



## ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

Together we can craft a better future!

Craftship Enterprise CIC manages Made in Ashford and The Craftship:  
We support local creative businesses and creativity in the community. We reinvest our profits back into these areas to fulfil the values that mean so much to us.



Our beliefs and values through 2024:  
Share, Support and Encourage

## Welcome to a look back on our achievements during 2023

2023 has been another difficult year in retail and for the High Street particularly in Ashford & even more so Park Mall. There is no getting around the great losses we have felt with our fellow Park Mall shops having to close their doors this year. Every shop that has closed has been tough for us, we have lost our friends from the town and such vitally important members of our community. They will all be missed greatly.

Reflecting on our own 2023 it has been a tough year behind the scenes for us too and a lot of our energy & time has been spent trying to sort out a new way forward for our organisation & shops with less outside support. It has been a tricky year for me personally & our directors having to make some big decisions at a difficult time for our High Streets. We decided that some risks are worth taking and we will try to find a way to make it all work by always keeping in mind what drives us - our community here in Ashford.

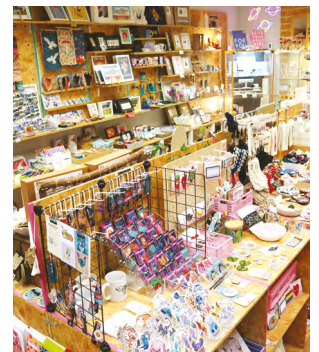
Despite that happening in the background when I looked back on our annual achievements, we have done quite a lot in 2023! Never a quiet time! We have grown more larger scale projects, fringe events and pushed forward with our own ideas. We have had some really great collaborations, brought in additional income for many local artists, gained new sellers in Made in Ashford and worked with 1000s of members of our local community!

**Our amazing highlights will be outlined in this report so please read on.**

Made in Ashford



There is not a year that goes by when we don't have some DIY happening in Made in Ashford, a change around is great. We are always striving to make the shop work better, whether that is for accessibility, the customer experience or to fit in more businesses. We try to make it the best it can be and respond to team ideas & customer feedback.



**64 local Kentish businesses** were

supported to sell their products, grow their businesses, skill share and become part of our community of creatives.

We have had **4** team social sessions including a visit to the Street furniture we painted and the Ashford escape rooms, another escape room night, a new year night out where we wanted to wear pink (I am not sure there was a reason), our birthday party where we ate Il Pakkero pizza (best in town), painted pottery at our place and then went to support Create Music village and the Tap Room. Ashford is a great night out, we always have fun!



**3** Artists have showcased work in our Starewell Gallery.



**Pre loved Craft/Scrap store** The upstairs of Made in Ashford was changed into our pre loved craft space and scrap store. This was an idea that had been successful as a pop up and then trialled in the Craftship before moving up to a permanent larger home upstairs in the shop. Here we have art & craft materials, tools & equipment donated by the public which we sort and then display in the correct area of the shop. Items can then be purchased by the public at a price they feel is reasonable to them. It is totally pay as you feel. This approach fulfils our values of reusing, recycling and saving from landfill as well as helping to make creativity financially accessible to people. It really is a treasure trove up there! The funds we are generating from this go back into supporting craft activities for our community in the Craftship.

# THE CRAFTSHIP



Lots of changes took place in The Craftship this year too. We continued to host Kippy's paint your own pottery, workshops, clubs and some birthday parties. We even hired the space out for business development courses to organisations like Social Enterprise Kent. We really tried to diversify what this space could offer Ashford and help provide more small business support.

**We hosted - 224** regular clubs, **73** workshops, **3** private group sessions, **2** parties & **34** completely free sessions!

**2,257**  
Creative  
participants

**725**  
Free places

## Workshops & courses offered:

Fairy garden making, sew a pencil case, painting party, water colour day sessions, rag rugging, natural dying, lino printing, adventure maps, learn to crochet, craft-o-rama and many, many more.



The Craftship has also been the host space for many of our other projects throughout the year; it also provided essential storage and office space for our team.

We also worked with other organisations to offer creative projects and space for groups to come together.



**Workshop  
leaders 21**

**8 CSE  
Team Members**

**Regular Clubs:**  
Story, Craft & Play,  
Sketch Book Club,  
Yarn Club, Free  
Family Craft Club,  
Crystal Club, Art  
Club, Drink & Draw,  
Swig & Stitch and  
Home Ed Art Club.

