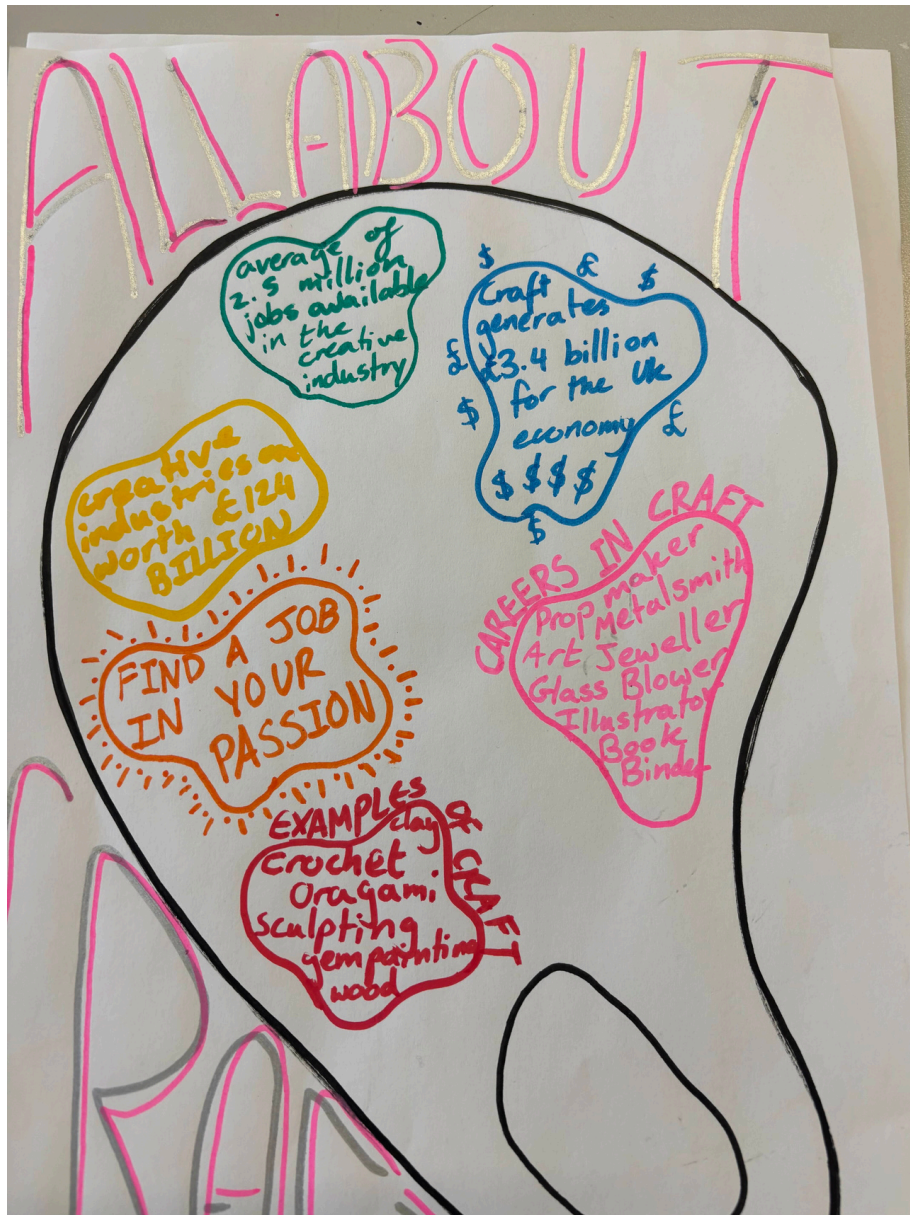
"I did a paint pallete with All About Craft as the title. Then I've got some facts, examples of crafts, examples of careers in crafts, then a quote 'find a job in your passion'."

