



ACHIEVEMENTS 2021

Learn, Create, Share

Craftship Enterprise (CSE) CIC manages Made in Ashford and The Craftship:

We are a social enterprise which supports local creative businesses and creativity in the community. We are not for profit and reinvest back into these areas.



It has been another tricky year in retail as we did not get to reopen our bricks and mortar shop until April and covid has loomed all year throwing up many new challenges in our field. Despite this we created some great ways to keep our social enterprise fulfilling its goals to support businesses and creativity in our community.

Our beliefs and values through 2021:
Community, supporting local businesses,
sustainability, to inspire, be colourful!

2021 has had some fantastic highlights. The biggest of them all was that we were able to open our 2nd site, The Craftship, where we have held many workshops and creative events. We have had regular makers markets throughout the year showcasing more local creative businesses. We have been heavily involved with and formed many new projects locally including content creation (craft kits for children of families using food banks), summer of craft, Fabric of Ashford, Carnival of the Baubles and the Banner project!.....

Made in Ashford

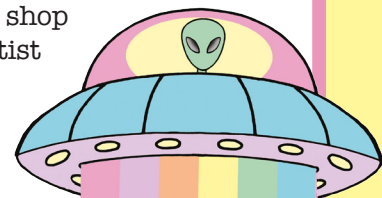
Made in Ashford saw a mini refit at the beginning of the year where more entry level spaces were created and extra shelving was put in for some businesses. This helped us increase the number of businesses inside Made in Ashford that we could support and bring into our community of creatives and makers. We also built new window display props using OSB to match our shops and have a back of window structure built to separate the back of the window and shop floor. This has increased sales and developed continuity for our brand aesthetic. We had 4 handmade window displays created by Melissa and Danielle including bauble disco for Christmas, mushrooms for autumn, rainbow shooting stars for reopening/ the summer and Valentine's day/ Mother's day.



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

THE CRAFTSHIP

July 2021 saw the opening of The Craftship, the newest addition to the fleet and our new creative hub. Located in a fantastic triple fronted unit, opposite Made in Ashford, we took on this new space with the aim to further support creativity in the community, complementing what we were already doing in the Made in Ashford collaborative shop. The unit saw a full shop refit as we took over a shell that needed so much work. Myself, my Dad, a paid artist (Tinybeagle), cleaner and a load of volunteers worked so hard to create an eye-catching, clean and fun creative space that was dynamic, modular and could be transformed. This effort took a long time to achieve on a shoe string budget and with a lot of hands-on hard graft from our members. We are now able to offer an accessible and inclusive space for our creative workshops and for community groups and creatives to hire along with an area to sell kits and craft components. The space has been very welcome in Ashford, well loved and well used since opening. It was once intended to be a creative hub and has almost grown into a town community centre with of course a creative flare! I am really excited to see this place flourish more in 2022.



Since opening we have:

- Enjoyed making & creating with over **2000** participants!
- Had galleries for 3 artists.
- Provided space for 22 workshop leaders to teach at. Established 3 weekly craft and art clubs for all ages.
- Enabled 15 national & local craft kit creating businesses to sell from our new space.
- Hosted 1 community kids art showcase. Hosted business coaching sessions.





Markets

This year our markets became regular, with them taking place each month in Park Mall. We hosted 9 markets which supported 57 creative businesses and we gave 2 charity pitches away to local good causes.

During the post xmas lockdown we also hosted 2 virtual markets and 3 live shopping events online.

E-commerce – website

This year we tried to grow our online presence and represent most of the Made in Ashford makers. It is a snapshot of our shop and it has increased in growth in 2021. We have added more products and new sellers. Our website also provides a sales platform for our workshops and makers market.

It holds our free creativity archives and has regular blog updates so we can tell everyone about our news.



Ebay for change

At the end of the year we were lucky enough to be selected to join the ebay for change programme, where ebay is supporting social enterprises on their platform for 12 months. By securing this help, we have already seen a rise in online sales through the platform and it is very early days! It has also created a job for one of our members to manage this.

Sales

Made in Ashford was closed for the first 3 months so ended on minus 16% for the year against 2019 (our last normal trading year and best year). But that is not really a fair comparison, so if we took the money in 2021 for the first 3 months as 2019 we would have ended plus 3%, which I feel is great growth for a shop and website in these difficult times. We have also managed to create and increase some of our other revenue streams in 2021 such as the Makers Market & hiring the facilities in The Craftship. All things combined our community interest company is beginning to have a more stable financial model behind it.

