

Crafts Council **Toolkit for inclusive practice in
craft organisations**

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What is this guide?

This guide contains practical steps on how to make your craft organisation more inclusive for people from minoritised groups . Is it based on research carried out with socially engaged craft organisations in the UK and Australia as part of the [Craft Expertise project](#). The five organisations featured in this guide are craft social enterprises or projects, working with people from minoritised¹ groups or communities. There are some useful practical tips in this guide on how to make craft spaces safe for people from minoritised groups.

¹ Minoritized groups include people who are ethnically and culturally diverse, LGBTQ+, disabled, working class, or neurodiverse, for example.

About the Craft Expertise project

The research for this guide was carried out by Dr Karen Patel of Birmingham City University, who has been working with the Crafts Council on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project Craft Expertise. The project has explored the experiences of women of colour in the contemporary craft sector, revealing the prevalence of racism and microaggressions across all areas of craft, from higher education, to studio spaces and fairs, to dealing with suppliers. The findings from the first phase of the project are published in the [Making Changes in Craft Report](#). Five women also talk about their career journeys in craft in the [Maker Stories podcast series](#).

The second phase of the Craft Expertise project focused on socially engaged craft organisations, which tend to work with people or groups which are underrepresented in contemporary craft, and people who aren't necessarily pursuing craft as a career, but engage with it for creative, health or social reasons. The interviews with people who run these organisations took place during 2021 and 2022, involving visits to Edinburgh, London, Adelaide and Melbourne. The podcast series Craft Expertise: The View From Australia, featuring interviews with the Australian craft social enterprises is available on the [Craft Expertise](#) website.

Case Studies - CraftA

CraftA, London



CraftA

CraftA is a socially engaged craft organisation based in London in the Greenwich area. It was established in 2018 by Viv Cameron, who had a career in a non-creative sector before taking early retirement. Viv volunteered for a local arts cafe in London, and from there she became involved in setting up a textile festival and arts exhibition at the cafe. The success of the festival and exhibition enabled Viv to take it into the community, and she began working with people to deliver therapeutic craft sessions. Viv applied for funding to establish and grow the group, now known as CraftA.

The workshops CraftA run are mostly textile based, and seek to foster social inclusion and alleviation of loneliness by bringing people together. They engage mainly with minoritized groups and vulnerable people in London, and who they engage with, and where they work, is dependent on project funding.

CraftA, like all of the craft social enterprises featured in this guide, adapted well during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first UK lockdown in March 2020, CraftA quickly moved to online delivery of sessions, which became in demand because few organisations were running online craft sessions at the time. CraftA attracted participants from around the world. They also engaged directly with local care organisations during lockdown, sending out making kits to over 120 care organisations for people who were isolated at home.

CraftA have been successful in securing funding for their work from various charities and funders, and ensure that inclusion is built into every aspect of their work, from how they engage, to their branding. They worked with a branding consultancy to ensure their brand appeared inclusive and welcoming.

Case Studies - Flourish

Flourish Jewellery Project,
Edinburgh



Flourish Jewellery Project began in 2020 as part of the Silverhub Studios, a jewellery social enterprise in Edinburgh established by Lisa Arnott. The project was initially funded by Creative Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lisa runs Flourish with Jessica Howarth, and both have qualifications in community arts and community development. Through Silverhub they delivered outreach making workshops to a range of groups, including veterans and young carers. They discussed the idea of a focused jewellery making programme for mental health and wellbeing, and applied for funding from Creative Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flourish deliver jewellery making workshops for vulnerable groups, mainly women who have suffered trauma and/or are recovering from addiction. Flourish are well networked in Edinburgh and particularly the local area of Leith. They have connections with local and national organisations such as Police Scotland, domestic violence services, universities and charities which help them connect to communities. The initial funding from Creative Scotland allowed Jessica and Lisa to fit out the Silverhub studios for COVID-safe sessions which they ran in the summer of 2020, after the first UK lockdown. They subsidised certain costs for the participants such as transport and childcare, which were often barriers to access for many of the women they worked with. As part of the jewellery making programme, participants also received a kit with tools and materials to allow the participants to continue making from home.