What appealed to other participants?
The visuals and how the letters go around the pallete.
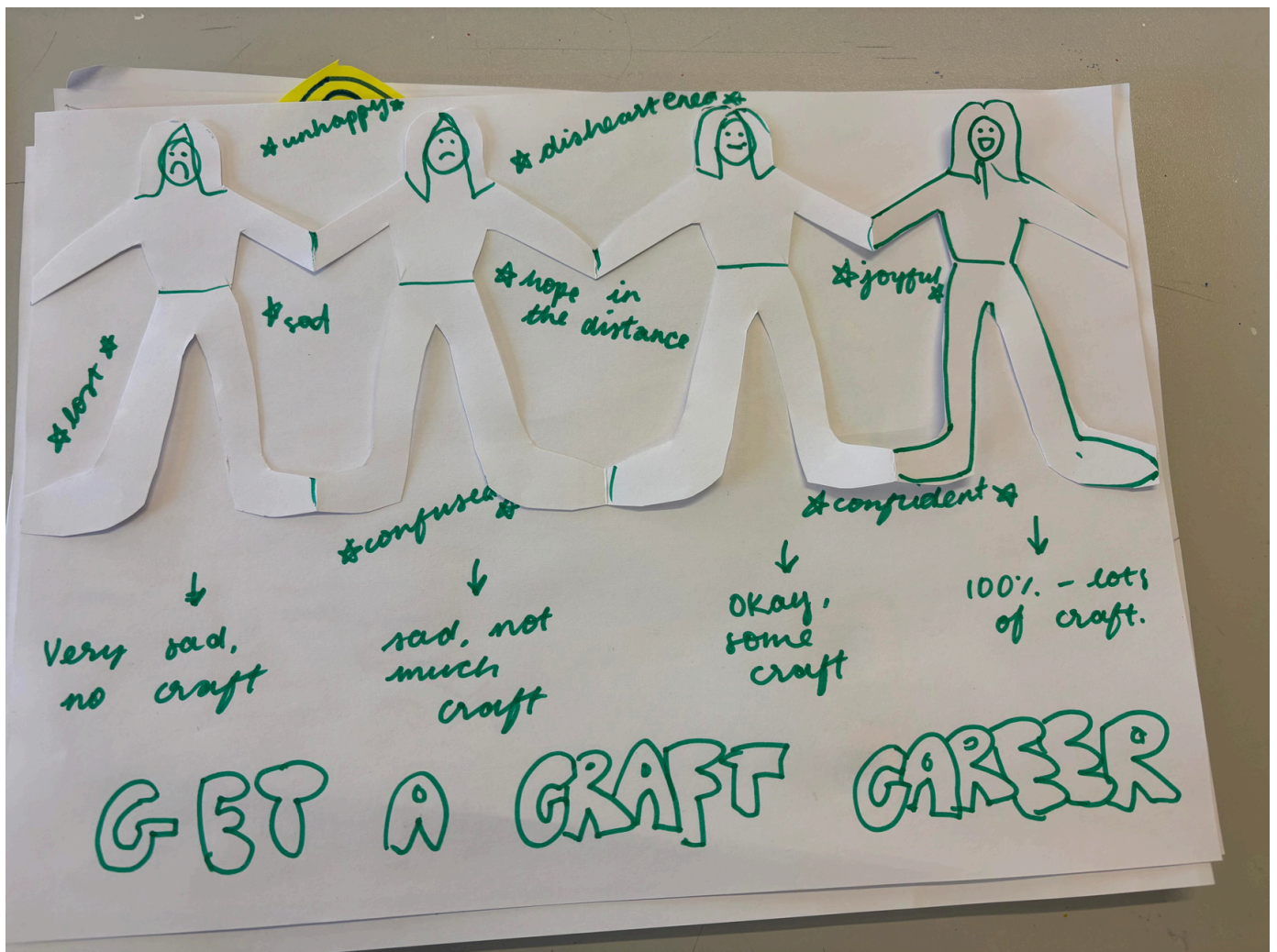
"I made a set of paper dolls with a happy person, a semi happy person, a semi sad person and a sad person. I've written synonyms of happy and sadness. I think the sheets you handed out earlier that said about craft making £3.4billion for the economy was really interesting as I thought there wasn't much money in craft careers to be honest."