Paid Roles

This year has seen an increase in our regular paid members with more hours and more people on our team. We now have 10 regular paid jobs and many more adhoc for projects and creative work.

Funding Sources



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Projects:

Awesome 

Content CREATION

Content Creation - Free Creativity with TNLCF

Content Creation was a project aiming to bring craft, creativity and fun to your home for free while we were in lockdown. Our artists and kit creators worked in various different ways to make creativity accessible in multiple ways to varying age groups. This project was funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and Craftship Enterprise CIC.

800 Craft kits, 200 activity packs & 200 colouring books with 200 packs of colouring pencils were given out for **free** at local food banks, children's centres, community centres and local schools for children across the borough.



19 local artists were paid to participate in this project. You can support this project and purchase our activity and colouring books online or in store. The profits are reinvested in to creativity in the community.



Rainbow bench



The seasonally changing bench by Park Mall crafted and created by us! This year the Masters of the Yarniverse community collaborated to make the best yarn rainbow! It was made from 136 knitted & crocheted squares, it took 150 hours to create and it was enjoyed by so many people who walked by it and had their photo taken. I heard people chatting about grannies knitting them jumpers and how they wish they could crochet, it was a wonderful conversation starter and statement installation in Park Mall shopping centre.

Banners of Ashford

This project was run by Emergency Exit Arts for Love Ashford where we made banners with local community groups that were displayed in local shop windows. The talented banner artist Ed Hall tutored us in his art and was the lead artist on the project. 8 community groups produced banners and 6 Made in Ashford members were paid artists.



Summer of free craft

This was a Craftship Enterprise project funded by Arts Council Funding. This was a celebration of craft over the summer holidays. Anyone could come and create with us for free. It aimed to build connections, form a sense of community, enhance local well-being and encourage spend in local



businesses as we emerged from lockdowns & the pandemic.

8 paid workshop leaders, 8 volunteers, over 500 participants in over 90 FREE sessions!



Fabric of Ashford

This project was a collaboration between Craftship Enterprise and Emergency Exit Arts for Love Ashford. The concept for this project was from us at team CSE and EEA provided a lead artist, planning, expertise, the recovery poem and additional equipment on the workshop days. This was funded by Arts Council funding and Love Ashford. The aim

was to bring colour and community back to the Highstreet in an interactive, growing installation in the centre of the town consisting of community led bunting and banners made from donations by Fabric of Ashford. 3 Made in Ashford Artists hosted 6 workshops with 39 participants to make the banners. 4 Made in Ashford Artists and 2 EEA artists worked on the open workshop days with 136 participants. An additional Made in Ashford member benefitted financially by making some of the equipment and display items for the workshops and installation.

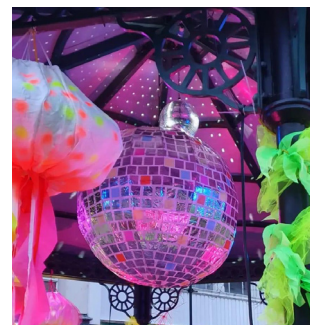


Shine on Ashford – Carnival of the Baubles

A return to Carnival of the Baubles after a covid year out! This year we named it Shine on Ashford after the Shine banner was stolen from the Fabric of Ashford installation. We took that and celebrated it. This year our theme was shiny disco and migratory sea creatures. We wanted to celebrate the migration stories of local residents and used this idea to choose the giant baubles with local businesses where they were displayed until procession night.



7 Made in Ashford members were paid artists in this project. We went into approximately 6 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, worked with 3 community groups, had 4 local volunteers and had 4 open workshops at the Craftship. Approximately 2,000 people came to watch or join in the light procession. It is the highlight of our year!

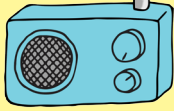


Free Craft for children at the William Harvey Hospital

8 volunteers put together craft packs for children who were staying in the children's ward at our local hospital. We funded the materials and some were donated to us.



Media Coverage



Inside Kent magazine,
Radio Ashford twice, Radio
Kent, Kentish Express,
BBC South East,
Bira Retail.



Awards

Winner of the Retail District Award, a national award from Modern Retail (Greenwich Market were the previous winners), runner up Ashford Business Award for Creative Digital Category.

CREATING A COMMUNITY



We were asked to lead a small series of discussions for the south east creatives working with our members to explore different themes online. We choose Facebook lives as our easily accessible platform and involved 4 of our members who were paid for their expertise.