## CASE STUDY: YARN CLUB

**6** Regular weekly participants **257** items made



**Projects:** Ashford food fest, Folkestone Poppy Project, Angels for William Harvey League of Friends shop, Scarf for Farrah the Fox (Carnival of the Baubles), ongoing donations such as blankets to William Harvey League of Friends shop, knitted shop window display for Made in Ashford, the friendship blanket made with knitted & crocheted squares, bags for patient trolleys in the William Harvey Hospital, gloves & hats for chemo patients, hats for the homeless, even a pineapple tea cosy. Participants also work on their own projects.



**pop-up small business incubator** Towards the end of the year we utilised the space as a pop-up small business incubator where businesses shared half of the shop to sell their products, share working in the shop and be part of our selling community. This pop up lasted until Christmas and it was a pleasure to collaborate and support these businesses to have a high street presence in the golden quarter. The businesses were Bare Bazaar, Crystals of the Moon, The Crafty shop, East of India, Pluckley Tea & Coffee, Aye Aye Fabrics, Tania Paige Designs and craft kits from various business. To implement this we had a refit, all the OSB! Lots of late nights sawing and drilling!



# Markets

In 2024 we held **14** Makers Markets with **77** creative businesses selling across the year **28** free spots given to young makers to help support them with their entrepreneurial endeavours.



## Sales

### E-commerce – website & Ebay for Change

In 2023 we saw an influx of sales in our Ebay for Change online shop and we have been working hard to add some of our pre-loved craft items that have been donated too.

We have also used our website platform to distribute free colouring in sheets again this year & activities to help creativity be more accessible to more folks.



**235**

parcels filled with orders were sent from our website & ebay.

Made in Ashford had a great early & mid-year, with sales smashing all of our previous records, Christmas came to us a bit late and our sales didn't match some of our more recent years trade. Despite this we still managed to have our **best year ever ending plus 8% on 2022!** This figure is based on Made in Ashford retail sales alone. Additional revenue streams such as The Craftship, The Makers Market and our website/Ebay for change have also had a positive increase this year.

### Paid roles

In 2023 we maintained our regularly paid core team of 6. We worked on lots of projects this year which is an amazing benefit as we get to work with even more creative freelancers on a paid adhoc basis developing skills and enhancing their income streams. We have worked with over 24 local creative businesses and artists to deliver a variety of projects this year.



Volunteers **8**  
volunteer hours **842**



### Funding Sources

Ashford Borough Council, Kent Community Foundation.

## Charitable donations

We produced a coronation activity book that we released online for free so that everyone with a printer could have access to it. We also gave away 15 of the books to people in our local community who could not buy a copy.

We have given away 29 activity books as school raffle prizes and for charities in our community. We went into Smarden Primary School and donated our time and materials to make lanterns with the children for Carnival of the Baubles lantern parade.

## Work Experience



Over the 2 shops and organisation we have had 4 work experience students from local schools this year and have taken on a regular volunteer from the Amber Trust.

We hope that this opportunity to work in our creative organisation inspires some young people to follow their dreams in community arts or creative business.



Folks can play a lottery where we receive a proportion of the profit. We have used this money to go towards free craft activities and subsidised sessions.

## Online Community



United Makers of Kent as well as our private MIA member groups.

## Awards

Finalists for best lifestyle store for Muddy Stiletto's Kent.



## Media coverage

- Appeared on BBC supporting Ashford's bid to get Eurostar stopping in Ashford again.
- One of our workshop leaders – Tania Paige Designs was selected to represent us on BBC Radio Kent and take a workshop live on air helping to promote our Xmas workshop activity in the Craftship.
- Muddy Stiletto's features throughout the year.
  - Kentish Express talking about the progression of a larger scale collaborative market for Ashford.

## Sustainability

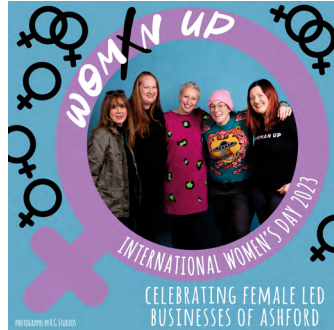
It is something that we can keep revisiting to see how we can be a more sustainable business. We hope that recycling craft items in the pre-loved space is helping to go a little bit further than we had previously. We also try to use these donated craft materials in our clubs instead of buying new where possible. This year we have not offered our members any additional support or advice to make their business more sustainable so we will endeavour to do this in 2024.