What appealed to other participants?
The 'stages'; the paper people; it's charming and interactive; the layers.
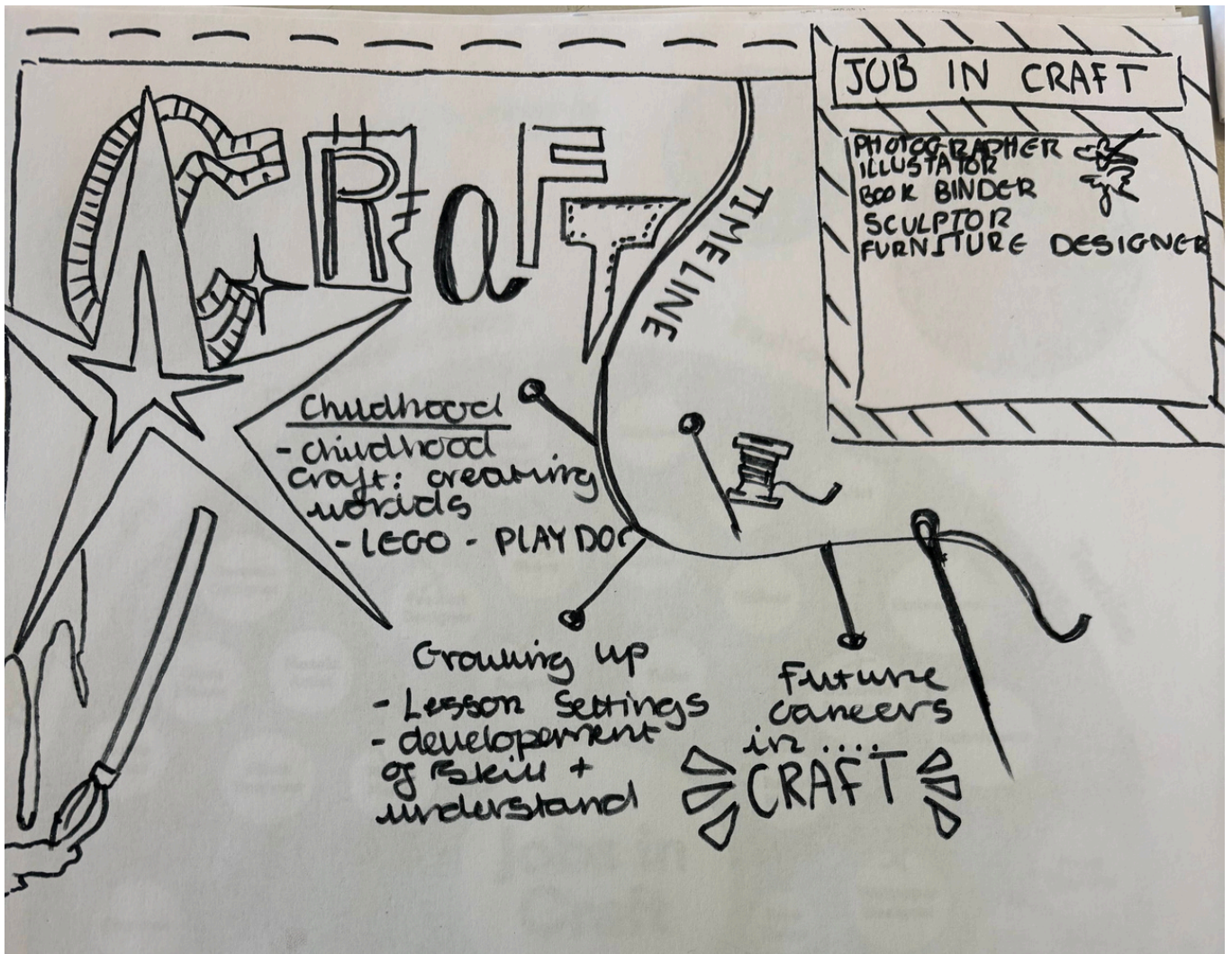
"When there's a pretty picture integrated into the text it makes me read the text, so I've done thread as a timeline of childhood craft, growing up craft and then career craft, and then have done a picture then integrated into text - if you're looking at something to do with craft you're interested in the design elements. Sneaky way of getting people to look at a picture and throwing in information too."

What appealed to other participants?
Combining the drawings and the timeline

"We wanted to do a cool, relatable teenager. We made it more visual instead of words but we put in the thought bubble things that relate to crafts. Sometimes they might not want to say it but they're thinking of what everyone else is doing."

