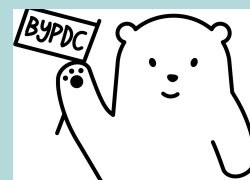




Bearwood Young Person's Design Company

EVALUATION REPORT

WRITTEN BY DIANDRA MCCALLA



Introduction

Bearwood Young Person's Design Company (BYPDC) was developed by Bearwood Community Hub with support from Grand Union staff as a response to the Community Initiatives Fund established by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner with the intention of "providing pandemic-recovery related support and provide activity which has a focus on mental health, re-establishing confidence in emerging from lockdown or diversionary activities that are on-line or socially distanced."

Set against the backdrop of the global pandemic, the project invited a group of young people aged 16 to 18 who are local to Bearwood to develop their own business. The vision was to create an environment where the young people were able to collaborate to develop a product of their choosing from initial concept and branding to production and distribution. The Bearwood Young Person's Design Company was devised with the intention of also developing an awareness of the skills required for a creative social enterprise. There was also the ambition for establishing a template that can be replicated with others as each cohort becomes a role model for the subsequent groups to work collectively on a number of products. The initial activity took place between August and October 2020 and consisted of predominantly online workshops via Zoom due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Bearwood Young Person's Design Company was devised to enable young people to form a localised company to design products for, by and with the community in Bearwood. The project directly addresses some of the current challenges facing young people arising from the coronavirus pandemic with rising unemployment coupled with a deterioration of mental health. According to government statistics, "581,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed in June-August 2020, an increase of 35,000 from the previous quarter and an increase of 87,000 from the year before. This is the highest level of youth unemployment since 2016" (Foley, 2020). Additionally, the decreased socialisation and complete upheaval in everyone's daily lives that the pandemic brought about, has affected the youth mental health with "the proportion of adults experiencing poor mental health has increased by 80 per cent among 18-29-year olds during the pandemic" (Foundation, 2020). This information raises concern about the long-lasting impact on both youth career prospects and mental wellbeing, particularly as there is no end in sight for the current situation. How communities, education and training providers and other organisations respond then becomes crucial in order to be able to support young people through these unprecedented times.

THE AIMS OF BEARWOOD YOUNG PERSON'S DESIGN COMPANY WERE TO:

- Work with a group of young people to design a new local young persons' company brand for the young people of Bearwood. We will create workshops that focus upon collaborative working approaches and create space for the young people to form how we do this.
- We will design a series of unique products for both local and on-line shopping markets looking to capture data.
- We will gather and share skill sets within the group - e.g. social media, photography, videography, business development.
- We will work with an external evaluator to measure success and offer recommendations for future developments of the design company.

COMMENTS FROM ALICE O'ROURKE BYPDC PROJECT LEAD AND ASSOCIATE CURATOR AT GRAND UNION

"With the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company, we wanted to provide young people with the opportunity to learn something useful and worthwhile during a time where it felt like these opportunities were far and few. The pandemic massively impacted upon young people – what with exams and results day, which has had a knock-on effect on job opportunities and university prospects. Not only did we want the young people to learn how to set up a business from a creative perspective, but we also wanted to give them something to focus on during this unstable time."



Scope of the evaluation

The scope of this evaluation will focus on the impact of Bearwood Young Person's Design Company for the young people involved, the workshop facilitators, the local community and Bearwood Community Hub in reference to the objectives mentioned above.

In view of the nature and size of the project, I decided to use the following methods of evaluation; observations, workshop documentation (for example videos, photographs and group chat transcript) discussions and questionnaires. Through these methods, I intend to provide a well-rounded impression of how the project went, and the experience the stakeholders involved had of it.

This will help to establish the whether there is potential for future development of the design company beyond the current stage of the design company programme.