We have collaborated with: We have collaborated with: Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, Kippy's, Beehive, Ashford Unframed, Nest, Emergency Exit Arts, and all 73 Made in Ashford business and artists we have worked with throughout the year.

## International Women's Day campaign

We brought together a group of female founding businesses to show case and co-organise a campaign featuring them. We packaged up the campaign and circulated it to be shared across multiple local social media accounts to celebrate & highlight the achievements of local female biz women. We also were part of a week of events, workshops & offers that we brought together and created promo material for.



## The Coronation

We repurposed our jubilee bench project for the coronation which went down to Elwick Place for photo opportunities over the weekend. We created a coronation activity pack which was sold in store & online and was also made available online as a free printable download.



## Ashford Warm Spaces

A series of workshops throughout the colder months particularly in school holidays that were free of charge so families could come and create together free, be warm and free of judgement. This was funded by Ashford warm spaces.



## Big Green Week



We participated with Big Green Week with some funding from Ashford Borough Council to put on a number of green workshops alongside their larger scale event. We had 4 funded workshops and a further 4 workshops that we hosted throughout the

week. We used this opportunity to have a conversation with the community about how they could be more green and positively impact the environment.



## Climate Action



Trying to take steps in creating attention & educating people in how they can make a difference in their own lives is important to us, especially with the young. So, we used recycled & scrap materials to cover the window of the Craftship in green hearts decorated by the community for the whole of Feb. We also had instructions detailing steps anyone can take to help reduce their impact on climate change. All of our clubs & many members of the public walk ins got involved in this too.



## Mural Festival Fringe



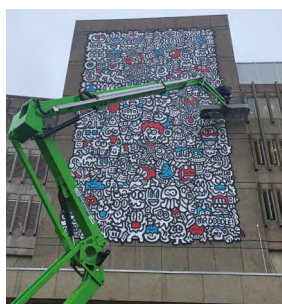
Ashford Unframed mural festival was a massive highlight of the year as we welcomed mural artists from across the country - and our own director Danielle Williamson of Tinybeagle - to change the face of our town. We were there taking photos, sharing them to socials and providing cups of tea for the artists (the awesome Charly Peters painted through snow flurries - she deserved a cuppa!).

Our main involvement in addition to being event cheerleaders was the fringe activity. We hosted a live window mural painting in the Craftship with local mural artist Aimee Gracefully Boho and 2 different activities that we ran on multiple occasions. One was making mural themed zines and creating Ashford's first Zine library in the Tap Room. The other was making a mini mural world from cardboard boxes which transformed the Coachworks into a play & creative space for 4 days throughout the launch week.

### Feedback from participants:

**"It is amazing that Ashford Borough Council is working with Made in Ashford & doing these community outreach sessions with the community. It really makes local people feel a part of it."**

**"This has been a brilliant way for our family to get creative together, we are not very arty but are all really proud of what we have made and that we are contributing to the start of a zine library in Ashford!"**



## Kent Big Weekend



This was an absolutely crazy fun packed weekend! We invited our most popular workshop & club leaders to do a taster session for free. This was advertised on the Kent Big Weekend website and folks who want tickets go into a ballot for them. The Craftship was rammed the whole weekend and it was such great fun sharing new experiences with first timers to art & craft practices from all over Kent. We cross promoted this event with Made in Ashford and we saw a rise in sales for the day. It was a great success to get people to know about our shops & social enterprise!



Over 100 people attended over the weekend, from Dartford, Gravesend, Dover, Birchington, Bromley, Folkestone and Canterbury as well as loads from Ashford. The feedback was that they were going to make a day of it, go for lunch and browse the shops. Made in Ashford alone made a 100% gain in sales across that weekend also monitored by tokens from the workshops we used to drive sales back. These folks all parked in council car parks with a few local walkers. Many had never been to Ashford. That campaign had record breaking interest & sign up which is fantastic advertising for our town.

## Street Furniture



Probably our most prominent project to date and we absolutely loved this one! The Love Ashford team tasked our creative social enterprise with painting 28 pieces of street furniture in 2 different designs that our creative leader Danielle of Tinybeegle drew from her brain. A team of 13 worked over 3 weeks in a mad heat wave! Some items we painted in situ under newly purchased garden umbrellas with the odd cold drink gifted



by members of the public when they stopped for a chat. Many pieces we painted in what is now Little Land & other empty units in Park Mall. When they were all placed in their new homes of Middle Row & Bank Street we were so proud. They just change the look & feel of the town with the wonderful murals that had been created. They looked really good for the whole season and some pieces can still be found around Ashford now.