What appealed to other participants?
It's 'cute'; good attention to detail; drawings are pretty, like the post it notes and the flaps (different layers)
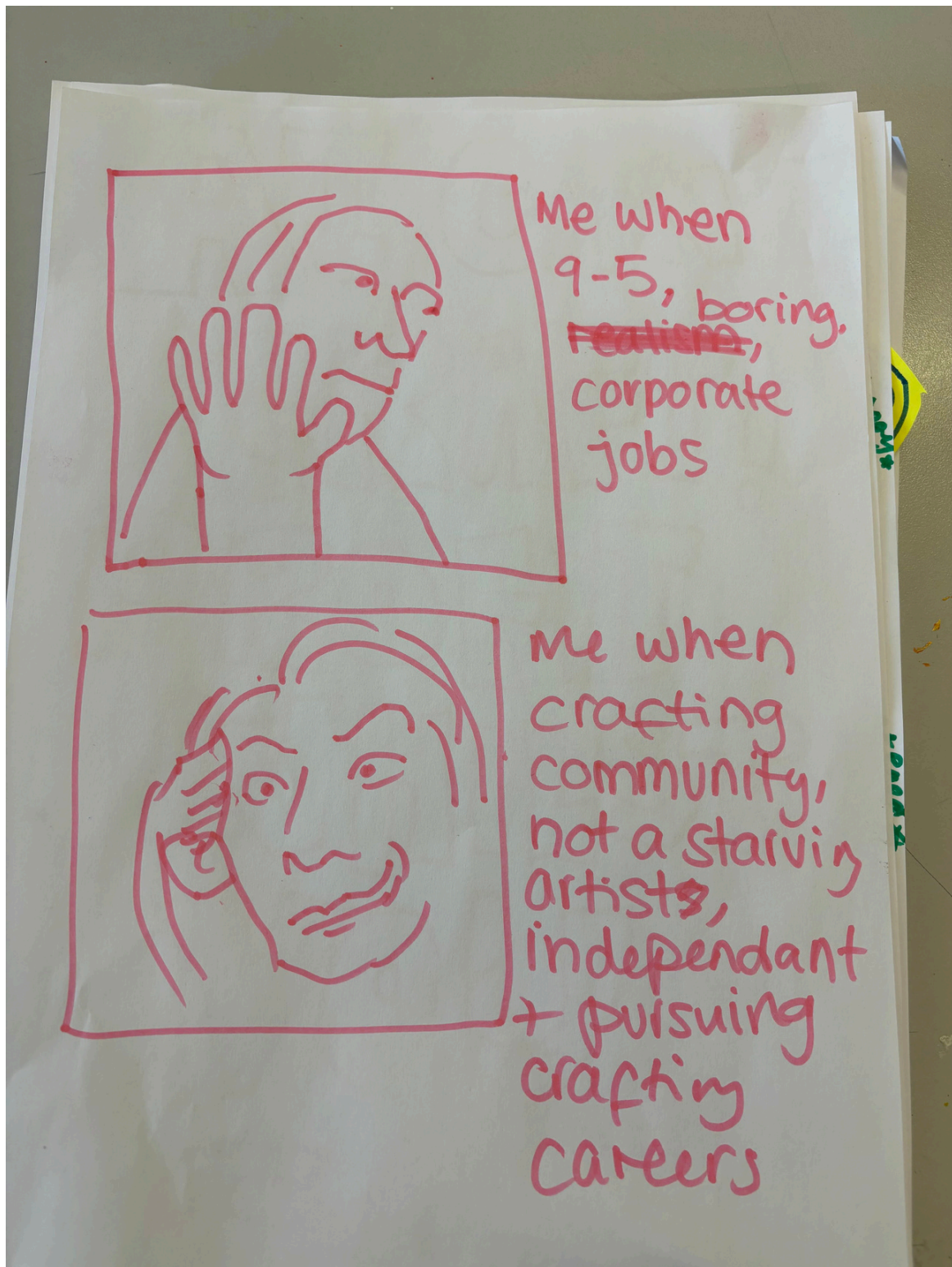
"My first one is utilising meme content - that's my take on how to reach young people. Obviously social media is a big way to reach young people, and if you're putting facts in a way that is informative but also funny you're more likely to have engagement from young people."
