

Endeavour Woodcrafts

Providing work training opportunities for people with learning disabilities and producing quality woodcraft items

Endeavour Woodcrafts Ltd, based in Ferry Hill, County Durham, is a woodwork co-operative company limited by guarantee that provides practical work training opportunities and life and social skills for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, who produce quality woodcraft items for a range of organisations.



The Endeavour Woodcrafts team

supplemented by the sale of their products, with a strong client base in the North East that, through word of mouth, has extended across the nation as far as London.

Originally based in Shildon at the Business Enterprise Workshops, Endeavour Woodcrafts was created, funded and supported in conjunction with Durham Social Services and the Durham Cooperative Development Association. In 1992, Endeavour Woodcrafts established itself as a co-operative business before moving to its current premises at the Old Fire Station in Ferry Hill in 1993.

Endeavour Woodcrafts has a service level contract (SLC) with Durham County Council that funds the running of the business. Through the SLC, Endeavour Woodcrafts employ two full-time and two part-time care staff, including qualified woodcraft worker John McCallum and Louise Killip, a craft-worker who assists in the workshop's paint room, and ten people with disabilities on placements who create a diverse range of high quality wood-crafted products from hedgehog and bird boxes to children's bedroom sets and toy chests. Endeavour Woodcrafts' income is

It is the varied range of products created by the woodworkers at Endeavour that set them apart from other similar organisations and attract contracts from a number of organisations. In the early 2000s, Endeavour found work with Tarka, an initiative that aimed to re-introduce traditional playground games to school children, and have had ongoing orders with Sure Start County Durham and Busy Bees Nursery, providing hand-crafted toy chests and bookcases and castle, garage and farm play sets. Endeavour have found recent success renovating old and producing new toys for the Learning Library, a company based in Spennymoor that provide an educational toys and games loan service to families, schools and other groups in the South West Durham area.

The social benefits of Endeavour Woodcrafts are countless. The company not only provide work training for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, but also develops its workers confidence through life and social activities and team-building trips, and helps them play an active role in the community. The income from its SLC helps to run the business and provide a quality service for the woodworkers who attend. From the sale of its woodcraft items, the co-operative is also able to provide its woodworkers with a weekly pay incentive, motivating their work and giving them a sense of independence. The inclusive nature of the co-operative means that workers activities are not limited to just woodcraft, with many being involved in the administrative side of the company, for example woodworker Gary Pickering also handles the visitor book while Linda Weldon plays an active role in working out the group's pay incentives, and Strevan Clough is a signatory on bank accounts.

Showcase – Endeavour Woodcrafts

While strategic decisions are made by the Management Committee, each worker contributes to the day to day running of the co-operative at monthly general meetings. As director Liz Hill points out, “Our aim at Endeavour Woodcrafts is to make our workers feel valued and involved, to develop their life skills and give them more independence. Each individual’s opinion counts and the majority of decisions are made by our group of workers – everyone has a voice at Endeavour.” This is echoed by Strevan, who has been with the co-operative for 15 years and loves the work and atmosphere, “At Endeavour you don’t get bossed about and it is rewarding working for the community.”

Endeavour Woodcrafts has simple aims for the future. Whilst looking to hire a small number of new workers, extend their premises and produce more diverse woodcrafts items over the coming years, Endeavour is keen to remain the small-scale and friendly woodwork co-operative it is today, rather than become a factory assembly line! The ongoing aim of the co-operative is to continue to include their workers in both the business and the local community and develop their self-esteem, confidence and independence through education and skills training so that each individual at Endeavour Woodcrafts is able to reach their full potential.

Contact

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Endeavour Woodcrafts quality children’s bedroom sets