## In the Loop



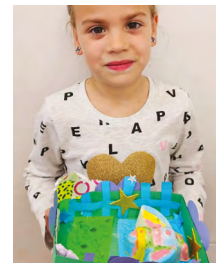
This was a project we got involved with, brought to us by KCC to help raise local awareness of the benefits of recycling and to use

the new dual recycling bins located in Ashford. We ran a series of workshops using recycled plastic bottles to make little planters and for participants to contribute to a bigger piece that would go into businesses with information about the new bins.



## The Active Project

We hosted a number of creative workshops funded by the active project. These were aimed at families to come together & get creative together building bonds & making art!



## Art for U

This project has been generously funded by Kent Community Foundation. Through a series of art & craft sessions we are bringing together members of the resettled Ukrainian community here in Ashford becoming friends and having



space to create together. We started the sessions before Xmas kicking off with building a giant fox lantern that the group processed at Carnival of the Baubles. We then held some Xmas craft sessions at the Beehive. This project will continue into 2024.



## Ashford's Food & Drink Festival



This wonderful event which was aimed at support Ashford's food & evening economy was created and managed by the Love Ashford team. Of course, we could not let a town centre event roll by without supporting it, so we themed all of our clubs and workshops with a foodie theme, utilising this time to spread the word about all the other things that were happening in town for this time. We even had some food themed give aways with stickers & badges that we made. Oh yeah and we made a giant lollipop window display. We kinda liked that theme!



## Farrah the Fox



Farrah was not one of our projects but 3 of our team went to help on her and we were so very, very proud of our small part in this awesome puppet that I wanted to include it in our report. Farrah is a giant mechanical fox puppet made by the incredible artists at Emergency Exit Arts and she was a piece commissioned by Historic England to tour the country for High Street Fest. Our team, led by the talented designer and textile lead, stitched the layers upon layers of netting onto the skin to make the fur and then hand stitched the skin onto the metal framework skeleton structure. Even that small part of the process was hard, long work but look at Farrah! She was worth it!



## Carnival of the Baubles



Oh, and don't we just love this project! It is funded by Ashford Borough Council and Emergency Exit Arts have the contract to deliver this. We have been working closely with them since year 1 of this event. This year we were given a chunk of the budget and responsibilities for our organisation to manage. This was great experience for us and it has helped us generate some additional funds for what we do here in Ashford. We worked with 13 local artists, 11 of whom are Made in Ashford regular makers/artists/freelancers and live in the borough.

This year the theme was enchanted forest, another artistic lead by our director Dan and we really pushed our ability to make the best lanterns yet. We also worked with the biggest number of people ever, the parade had the biggest crowd and it was without doubt the top year. We are very proud of how this event has developed and how we have been such a big part in it. I am personally so, so proud of the team of artists who really push themselves & are so dedicated to making the event in their hometown the best. They really push the extra mile - thank you guys.

We went into **7** primary schools, **1** secondary school, worked with **8** community groups, Ashford College and had **4** open workshops in County Square with **233** participants and held **4** open call big build sessions.



# Our social impact

**We are a little events factory! Running workshops & clubs all the time. We hold so many events and our shop alone is a little footfall driver to Ashford town centre. Many of our customers say it is the key reason they come into town.**



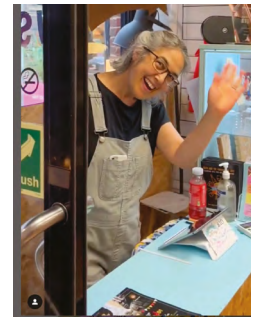
The Craftship holds a range of creative group attended by some of our community who really need this service. Most sessions are subsidised (from our other services such as selling donated craft materials), so we can pay group leaders & offer free spaces to those who need it. We hold a space for people all of all



ages to come together and create without judgement. Friendships have been formed and many of these people use the town for other things while they are here. Many have told us how important the clubs have been for their mental health, having somewhere they can come each week (or more) to feel safe, welcome and loved. We are a safe, warm space for anyone who needs it. We are working with KCC to be added to the directory of local services supporting the elderly & mental health issues in the area as part of the community catalyst project - a social prescribing programme.