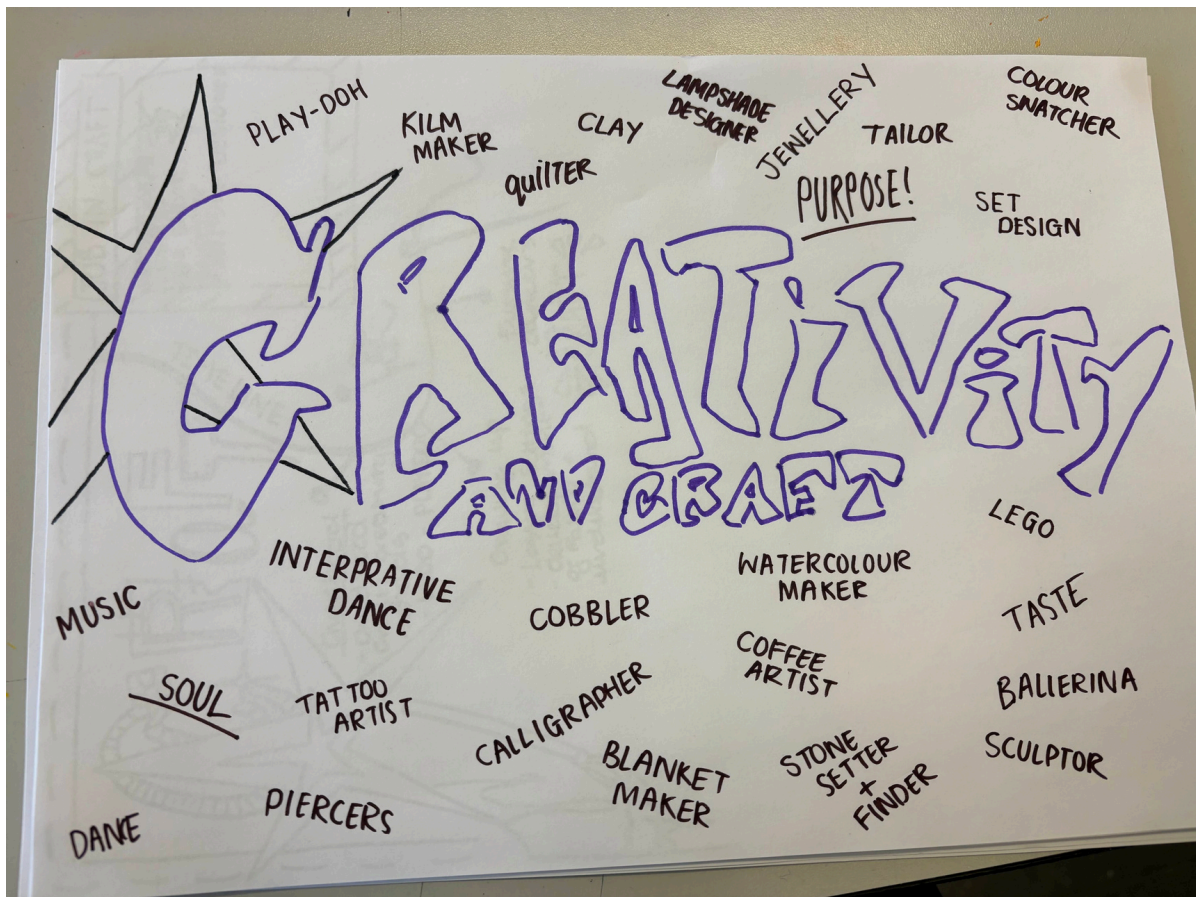
What appealed to other participants?
The use of memes
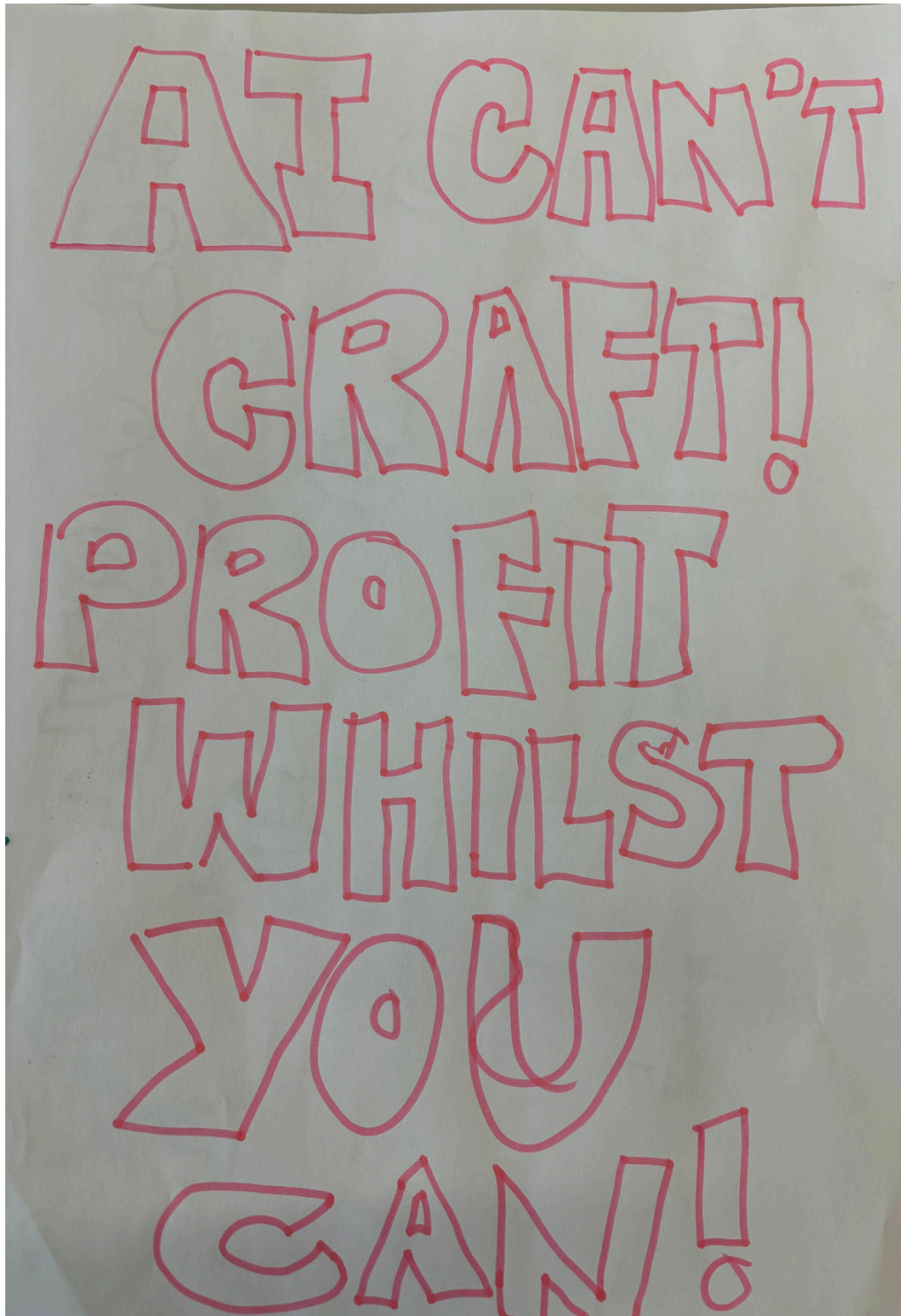
"We're all kind of economically screwed our generation so if you explain to people that there is money in crafts then they will want to do it. And if you can explain that it's more on their terms than regular jobs that's good."