The evaluation will be used to:

- Monitor the impact of the project against Bearwood Community Hub's intended outcomes as part of Community Initiatives Fund reporting requirements.
 - Identify areas of success that could be replicated and areas which could be developed and improved for future Bearwood Community Hub projects and the continuation of Bearwood Young Person's Design Company.
 - Assess the extent to which this project has met the directives of the Community Initiatives Fund regarding providing activity "which has a focus on mental health, re-establishing confidence in emerging from lockdown or diversionary activities that are on-line or socially distanced" for the benefit of people in Bearwood (located in the ward of Smethwick).
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Findings

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The project was planned with the outcome of a finalised design and brand identity developed by the participants with the intention to create the products for sale within the community. The project timeline (see Appendix A) allowed for a programme of workshops which were both linear and iterative accumulating in the finish product design with accompanying marketing ideas. In the project timeline, the initial sessions were designed for the young people to get to know each other, to understand more about their values and interests as well as developing collaborative working practices. The plans then moved into a development phase with idea conception and refinement, creating a business plan and considering the social function and sustainability of the product and refining designs. The next phase was the practical making beginning with test ideas, followed by the final product. The final stage of the product development process is the branding, marketing and distribution.

The planned sessions focused on reflection and encouraging the young people to actualise their own ideas based on enriching creative agency. As the outcome was not predetermined, this allowed space for the participants to use their collective creativity to conceive a project based on what they consider to be important to them.

In the process of finding participants for the project, Bearwood Community Hub consulted with Lordswood Girls' School and Shireland Collegiate Academy, two schools local to the

Bearwood area. From the call out, five female participants were recruited, four from Lordswood Girls' School and one from Shireland Collegiate Academy. As the project began recruitment so close to the summer holidays and the schools had reduced contact with their students, the timing though meant that the support from the schools didn't provide the results wanted. The timing of the start of the project was also an issue for the school inclusion department from Birmingham who were initially interested in the project but couldn't commit given the timeline. The young women were all keen to take part in the programme, while four of them indicated that they usually tend to engage in extracurricular activities outside of school. With more time available before the start of the project, there could have been more opportunity to expand the call out to wider networks within the Bearwood community which may have yielded a more diverse cohort, particularly reaching young people who identify as disabled as well as those from a lower socio-economic and/or ethnically diverse background. There is also the potential to engage those young people who would not typically engage in social enterprise or creative projects, possibly due to being considered 'disengaged'. This could then have increased the social activity for other young people in the local community with great need, particularly in such an unstable socio-political climate. On the other hand, the lower socio-economic demographic could present potential difficulties with access to the internet or computer which must also be considered with the project taking place predominantly online.

Workshop attendance ranged from all in attendance, whilst the lowest was 2. At the start of the project in August, there was an easing of UK lockdown restrictions which created more opportunities for the young people to engage with other activities. With the small group size, some of the activities, especially the discussions, were difficult to maintain at times and having more young people may have made the young people be less obliged to contribute consistently to the conversations. In spite of this, the young participants still benefited from the project as they were able to receive more individualised support and had more freedom to develop artistically. Although not all team members attended every session, they formed a positive collaborative team working practice particularly via the WhatsApp group and sharing of tasks as a group so that the overall outcomes were achieved.



WORKSHOP DELIVERY

A crucial element to the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company workshops are the facilitators. While there were clear objectives for each session, the workshops focussed on allowing the young people to have agency and ownership of their product. The facilitators offered provocations and examples from their own professional experiences and expertise to allowing the young people to consider a variety of factors and approaches in the development of their product.

For instance, in the session delivered by Amerah Saleh entitled, 'Working together: approaches to collaborative practice', Amerah asked a series of questions to the group in order to stimulate conversation and reflection about their working habits and issues they are passionate about. The relaxed tone to the workshop created an atmosphere where the young people felt open to share as much as they wanted and listened and/or commented respectfully. Some of the young women even encouraged those who were more hesitant to speak. Through the course of this workshop the group established a document of boundaries and guidelines for working together called 'Young Person's Design Company Rules to Success' (see Appendix B).