Made in Ashford has had a substantial impact on wellbeing for makers & helped create a sense of pride in our town. Many of our customers tell us it is the best shop in Ashford they also tell us they would expect to see our shop in Brighton, not Ashford. We have seen a steady increase in shop floor sales over the years of between 8% - 20% year on year growth. This is proof that our



community loves this shop & keeps coming back. We again pride ourselves on being an inclusive, safe space for people and spend a large portion of our time chatting to customers going above and beyond. We have even on occasion taken customers to bus stops to help them, tried to find their family with them, fixed sentimental gifts for them. Amongst so many other things, providing a level of care within our community that you just would not get from a multiple.



Our shop contains 70 small businesses, 25 of which work in the shop & are all local people who deeply care about our community. All these people are cheerleaders for Ashford. We have had folk from Margate & Folkestone say how much they love Ashford because of the wonderful people here.



Our pool of businesses has become a lovely community of friends who go out locally in Ashford supporting bars, the escape room, the cinema, cafes & events in the area. We also use these facilities when we are working in town and are most likely to pop to the shops in Ashford as are all our workshop attendees. These people are total ambassadors for the town and we are often like the Ashford tourist information centre, signposting people to other relevant establishments & things to do. It is important to us to support other businesses, which we use our social media, word of mouth & physical presence to do.



# Thanks & Mentions

**Every maker and creator who sells in Made in Ashford, puts on a workshop or joins us as a freelance artist** - THANK YOU! It is so beautiful to have such amazing people around us and as part of our organisation. Your power makes me feel empowered!

**Ashford Borough Council/Love Ashford team** - Thank you for getting us involved in some really brilliant projects this year. Also, thanks for those of you working behind the scenes doing stuff. Shout out to Keli, Makala & Christina in the LA team particularly for working hard for Ashford town centre.

**Andrew Osbourne (ABC)** - for fighting our corner and believing in us from the beginning. You have given me a lot of extra support this year and I know you don't have to. It is very kind.

**Chris Dixon (ABC)** - Another incredible support for us, me individually and most importantly creativity in our town. What a year for you with such an amazing mural project that changed the look, feel and footfall in the town. A guy who always has the time for folks, tries so hard to join folks together & help. Well done & thank you.

**Cllr. Steve Campkin** - Thank you so much for supporting us through some difficulties, listening to me, advising us & working on the inside. We had a complicated year and with out your help we might not be looking forward to another one.

**Emergency Exit Arts** - It has been such a brilliant experience working closely with EEA on a number of local projects and we have learnt so much. We do feel very privileged to be developed by such an amazing, accomplished organisation. This is a massive thank you to the whole team at EEA who are just fantastic, talented and so much fun!

**Hannah Rushforth** - You have given us so much support particularly in the last year and have shared your knowledge with us which is massively appreciated. You have definitely been a force in our growth and we thank you for that impact!

**Danielle Williamson (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Tinybeegle)** - Look at your year! In this report how many name drops?! Such a brilliant creative lead with so much talent. You have really helped elevate our organisation and what we can deliver. You work incredibly hard and the results are always top notch. Thanks for this and all the other stuff in between. We all know you do a ton for CSE & me.

**Charlotte North (E-commerce manager & Charlotte's Photography)** - Another year working on the website, taking photos and being our back of house admin extraordinaire. How would we survive without you?! Thank you so much for knowing exactly what is going on all the time, I am glad someone does!

**Sue Jones (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Mulberry Glass Art)** - Super Sue, you are just a wonder! Rotas, window dressing, voice on the ground, sales superstar, friend and so much more. Another vital part of our organisation.

**Carla Richardson (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Ellabee)** - The business voice of experience in our board, the one who pulls it all together when we need it most then says it best and makes sure we go through with it. A hugely practical person who comes to the rescue at the most important times.

**Tina Allen (Keep it in a Frame)** - you get this year's joint award for being the most flexible person for covering the shop! But that is not all! Grafting on the ebay for change store and website as well as doing anything else we need. Fantastic work buddy!

**Katy Morrison (Katy & The Bear)** - Another year of growing markets and super making through carnival times. It has been a lovely year with you with plenty of ideas and ways to develop this side of our soc ent. Looking forward to making some new big ideas come true in 2024!

**Debz (Pancake Pet)** - Another great year for you! I have absolute loved having you involved in pretty much all of the projects we have done this year. You are so hard working and despite it being a turbulent year at the Craftship you have always done your best to make it work. You always go the extra mile and talk through all of the ideas & woes that go with this job! You have been an awesome friend and excellent workshops leader/co-ordinator. 24 is going to be an even better one, I can sense it!