What appealed to other participants?
The powerful statement

PLAY-DOH
KILM MAKER
CLAY
LAMPSHADE DESIGNER
JEWELLERY
TAILOR
COLOUR SNATCHER
Quilter
PURPOSE!
SET DESIGN
CREATIVITY AND CRAFT
LEGO
INTERPRATIVE DANCE
COBBLER
WATERCOLOUR MAKER
TASTE
MUSIC
SOUL
TATTOO ARTIST
CALLIGRAPHER
COFFEE ARTIST
BALLERINA
BLANKET MAKER
STONE SETTER + FINDER
SCULPTOR
DANE
PIERCERS

"Wanted to give it lots of niche options so you can see the careers you don't normally think of when you think of crafts. Wanted to show the full variety and how wide the actual variety of jobs in the creative industry are, and how there's pretty much something for everyone."

What appealed to other participants?
To the point. Not lost in information. Way it highlights niche jobs as young people don't know the depth and variety of jobs - people have rigid ideas about what jobs exist but actually there are some really niche jobs.
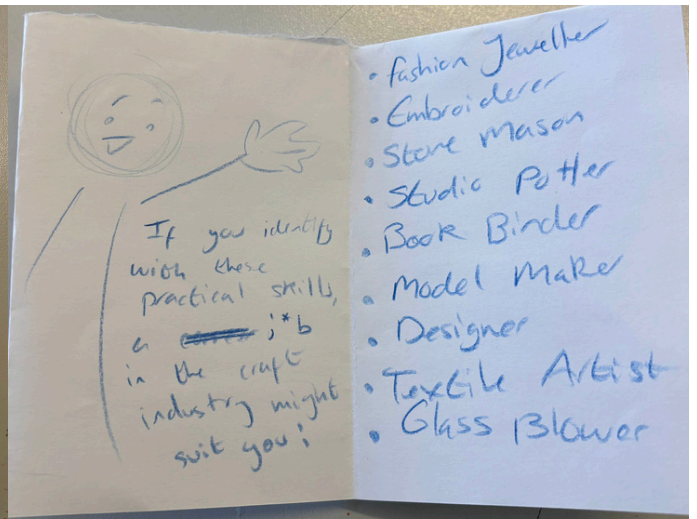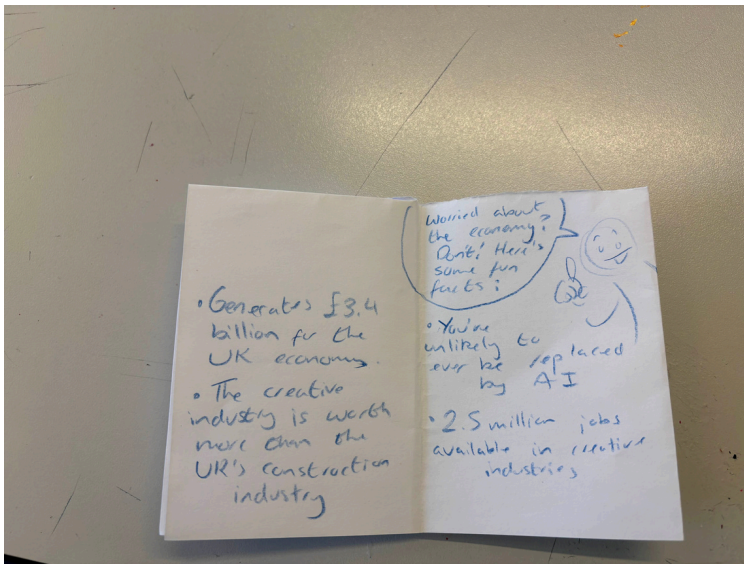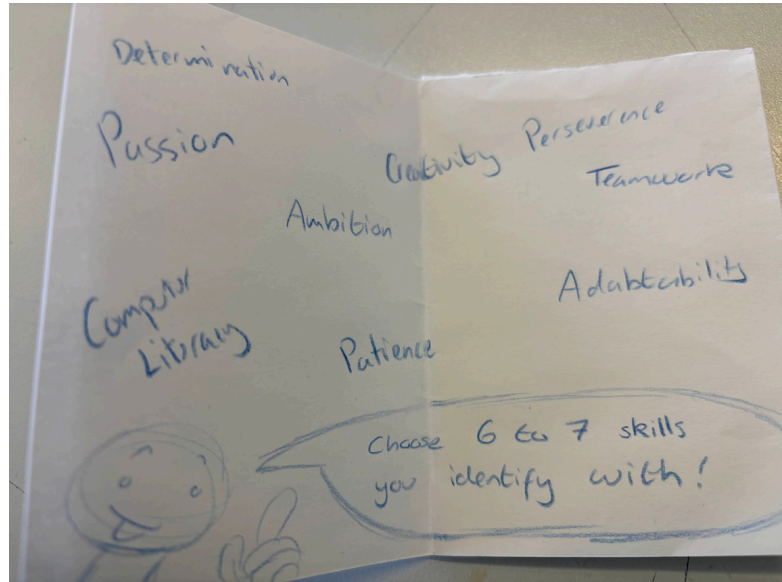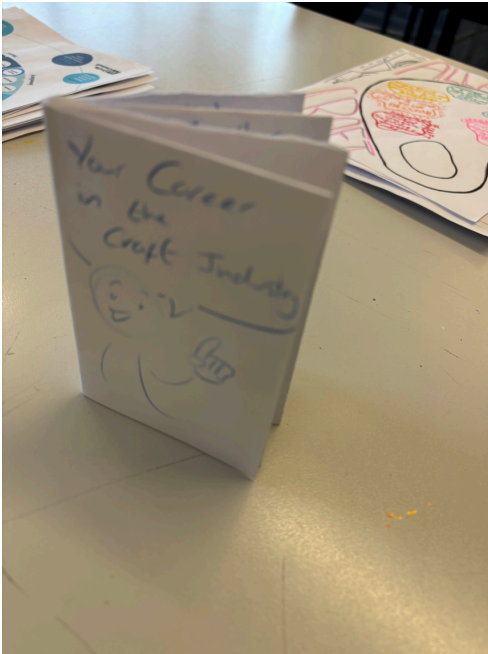
"We went for a book, something that could be handed out. I always think a helpful mascot is good for walking through explanations. We chose language that attracts the youth in a subtle way, but will get people talking about it and then they'll grab the leaflet as they think it's silly or amusing. It's like viral jokes online that will just get people engaged. A page on different jobs and then one on facts - then bringing in a questions about the economy. Something small, easy to read."