In each of the following workshops as the discussions and activities continued, it was interesting to observe the increase in confidence the young people had talking to each other about their opinions and ideas compared with at the start.

The positive influence from each facilitator sharing their own expertise, particularly the creative design and making workshops from Janet Gray, Sarah Taylor Silverwood and Keith Dodds was the crucial in encouraging the young people to actualise their own creative ideas and perspectives. As the workshops progressed, the group were able to be conscious of core business considerations such as an understanding of coherent branding, marketing to a target audience and making design decisions which impact commercial viability. Alice O'Rourke reiterated this observation, **“It was great to be able to meet in person with the group to have our first making workshop with the group during Janet's sessions - it was at this point that the group decided they wanted to have agency over making their product rather than outsource something, so this was a real memorable moment for the group.”**

This opportunity to collaborate with professional artists was a valuable experience to include in the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company project as it broadened the young people's artistic scope.

Through the process of the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company programme the young people collaborated to decide on a product to create which was not only representative of their own interests and values but also explores how the design company can serve a social need. During a making workshop with Janet Gray, the young people tested sewing different product designs. They then settled on a multi-purpose storage pouch from which they were interested in one of the uses being to discretely store sanitary wear. The focus on period issues demonstrates a clear motivation to consider the wider community and to make sure that the design company is rooted in playing a social of affecting change for a cause that was important to them.

Alice O'Rourke noted, "I was so happy to be working with such a politically engaged group of young people – particularly when they came up with the 'EAT THE RICH' slogan. It felt like this group was giving them a platform to speak out about what they believe in". The project thus is to be commended for encouraging active citizenship as it is a core educational requirement that young people learn "the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community" (DfE, 2013).

Originally the project timeline only included the initial socially distanced meeting as the only planned in-person session, however as government restrictions eased in the summer this allowed for some practical group workshops to take place. It is a testament to the flexibility of Alice as project co-ordinator and the facilitators to be able to adapt to the changing situation to provide creative sessions for the young people. This adjustment was successful as the young people could create all of their pouches ready for sale and have get to work together as a team without technology. In the feedback given by the young people themselves, they each commented on the importance of being in the same physical space as a project highlight and suggested that they would have like to have done more of this had the coronavirus restrictions not been in place. Three of the five participants indicated that that visiting the Feed My Creative studio was particularly enjoyable for them and three out of five also indicated the wish to have more in person workshops as part of the programme, if it were repeated. In spite of this overall preference to work together in person, the use of technology (namely Zoom and WhatsApp) to bring the participants together, was successful in supporting the design company project sessions which led to the completion of the pouches.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The skills shared and developed by the young participants during the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company programme are evident from the workshop observations and questionnaires completed by the young people themselves.

All the responses given by the participants were either positive ('strongly agree' or 'agree') or neutral ('neither agree nor disagree') indicating the overwhelmingly beneficial effect the design company project has had on them (see table below). The evidence also indicates that the young people recognise their own personal development in the skills that hold value for them including, "the skill of running/developing a business", "Open and honest communication", "More of a creative mindset", "Environmental and design skills" and "Sewing and project management". It is important to acknowledge that these skills also correlate with commonly listed key employability skills, which are necessary for the young people to develop now as they prepare for entering the job market, especially in the context of increased unemployment due to the pandemic (National Careers Service, 2020).

Strengthening collaborative working was mentioned within the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company aims. The young people strongly confirmed that this quality was a core outcome of their experience in the project from the questionnaire data (see table below). Some also expressed that they were concerned about not being able to meet new people and missing opportunities such as National Citizen Service (NCS) due to the coronavirus restrictions. Such experiences would have provided them with an environment to develop teamwork skills, however the young people were pleased that the design company programme filled this gap over the summer holidays. The group's support for each other and commitment to work as a collective is evident in the workshops in the way that they shared their views and listened to each other as well as vote to make decisions. It is clear that the programme has established a sense of collectivism with shared ideals and ambition towards the common goal of making the company thrive. This commitment to teamwork is echoed in comments from Janet Gray,

“They did a fabulous job in completing more than we initially expected. The levels of teamwork were outstanding... They worked really hard and their final product was beautiful.”