**Kim Dawkins (Melissa's mum)** - Nice one Muvva! You have taken on extra responsibility this year heading our new Pre- Loved/ Scrap store upstairs in Made in Ashford as well as running the regular yarn club. So many volunteer hours from you which is amazing.

**Paola (Charlotte's mum)** - Thank you for all the people you help at yarn club and for covering the club. You have been a massive supporter from the start and we really appreciate it. You also made Charlotte who is awesome, so thanks for that too!

**Zoe (The Craftyshop)** - Another super person who has come to our rescue with shop cover so much this year as well as helping manage the market on the ground when we need a bit of cover for that too. You are one of the kindest, most lovely people and we love you for it!

**Steph (Ugly bug Steph)** - Thank you for all of your flexibility and coming to the rescue of our rota on so many occasions this year. Also, you make the most awesome products, I probably shouldn't have favourites but I do and you are one of 'em!

**Tania (Tania Page Designs)** - oh my gosh, where would I be without you absolutely sorting our book keeping, finances and being a brilliant friend. We/I am so lucky to have you. Looking forward to having you back around a bit more in 24!

**Denise Hennessy-Mills** - Our friend and Sketchbook Club regular. Thanks for all your support. Coming to workshops and events and stepping in to lead the Sketchbook club when we needed cover. Legend!

**Russell Wood** - The evening shop moves, looking after our children so I can work, all the carrying, the help with shop fits, the cuddles and being there for me every day. You are the person that makes all of this possible. This organisation would not exist if it was not for the effort you put in to our family & believing in my dreams.

**Jas** - Our totally awesome volunteer, you are super and have got right involved with so many of the things we get up to.

# The Future

Craftship Enterprise CIC is a hyper local social enterprise with community & creativity at our heart. We would love to offer all of what we do under one roof in the future. It is our aim to continue & grow the Made in Ashford shop brand.

We want to rebrand our markets & grow them to support more makers, drive footfall around & spread the positive word of our town.

I see a large part of our future as being an arts organisation, delivering projects which bring in additional funds to our soc ent while also supporting local creatives & creativity in our community. This is already happening as we become a go to organisation in Ashford. The more projects going through our organisation the stronger benefit to Ashford's creative community, local freelance artists and a bigger sense of pride in our town to the wider community.

Our passion is Ashford & we want to see it blossom further into the beautiful town that it is.

Personally, I really love it here, it saved me and I know the positive impact this place has on so many people, I see it firsthand every day. I will continue to give everything I can to helping support this town/community & to help it grow.

**Thank you to you lot! Our customers, clients, participants, beneficiaries, grant funders, post readers, Facebook/Insta likers, cheerleaders you are all a part of this and what we do.**

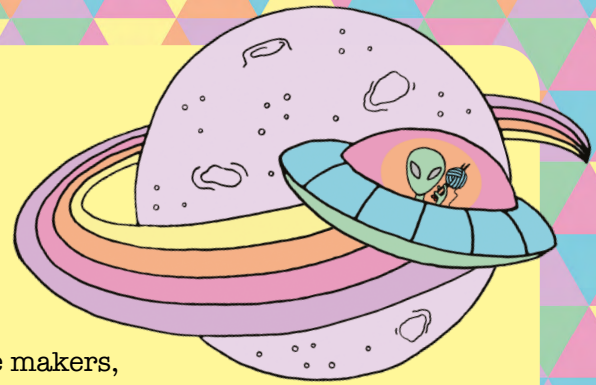


**We care and love this town and we would not be here doing what we love without you all!**

**I look forward to another year of fun, colour & positive impact in our town - It is not easy in Ashford and that is why it is so important!**

*Melissa Dawkins*

**- Founder Made in Ashford/The Craftship,  
Co-director of Craftship Enterprise CIC  
& Aye Aye.**



**Made in Ashford and the Craftship are so much more than shops! We are a community and you ALL help to make us what we are. From the customers buying just a card to those who simply like our posts on social media, if you are there rooting for us, you are a part of all this and the good we can do!**



**Unit 26  
Park Mall  
Ashford, Kent**



**Unit 1  
Park Mall  
Ashford, Kent**

[www.madeinashford.com](http://www.madeinashford.com) find us on Facebook/Instagram/Twitter  
01233 634418 info@madeinashford.com