Spring/Autumn Fair key note speaker

It was a privilege to be asked to speak at the NEC for the Spring/Autumn Fair representing Ashford town centre, collaborative shops like Made in Ashford and social enterprises on the same stage as Theo Paphitis later on in the day.

Holly Tucker

we were so lucky to be chosen to meet Holly Tucker MBE and have a business power hour with her in her pop up shop in Box Park, Shoreditch. She was super inspiring and gave us some great advice and direction when we needed it most.



Development

2021 was all about development and how we could work towards an improved social enterprise which had clear values and goals. It was also very important to share the journey, be open and honest with our members and enjoy their involvement in our growth. I had coaching sessions with Leona from Indie Roller and also became an Indie Roller member to support us to get here. ABC have funded further business training with CPG and we are digging into the figures of the social enterprise currently so an even more solid financial plan and strategy will emerge in 2022 for us. This will be critical for our future and expansion plans (yes we will take over the world, or just Ashford)!

Social media We have a good social media following with 11k followers over both our main platforms Instagram and Facebook. We have used our voice to showcase products, promote makers, talk about our events, support other creative enterprise and share local stories. We have seen good engagement and conversations taking place on our socials, resulting in sales and additional interactions for our members and town.





Community support

Supporting our community and local businesses is strong in our beliefs. So we gave away 50 activity books to the whip & lolly trail and 18 to the community for raffle prizes. We have sold tickets on behalf of Ashford Choral Society. Made in Ashford upstairs has been used by creatives for planning a comedy!

One of our favourite and most important things we do to support our local community is shop with them and shout about them on our social media (and in real life, you can probably hear us shouting!)

Our social impact

We have continued to give creativity to our community which can help with the symptoms of anxiety, depression, loneliness and even dementia, according to research. It aids well being, builds connection and makes our town a good place to be taking pressure off other services locally.

We are improving the quality of life for young people in the area and adults too. We work with many community groups and projects including the youth reparation project, where we help young people give back to our community and we hope they see there can be a better path for them in life. We have also worked with other young peoples groups, home ed parents, resettled refugees and the forensic outreach liaison to make art works and be part of a creative group in our town centre. We hope working with these groups will help them take pride in our town, build connections and feel part of our wonderful community.

The Craftship, as we have seen, has helped drive town centre footfall and local spend as people use it as part of a day out and, in addition, often eat and shop as well. This in turn is helping to bring other businesses revenue and aiding our town regeneration effort.

Made in Ashford, our Makers Market, Art Projects and e-commerce are helping support local creative businesses. 90% of our makers are female, most of whom are parents trying to make a living around their parental responsibilities. One of our aims is to help support these local businesses to make a living from their businesses and what they love doing. This year we helped get a step closer to this goal!

Sustainability

We have always tried to be as eco as possible and encourage our makers to make more sustainable choices when buying components or packaging.

We have taken lots of donations in the Craftship for craft

equipment and fabric saving them from landfill. We use them in our workshops for the community or sell them to raise funds for our not-for-profit organisation. We have also made some swaps in what we purchase for the shops this year, trying to buy more locally and less plasticity!



Safety

The safety of our team and community has been a major concern this year. We decided to join Ashford Partnership Against Crime and have found that an incredibly supportive and reassuring group to be a part of. 2021 was a bit rocky as we had a few incidents with criminal damage. Twice to the Fabric of Ashford installation and we lost our seasonally changing community rainbow bench to arson when it was decorated as a rainbow. Despite these disappointing events, the community of Ashford can't be beaten and we were gifted a brand-new handmade bench by Oyster Bay furniture to replace the one we lost.

Thanks & Mentions

The amazing Made in Ashford tenants – A huge thank you to all of the Made in Ashford members who have come through another tough year with positivity, enthusiasm, love and trust. It has been a leap of faith to stick with us for another year and many of you have put in the extra effort helping with the Craftship, doing extra shifts and getting stuck in!

Ashford Borough Council/Love Ashford team – Another year of support without which we would not be here! It is thanks to you we have been able open our 2nd site, grow our market and get involved with and create all these amazing art projects for our community!

Danielle Williamson (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Tinybeegle) – You hard grafting, creative, amazing individual. My wing woman, my sounding board, my co-pilot of this crazy Craftship. There is no other creative team mate like you. You just get it and work so hard with such talent. Ashford is lucky to have you! It has been a privilege to watch you flex your artistic finn this year.