The running of Flourish requires a great deal of time and commitment from Jessica and Lisa, who said that their background in community work is crucial to its success, because of the complex experiences of participants who may have suffered from trauma (and may still be), mental health issues and financial difficulties. They work with women's services, charities and social workers to inform their approaches to working with the women.

Case Studies - Path Carvers

Path Carvers, Birmingham



Path Carvers was established in 2017 by wood carver JoJo Wood and her partner Sean. Path Carvers provide workshops and training sessions focusing on wood carving for mental and physical health. They aim to make craft as accessible as possible, providing free or subsidised classes and taster sessions for people with health conditions. They also encourage participants to think of craft as a career, and offer help with various aspects of craft enterprise such as marketing and selling online.

JoJo has a teaching background and Sean was a psychiatric nurse, with a background in setting up social enterprises to help people with mental and physical health. JoJo has taught wood carving around the world, and the two decided to set up Path Carvers, with a specific focus on teaching people to carve small implements such as spoons and spatulas from wood, to help people with mindfulness and mental health. Both JoJo and Sean value craft for their own mental health, and wanted to bring their skills and knowledge to teach people in the local community in Stirchley in Birmingham. Another motivation is to make wood carving more accessible to people, because as Sean said,

“woodworking and craft in particular is a very white, middle-class activity.

JoJo said that woodworking classes or courses are often out in the woods, and are expensive because they often include a residential. The residential format is not accessible for people who live in the city and rely on public transport, and not everyone can afford to pay for a residential or set aside the time because of care or work commitments.

So, JoJo and Sean set up their workshop in a unit on Stirchley high street in Birmingham, which would attract local people who could drop in for a chat with JoJo, or they could attend weekly wood carving clubs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, JoJo and Sean decided to move premises, because of the increasing gentrification of the area. They said they were eventually “priced out” of their workshop, because Stirchley began receiving press coverage about being a desirable place to live, leading to house price increases. They are now based in Balsall Health, another area in south Birmingham with a very culturally diverse local community. The premises where they are now based run ‘Second Saturdays’, where on the second Saturday of each month, local organisations offer free creative classes for the community. For Path Carvers, this has allowed them to introduce more people to carving.

Case Studies - Jam Factory

The Jam Factory,
Adelaide

Jam
Factory

The Jam Factory is a craft social enterprise in Adelaide, Australia. It has a prominent presence in the city; its building sits on one of the main roads - the North Terrace - leading into Adelaide. The building is owned by the local government and is rent-free for the Jam Factory. It is open to the public, with a shop and art gallery on the ground floor. Visitors can book free tours in midweek, which includes the opportunity to view the glass blowing facilities and the associates (the artists and makers based there) at work. As well as studio space for makers, the Jam Factory offers craft workshops to the public which were launched in 2021, when lockdown from the COVID-19 pandemic was lifted.

For Associates who are based at the Jam Factory, they have access to studio space, facilities, mentoring and residency scholarship opportunities, and exposure through the galleries and shops. They have historically attracted people from around the world for their Associate schemes, and are making concerted efforts to work with and support First Nations¹ craftspeople. The Jam Factory collaborate regularly with art centres in the desert regions of Australia and show their work in the gallery and shop.

The Jam Factory work with genuine care and wellbeing in their approach, and emphasise the skills and knowledge of their makers in their communications and marketing. The staff at the Jam Factory take their duty of care seriously, and ensure an ethos of care is at the core of what they do. They provide extensive mentoring and peer support for participants and associates.

² First Nations is the preferred term for the original custodians of the land in Australia, more widely known as Aboriginal or Indigenous people.