Results of participants' skills questionnaire

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree (About the same)
I feel I am more self-confident now since doing BYPDC	1	1	3
I feel I have collaborated well with others in the team	3	2	0
I feel I am better at expressing my creativity since taking part in BYPDC	0	5	0
I feel I am better at working independently since taking part in BYPDC	0	3	2
I feel I am better at decision-making since taking part in BYPDC	0	4	1
I feel I am better at giving feedback since taking part in BYPDC	1	4	0
I feel I am better at communicating since taking part in BYPDC	1	4	0
I feel I am better at understanding of how to create a social business since taking part in BYPDC	2	3	0
I feel I have developed an interest in community/ social/ environmental issues since taking part in BYPDC	0	5	0



OUTCOMES

The intended outcome of a final product being design and created has been achieved and exceeded because the young people had decided to create the pouches themselves rather than just designing them and outsourcing the production. Given the changing covid-19 situation, the programme has had to be flexible with the timeline and has benefited from taking more time on the branding and production before placing the pouches on sale. Therefore, the group are working towards a Christmas launch, and are waiting for the Bearwood Community Hub to open their café/shop space, to be the primary venue where the products will be sold. The young people were keen to make sure that the products created by the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company were sold within the local area of Bearwood and would continue the project's relationship to the Bearwood Community Hub.

The programme has embraced the principles of a social enterprise, which can be defined as "a cause-driven business whose primary reason for being is to improve social objectives and serve the common good" (The Good Trade, 2018). The proceeds of the products sold will go back into the project to maintain its sustainability, and partly to charities that support period poverty, which is something that the participants feel passionate about and supports a current need (BBC News, 2020).

Impact and legacy

Although the product launch has been delayed, the design company programme did succeed in achieving the initial objectives.

Overall, the young participants engaged in creative workshops to generate uniquely designed products and through this process enriched a set of skills easily transferable to other areas of their lives. The project equipped the young people with several lessons about themselves, their abilities and their expectations. One of the young people commented that the programme “helps to show that not all entrepreneurial people and paths are all about money and isn’t just a male-dominated field – like I imagined it being.” This validates that the project has actively changed the young person’s perceptions of what entrepreneurship is, realising that those entrepreneurial skills are adaptable and can have a social impact too. The growth in self actualisation and self-confidence is very beneficial as this resilience is applicable to the young people in their school and professional lives. The young people themselves commented about the lasting impact of Bearwood Young Person’s Design Company, with one of the participants saying, “I will hopefully be able to use my experience to show my range and adaptability to future employers”. Another stated, “I felt like it [the project] was something that would brighten up my year as this year hasn’t been the best due to the coronavirus and exams being cancelled” which emphasises the significance of the opportunity the programme had on the

young people, particularly in a difficult time of uncertainty.