What appealed to other participants?
It's interactive, well thought through. Everyone who's into craft or art will always pick up a design like that.

"I wanted to put all the careers in because when I was looking at [the Crafts Council careers wheel] I didn't know all of this was classed as craft careers you could go into. So for young people looking to find their careers and what to do at university and in life and everything it's just good to like share the knowledge of what it actually means instead of having in your head your idea of what craft careers are. When I thought of craft I thought more like youtubers doing crafts online but I didn't realise it could go into so many branches and jobs as well."

No feedback from others

"So we created this more of a poster because we wanted it to be welcoming. Have got bold font, to catch attention. Silly illustration. And then we've clearey listed different options. We made art obvious. We want people to be drawn in - instead of the word career because that can be offputting - we want them to realise that this is something that they want to do and they do as a hobby and therefore they can get a job in it."

No feedback from others

Craft

Craft can be emotionally calming, and a way to have fun while also being creative.
Many teenagers today enjoy doing craft as its a way to express their individuality.

Choising a carrea in Craft

This can be very impactful as Craft is a high part of the economy.
Different jobs can be part of a range of jobs such as interia design or fashion. It can be a seccure job while also being fun and imaginitive.

Why it can help!

Their are many reasons to choise craft but the main one being that it can help you to understand why different mediums of art is important and can set an example.

No explanation or feedback from others

Summary from flyer design exercise

Content and messaging suggestions

1. Provide clear evidence that craft jobs are financially viable

- Facts like "craft makes £3.4bn for the economy" were surprising and compelling.
- Young people want reassurance that creative careers are accessible to them.
- Link to their passions i.e. "You can earn money doing what you love"; "find a job in your passion"
- Avoid heavy or formal 'career' language, which can feel off-putting ('job' is recommended rather than 'career')
- Direct statements about money and opportunity were described as "powerful". Young people appreciate honesty about economic realities ("we're all kind of economically screwed… "explain that there is money in it")

2. Show the range and variety of craft careers and that they can be legitimate, varied, and rewarding

- Some of the more niche jobs were of genuine interest
- Young people want to feel there's a place for them, even if they don't fit the stereotypical 'artist' mould

3. Identity, feelings, and emotions resonate well

- Participants liked content that reflected personal journeys, emotions, moods, uniqueness. Particular themes that appealed were: "Creativity can be part of who you are and your future." and "Craft is already part of your culture — here's how it fits your world."
- There was interest in articulating that creative stories have stages i.e. "childhood craft → grown-up craft → job in craft"

Tone and Style

- Use subtle language that is attractive and relatable to teenagers
- Tone should feel like it's on their terms, not lecturing. It should be encouraging and empowering
- Participants veered towards "Silly illustrations," "viral jokes," "amusing content"
- Use emotional, calming language. Show how it's about expressing your individuality.
- Have bold, clear fonts that catch attention
- A mascot or lighthearted character can increase approachability
- Participants don't want sugar-coating - they want facts to be presented clearly, honestly and accessibly.