Charlotte North (E-commerce manager and Charlotte's Photography) – Another year of working very hard and doing your jobs so well and precisely. Liaising with the team and managing the stock has been getting more tricky and you have done it very professionally. This year we are going to up it even more though – get ready!

Sue Jones (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Mulberry Glass Art) – Rita legend! (the rota as we call her for those of you not in team MIA!) I am so grateful you do this every month and you do it so well. You are an amazing ambassador for our shop and a sunshine in our lives. Your positivity and guidance are immeasurable in all of this.

Carla Richardson (Co-Director Craftship Enterprise CIC & Ellabee) – The behind-the-scenes stuff does not get enough credit and you work so hard for us, making sure all the back-office stuff is sorted on time and in good order. I am so grateful for this. I love our chats and sharing of ideas, your expertise in our field is so wide and it is the most enormous help. You are such a good person and I appreciate all the times you check in, it means the world.

Tina Allen (Keep it in a Frame) – For another year of website work and now ebay for change extras. For always being a safe pair of hands and all the kindness and feedback you give us all. Such a great teammate.

Katy Morrison (Katy & The Bear) – Thank you for totally smashing market management and building a successful arm of our social enterprise. You have also done lots of extras this year and been a major supporter of ours. You too have been a great advisor and I mega appreciate your effort and love for what we are doing here. You have made us some banging info graphics this year too!

Tania Hills (Tania Paige Designs) – You have just been gifted from the heavens to help us reach the next level. I could not be more grateful to you for scooping up all the boring jobs and being a safe pair of hands for all of these things. It has been a weight off my mind and will enable us to move forward with some expansions in the future as a direct result of your help and understanding.

Anneli Woolls (My Tiny Little Studio) – Another year of programming workshops, learning and working really hard. What you do is so important and crucial in the building of the Craftship. You are also an amazing guide for me and I have learnt so much from you. I really love our chats and with your help you have helped me become a better person and leader.

Kim Dawkins (Melissa's mum) – Yes Mumra! Another legendary year for you. You are always on hand to help with what ever we are doing in the Craftship, there is nothing you won't get stuck into. Another year of child care, proof reading, giving advice and gifting me the knowledge of your experience of management/processes/organisation/general skills! I hope you manage to teach me to crochet in 22 as well.

Paula & Platti (A Little Pot of) – You guys are always awesome, such fun and come to our rota rescue all the time. You guys will be missed in 2022.

Della – Another cheery human who is flexible and comes to our rescue. Thank you so much for all the above and beyond that you do.

Annie & Ben Prior – thank you for all the volunteer work you did in the Craftship build. It was such a help when the job seemed like it was never going to end!

Dave Dawkins (Melissa's dad) – thank you so much for all of your carpentry skills, drilling 1000 holes to make bespoke OSB peg board in the Craftship and being on hand to help with any building queries I had along the way.

Russell Wood – who has been a super help working every week in the evening doing odd jobs, moving things, cleaning up, looking after the children, giving the best hugs when it has been tough and believing in me. It has been a long journey for over 6 years and he has always been by my side, without him there would be no Made in Ashford or Craftship Enterprise CIC.

And last but definitely not least! - Every single person who has supported us by shopping in Made in Ashford, attending one of our workshops, donating fabric/craft materials, coming to chat to us, offering encouragement, commenting or just liking one of our posts on social media – Thank you! It makes such a difference to us and helps us do the work we do in Ashford & beyond. We care and love this town and we would not be here doing what we love without you all!

Made in Ashford and the Craftship are so much more than shops
- We are a community that you are a part of!

“My little girl and I have loved every craft we have booked. It has bonded us closer together. You are a light in dark times. With all my heart, thank you.”

- workshop participant
2021

I ♥ ASHFORD

Craftship Enterprise CIC is not for profit and the money we generate is invested back into our goals of supporting creativity in the community and supporting creative business.

2022 is looking bright already. We have our 1st kickstarter who will be joining us very soon and I hope will bring some additional support and consistency to our team. We will be really getting things in order this year and hope to obtain more funding for lots more projects to support you and our community. There are so many ideas for workshops, parties and subscription boxes! It is a jam-packed year of events and we hope to be involved in loads of Ashford's creative offerings! Watch this space.



Thank you for reading our report.

I can't wait to see what the next year brings for us and telling you all about it - Together we can craft a better future!

Melissa Dawkins

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



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