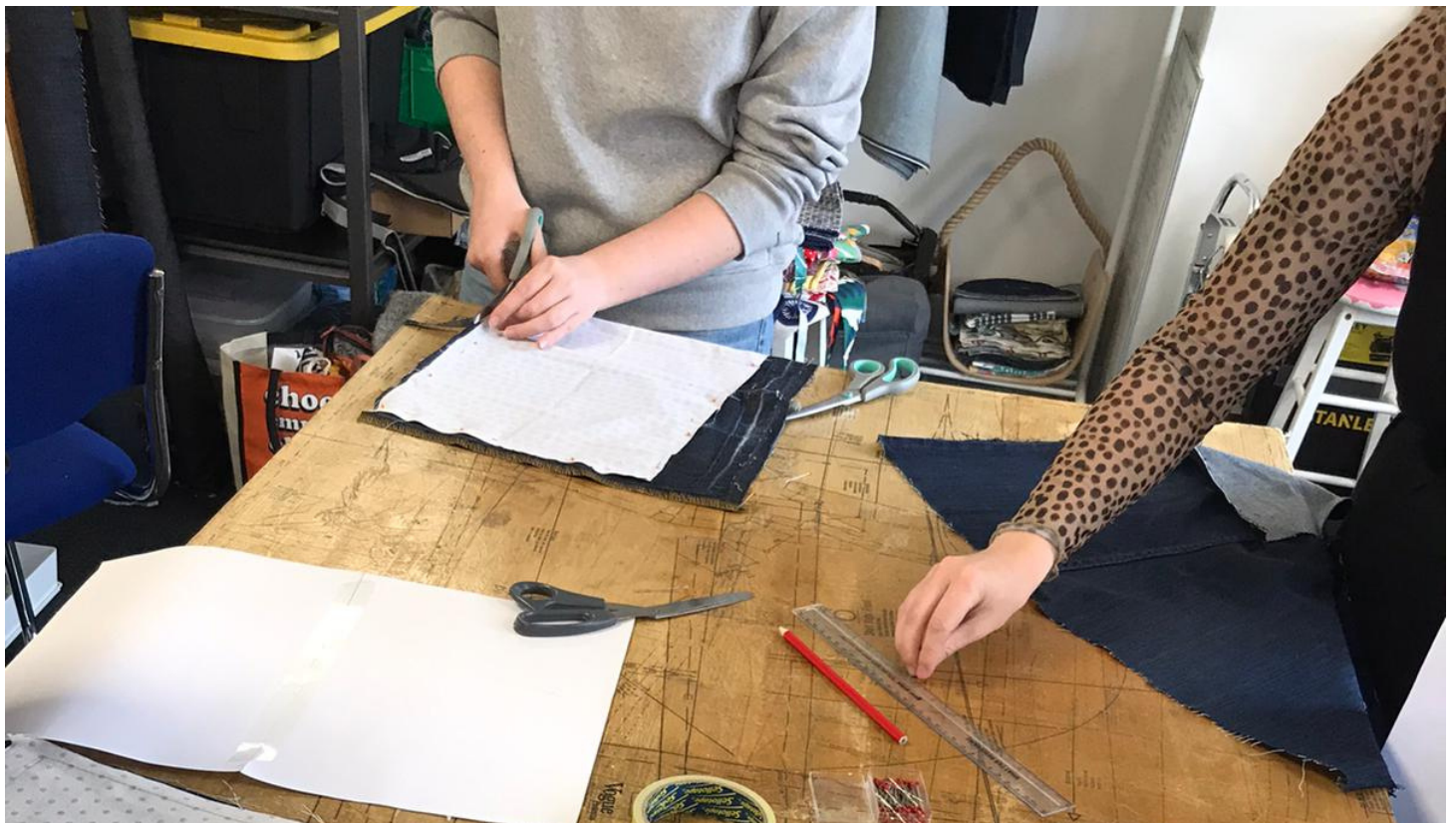
For Bearwood Community Hub, Bearwood Young Person’s Design Company was an opportunity to create a programme of meaningful engagement with young people and the Bearwood community at large. Bearwood Community Hub’s initiation of the project provided a legitimacy for the young people to feel able to take ownership of their own ideas to create their own company, providing products for the local community whilst supporting a cause they believe strongly in.

The design company has the potential to inspire the development of further educational and youth engagement programmes at Bearwood Community Hub and other communities in Birmingham. The project has crucially enabled Bearwood Community Hub to refine its approach and strategy in working with young people and has provided significant research in terms of how young people can develop their own creative companies. The young people have intentions of continuing the company after the product launch with hope of creating further products and even collaborating with other artists and charities.