Format suggestions

- Use of memes was considered effective ("informative but also funny")
- Participants appreciated designs that had an element of interactivity and discovery for example:
  - Timelines
  - Thought bubbles showing inner thoughts
  - Post-it notes, flaps, layers
  - Collage-like layouts
  - Booklet formats - i.e. fold-out flyer, mini-zine
- Participants appreciated effective combinations of text and illustration where visuals are part of the message, not just decoration - for example using images as frames, borders or shapes that hold text, text that winds around illustrations. They discussed creating a flyer that looks hand-made, multi-layered and visually playful
- Have simple layouts that are to the point and where you don't get lost in the text
- Visual metaphors worked well i.e. paint palette, needle and thread - which drew eyes to key information. Consider using craft materials as structural elements (stitches, threads, cut-outs, tools forming dividers, etc.)

"There is no world without crafts - cause there isn't, there would be no buildings or anything. Just to let people know it's not knitting, art, it is all around them. I wanted a bold statement that could motivate people into doing crafts more." *(No picture - quote captured from participant)*

Sample design brief

Design a youth-friendly flyer/poster that inspires young people (14–21) to explore craft-related career paths.

Goal:
Shift perceptions of craft careers by showing that:
- They are diverse, exciting, and far more wide-ranging than most young people realise.
- They can be financially viable and offer genuine job and money-making opportunities.
- Craft can grow from something you enjoy into something you do professionally.

Tone and Style
- Youthful, relatable, humorous and visually engaging — without being patronising or overly "careers talk" focussed.
- Cool, casual, teen-friendly – feels like something a friend might show you, not a school leaflet
- Subtle youth language – contemporary phrasing or hints of online culture, not obvious slang.
- Humour and memes welcome – "informative but funny" boosts engagement.
- Honest and direct – acknowledge economic realities, emphasise money and opportunity clearly.
- Encouraging and empowering – messages about passion, identity, creativity and possibility.

Content Priorities
The design should highlight:
- Real facts about economic opportunity - use one or two powerful financial stats in a bold, memorable way.
- The variety and range of craft jobs including niche and unexpected roles.
- Emotional connection to craft - different moods, stages or personal journeys. Consider referencing feelings, identity, self-expression or the transition from hobby → career.
- Relatability - messaging that reassures: "You already do this — it could be a job."

Visual considerations
- Integrate visuals with text - illustrations shouldn't sit separately, for example weave text around visuals, or embed facts inside pictures, shapes, threads, paint strokes, etc.
- Consider character-led illustration - i.e. a mascot
- Drawings should feel hand-made, playful and slightly "scrappy" rather than polished corporate graphics.
- Youth-coded visual language is important: Memes, post-it notes, doodles, 'viral joke' tone welcomed - subtle, not forced
- Should feel like something you'd screenshot and share
- Font: Bold, eye-catching headings; Short, punchy statements; Avoid heavy paragraphs
- Colour and mood: Warm, welcoming, fun; Not overly childish; accessible to older teens and young adults
- Aim for something young people would pick up because it looks funny, cool, or intriguing, not because it looks educational.

Possible Formats
- Mini-zine aesthetic (flat as one page) with a mascot guiding you through the sections.
- Visual timeline: Thread/stitch/line connecting "childhood → hobby → uni/training → job".
- Meme panel layout: Mix of meme frames, facts and niche job spotlights.
- Illustrated palette, toolbox, or craft wheel: Central image surrounded by career options.

Must include:
- Clear title related to "Craft Careers" / "Your Creative Future" / "All About Craft"
- At least 1 economic fact
- A curated, readable list of niche craft career options
- At least one integrated visual-text element

Must avoid:
- Overly formal tone
- Dense information blocks
- Corporate or school-style formatting

Success Criteria
Young people describe it as:
- "Cute", "cool", "funny", "interesting", "relatable", "welcoming", "interactive-looking."
- It feels like something you'd stick on a bedroom wall or share online.
- It changes perceptions: craft = real jobs, real money, real variety.

Suggestions for Crafts Council

1. Young people are inspired by seeing creative career paths displayed in their art departments, especially when those displays include niche roles and jobs that pay reasonably well. Several participants suggested that Crafts Council could send ready-made display materials to schools and specialist art colleges.
2. They felt they learned a surprising amount about the craft industry in a short time during our session. This was reflected in the increase in understanding between the two 'human surveys'. Many said they would love Crafts Council staff to visit schools directly to talk about the sector and share opportunities for connection and networking.
3. Participants recommended reaching children much earlier, including EYFS and KS1, to help show that early forms of craft (playdough, lego, drawing, etc.) are fully accessible from a young age.
4. There is some confusion around the subtleties of difference between the definitions of craft and creativity, and by extension the "craft industry" and the "creative industries". The terms are used interchangeably in the school brochure, so it may be worth clearly explaining that craft sits within the wider creative industries.
5. One participant raised the issue of craft being perceived as "feminine," and several others associated craft to female relatives (mothers, grandmothers, etc.) who they remembered crafting with as children. This may be an area worth exploring further and addressing directly.