Case Studies - The Social Studio

*The Social Studio,
Melbourne*

The Social Studio

The Social Studio was founded in 2009, and is a social enterprise which aims to provide work and training opportunities for people from refugee and new migrant backgrounds, in fashion, textiles and the creative arts. Since 2009 the enterprise has grown from a small training provider to an ethical clothing manufacturer with a shop, situated in the Collingwood Yard complex in Melbourne. A key offering from The Social Studio is an accredited course in clothing and textiles production, which is delivered in partnership with RMIT University in Melbourne. This course helps participants to develop their craft skills for potential future employment in fashion and textiles, offering pathways to the industry for migrant and refugee people. The clothing manufacturing offer of The Social Studio is an important income generator, as they have developed an in-house clothing label and manufacture clothes for third parties. This part of the social enterprise expanded significantly during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, because they reacted quickly to the need for face masks, putting resources in place to produce face masks on a large scale.

As with the Jam Factory and the other case study organisations in this guide, care is at the centre of what The Social Studio do. They work with a lot of people for whom English is not their first language, so for their accredited textile course they bring in additional tutors to help participants with their English. They also bring in people to help participants deal with any issues they might be facing personally, what the CEO, Dewi Cooke, describes as “wraparound psychosocial support”. They also provide dedicated prayer rooms, and for the staff, they are flexible with leave for religious or cultural reasons. Dewi also notes that The Social Studio has a very culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, which she says creates “a certain level of safety” for students and participants.

Making craft inclusive

The case study organisations featured in this guide are all experienced in working with people from minoritized communities, who are generally underrepresented in professional craft. Many of the people who run these organisations also have qualifications and experience in working with people who experience complexities in their lives, and may have physical, social or mental health difficulties. So, it is important to note that socially engaged work is requires a great deal of emotional labour, and skills and experience which are crucial for helping people with difficult personal circumstances.

While the socially engaged sector appears to be quite different from the professional sector in craft, there are lessons and good practice which can be learned from the case studies here, to make professional craft more inclusive. Here are some practical things you can do to start to make your craft organisation genuinely inclusive.

1. Create a safe environment

Creating a sense of safety is crucial to make your organisation or space more inclusive. A number of measures can be taken to create a safe environment, but the most impactful is diversifying your workforce – as Dewi from The Social Studio said, having a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce creates a sense of safety. Ensuring you and your staff have a genuine commitment to ongoing learning about equity, diversity and inclusion is also important. A part of creating a safe environment also involves examining the power relations in your organisation. Who has the power in your organisation? Are existing power relations preventing people from accessing your organisation, or your products, services or events?

2. Work with an ethos of care

The case study organisations featured in this guide all work with an ethos of care and social justice at their core. They genuinely care about their employees and participants, and wellbeing is their primary concern. The work of The Care Collective may be useful in helping you to think about care and what it means for you, and your organisation/space.

3. Demonstrate your genuine commitment to equity and inclusion

The organisations in this guide demonstrated their genuine and heartfelt commitment to equity and inclusion in a number of ways, for example with Flourish subsidising travel and childcare costs for their participants, or Pathcarvers working with a mental health provider to run a helpline for makers who are struggling. The actions you take will make meaningful change. The Crafts Council's toolkit for change includes a number of actions you can take to make your organisation or space genuinely inclusive.

4. Allow flexibility and consider cultural needs

The case study organisations featured here consider cultural needs, and are flexible with the people they work with. A simple action to take here is making a note of all cultural and religious events/festivals in your calendar and ensuring none of your events clash with them. As part of your equity and inclusion learning, include religion and faith, which is often overlooked in wider conversations about diversity.

5. Connect with your community

The strength of the organisations in this guide was the connection to their local community, often facilitated by their connections to other organisations and wider networks. These organisations can help with funding applications, holding outreach/taster sessions in the community and engaging with people who might not normally engage with craft or think it is for them. In all cases, the social enterprises featured here listened to their user communities and participants. Through regular evaluation and asking participants what they want, these organisations ensure they understood their communities' needs.

Further reading and resources

- Crafts Council Toolkit for Change: <https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/diversity-inclusion/toolkit-for-change>
- The Care Collective Care Manifesto: <https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/products/2625-the-care-manifesto>
- The Centre for Cultural Value resources on wellbeing and participation: <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/cultural-value-resources/>

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