Youth engagement projects are most effective when there is a long-term commitment and so it would be interesting to discern what role they will continue play as the Bearwood Young Person’s Design Company continues.

Bearwood Community Hub’s response to the impact is summarised by Alice O’Rourke,

“Connecting the young people with artists, makers, and practitioners feels so important at a time where there was limited resources and opportunities for young people to meet people in this field. It’s been a fantastic opportunity to support young people to realise their potential and give them a set of skills that they can carry forward into their future aspirations.”





Recommendations

Following the evaluation above, I have concluded that the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company was successful in achieving its initial aims and the directives of the Community Initiatives Fund. I have made some recommendations which can be used to improve the project as the first cohort move to continue the company or should the programme be repeated or developed further.

1. When the pandemic restrictions are eased, there should be an emphasis on practical design and making skills.

If the young people did not have the opportunity to have practical creative workshops with the facilitators, the experience of the programme may not have had the same sense of impact and accomplishment. For this to be sustainable for Bearwood Young Person's Design Company, having a consistent venue from which to work would be beneficial, especially one in which social distancing is possible. Furthering the relationship with Bearwood Community Hub could provide an ideal venue to host the programme on a longer-term basis. This would enable the workshops to be scheduled regularly to sustain engagement and embed the company firmly within the community.

2. Building strong relationships with schools and local community organisations could prevent potential issues with recruiting diverse participants.

With the short timeframe before the project was due to start, Bearwood Community Hub had to recruit participants fairly quickly from the two schools which resulted in a very enthusiastic and dedicated group of young women. By developing a stronger relationship with the schools and other local youth organisations, this could lead to greater diversity of young people involved. A target recruitment strategy for future cohorts could further increase the impact of the project on the wider community. The Bearwood Young Person's Design Company may wish to offer similar skills development and creative inspiration benefits, particularly to those most socially disadvantaged young people. This is supported by a comment from one participant, "I think a programme like this should be offered to a lot more people as its very beneficial in opening up ideas of work fields they may potentially want to go into, especially as creative jobs and the arts in general are almost looked down upon by the government."

3. A co-created strategy for the legacy of the Bearwood Young Person's Design Company should be created in order to articulate the trajectory of project and outline the support and resources offered by Bearwood Community Hub and Grand Union.

As the young people have the intention to expand the business, it would be useful to formally outline what the future plans for the design company will be. This is important in order to maintain transparency and clear expectations for how the group could expand. After the launch of the product there could be a consultation session between all stakeholders and the young people to co-create guidelines for the future of the design company. Co-creation is vital as it ensures the young people still retain ownership in their company.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Bearwood Young Person's Design Company Initial Timeline

20 - 31 July 2020

Recruitment and contacting young people

- Begin conversation with young people involved
- Find out availability
- Establish point of contact - WhatsApp/Gmail?

Session 1: Tuesday 11 August

Park meet-up Led by Alice O'Rourke

Alice to meet young people in Bearwood in a safe, socially distanced way. This will be an opportunity for everyone to meet and see each other in an informal setting, but also a way to establish people's strengths and assign certain roles for the project. Alice will talk through the programme and budget, answer any questions and explain how the sessions are going to run online and what to expect in the next 11 sessions over the next 6 weeks.

- Set out outcomes and expectations of the project
- Provide everyone with a journal or sketchbook and supplies
- I'll ask everyone to individually think about products and ideas for the upcoming workshops

Session 2: Friday 14 August

Working together: approaches to collaborative practice Led by Amerah Saleh

In this session, Amerah will talk to the group about her creative practice as a spoken word artist and educator.

This session will be focused around group development, in terms of both working practice and productivity. Outcomes include:

- supporting the young people to establish what it is they are passionate about as a collective of young people which can be reflected in a product that they sell
 - guiding the group with how to work in collaboration effectively using ice-breaker activities
 - How can we turn a community-focused idea into a product? Thinking about socially USEFUL products
-

Session 3: Tuesday 18 August

Thinking about products and design Led by Sarah Taylor Silverwood

Sarah can talk about her experience as an artist and introduce ways that you can translate ideas into objects (in this case products). This session will shape the groups idea about what they want to sell if this hasn't already been established - Sarah can talk through the limitations of selling things like t-shirts as a pilot product and talk about how you can create products with variations.

- For example, one tote bag but with three designs.
- Troubleshooting ideas
- Set task for next workshop for example - get them to think about a concept that they want to explore that will help Sarah to visualise the next creative sessions.
- Incorporating creative processes within the business - important for the group to understand how they can do things themselves.

The group should leave this session with a really good idea on what they want to sell. Depending on what they want to sell will help shape the next two creative workshops where Sarah will guide them with creative processes to take their ideas to a product.

Session 4: Friday 21 August

From concept to product Led by Janet Gray (Feed my Creative)

Leading on from Sarah's workshop, the group will have established what product they want to sell. Janet can introduce her practice and business - this session will focus on business development aspects.

- Using the mind map process to help the young people develop a business plan or strategy
- Talk about sustainability and the environment, and reasons for using different materials
- Get them to think about where things are made and why it's important to consider this

Set a task or idea to consider for next workshop.

Janet to let me know what materials or items I may need to organise before the second workshop on 28 August.

Session 5: Tuesday 25 August

Marketing and branding Led by Keith Dodds

Keith can introduce his practice as a graphic designer working in Birmingham. Talk to the group about the importance of branding, marketing and identity. Show them examples of approaches they can go for.

By the end of this session, the young people should start to be thinking about how they want to market themselves and their products, ready for the second session with Keith where he can put ideas into practice. E.g. Instagram, website, logo.

The group should leave this session with an understanding of different ways to market and brand their business, and Keith can establish what they need to think about ready for the next session.

BY THIS POINT OF THE PROJECT, THE GROUP WILL HAVE ESTABLISHED: THEIR CREATIVE PROCESS TO MAKE THE PRODUCT (IF RELEVANT) THE PRODUCT THEY'RE SELLING

Session 6: Friday 28 August

Creative workshop - recycling Led by Janet Gray (Feed my Creative)

This will be a creative workshop led by Janet - offering the group the opportunity to learn new skills. Understand creative processes. By the end of this workshop, the group will have played with material.

Session 7: Tuesday 1 September

Creative workshop - illustration/digital Led Sarah Taylor Silverwood

Session 8: Friday 4 September

Creative workshop - screen-printing

These sessions will be shaped depending on what they're selling, whether they want to produce a zine, poster, logo etc.

Session 9: Tuesday 8 September

Building the identity Led by Keith Dodds

This workshop will be a practical session - Keith will guide help them to build their marketing and brand i.e. website/social media etc.

The group should feel confident with their skills to add to and continue these platforms.

Session 10: Friday 11 September

Planning the launch and overview Led by Alice O'Rourke

Session 11: Saturday 19 September

Photographing the products Led by Nina Baille

By this point, the products should be ready, and Nina can lead a workshop for the group on the importance of storytelling through photography.

This workshop will allow the group to play around with photography and decide the best approach for their brand. Nina can assist them with photographing the products.

Session 12: Friday 18 September

Planning the launch and overview Led by Alice O'Rourke

Planning for launch of products

Tentative Launch: Friday 25 September

To be decided with group

How
we can be

SUCCESSFUL

- Clear communication to ensure everyone is on the same page
 - Respect each other's opinions and don't be embarrassed when giving them
- Respect the times and the way that others work and create a compromise if needed
 - Learn each other's strengths and weaknesses
- Issue roles based on individual tasks
 - Bring solutions, not problems
- Be honest and transparent with each other
 - Ask for help and don't be ashamed about it
 - Take initiative

**BEARWOOD
YOUNG
PERSONS
DESIGN
COMPANY**
