



Woodwork Training for people with disabilities



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The Furniture Group



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Introduction

Working with wood is fun

Apart from the fact that it can be used to make useful products such as storage boxes, benches, tables, planters, chopping boards and stools, it is the process of working with wood that is so satisfying.

The Furniture Group has 12 years experience of working with people with disabilities. We have discovered how working with wood...

- excites people's imaginations
- offers numerous different outcomes, ranging from the very simple to the more difficult tasks, making sure that *everyone* in the group is engaged
- builds self-confidence
- awards tangible results (hand-made products to keep, offer as a gift or even sell)
- provides a useful skill that can be put to excellent use, either in the workplace or on an apprentice scheme.
- allows people to work either in a group or by themselves

This booklet aims to inform organisations how they can offer clients with disabilities a fun and stimulating training package that provides practical skills.



Training



Health and Safety

The Furniture Group considers the health and safety of its service users to be the most important component of any training package it delivers. The first lesson of the course focuses on:

- making the group aware of dangers in the workshop
- the safe use of hand held power tools and equipment
- safe behaviour in the workshop (i.e. no running or eating)
- reasons for wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as dust masks, ear defenders, gloves, hard shoes.
- the safe handling and storage of materials (i.e carrying timber)
- what to do in the event of an emergency

The course fee includes goggles, dust masks and ear defenders for each member of the group.

The training sessions are mainly delivered by Nick Coughlin, or in the event of him not being available, by one of his team, all professionally qualified to degree level or above. Each team member is trained in First Aid and is CRB checked.

Materials are always prepared in advance of the session and tools and equipment are checked for their compliancy with health and safety standards.



The Package

Prior to starting any training course, The Furniture Group will always discuss with the client organisation any specific requirements that can be built into the sessions. However, a typical training package might include the following:

- Engaging woodwork related activities will be designed that are appropriate for the varying needs of the group.
- Provision of tools, materials (for training purposes) and health and safety equipment. *Note: All timber supplied for training purposes is locally sourced recycled wood.*
- All projects will be fun and stimulating and offer tangible results
- Useful products will be made for the project or for personal use (previous examples have included benches, planters, bird boxes, storage boxes, picture frames)
- Educational trips can be organised to places such as Leaside Wood Recycling Project in east London, Brickhurst Farm and Saw Mill in Tunbridge Wells and Riverwood in Greenwich. (Transport and packed lunch to be provided by client)
- Regular updates showing processes and outcomes will be provided to the client organisation.

The length of the course can range from one month to one year. We will always work with the client organisation to develop a suitable timetable.



Enterprise development

The Furniture Group has worked with the public sector for 8 years and understands the need for charitable organisations to be sustainable. In this regard, we can assist in the following ways:

- We can involve the group members to design and manufacture quality products that can be sold on a commercial level. For example, with past groups we have sold:
 - planters to local authorities (for parks and other public spaces)
 - benches to Housing Associations
 - garden accessories to private clients (bird boxes, seed markers, garden decorations)
- We can work with the client organisation to develop a business plan that uses the woodwork training course to generate a stream of unrestricted income.
- We can develop a set of marketing materials (leaflets, posters, website, exhibition) that will target local enterprise opportunities.

Please discuss your requirements at the preliminary meeting.





The Venue

Our workshop

The Furniture Group has a large fully equipped workshop based at the Bromley by Bow community centre. This offers facilities for people with disabilities including a park, onsite café and kitchen. We can accommodate six trainees and two support staff in this workshop.

Your site

We can come to you. Using the flexibility of hand tools and cordless drills we can provide all the equipment needed to run a course on your premises. We would require an appropriately sized room with tables, chairs and preferably a sink.

Your workshop

We will be happy to run the sessions from your workshop if you have one. We can provide additional equipment if required and will always work to maintain a clean and safe environment.

As a matter of course, should we run the training packages from your site, a full risk assessment will be carried out before the sessions begin.

The Furniture Group has Public Liability insurance cover for training and woodwork activities.



The Outcomes

The Furniture Group will work with the client organisation to meet any outcomes that are required to fulfil funding criteria. However, trainees will typically learn the following on our course:

- Basic woodwork skills
- Safe use of hand tools
- Develop arts-based skills through drawing and photography
- Designing products
- Manufacturing products
- Assembling products
- Finishing techniques (sanding, oiling, varnishing and painting)
- Fixing and Installation
- Numeracy and literacy skills
- How to work as a team

If requested, the course could lead to an Arts Award qualification. This would be an additional cost.



Getting started...

If you would like The Furniture Group to deliver a training package for your clients, the following steps will guide you through the process:

1. Contact Nick Coughlin on 020 8709 9733 or 07748 387 053 to arrange a preliminary meeting.
2. First meeting: discuss course requirements.
3. Nick Coughlin will provide a cost breakdown for the training package.
4. If accepted, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be drawn up.
5. Second meeting to sign SLA, undertake risk assessment and discuss any details.
6. Training begins!

Look forward to working with you!

About the trainer



As the director of The Furniture Group, Nick Coughlin has 20 years experience designing and manufacturing furniture. After graduating with an MA in Furniture Design and Technology from Brunel University, High Wycombe (1990), he worked as a freelance designer for three years before deciding to find a more meaningful way to use his skills. This led him to work at a rehabilitation centre in Namibia as a VSO volunteer, teaching woodwork and metalwork skills to people who had lost limbs during the war of independence. His aim was to help them develop products that could be sold to the local community.

After 3 years, Nick was approached by the Namibian company, AMCOM, to run an industrial wood factory in the North East of the country, managing a workforce of 80, to stimulate the furniture making economy in this region. After two years of developing a line of products that won gold awards at the EXPO trade fair in the capital city of Windhoek, Nick returned to the UK in search of a career that would reconnect his design skills with his social values.

Nick spent the next 7 years at the Bromley by Bow Centre, a community centre in east London, running a social enterprise called The Furniture Group. This enterprise trained and employed people from the local community to design and manufacture park furniture for local authorities, social landlords and other public sector organisations. During this time, Nick also delivered a two year NVQ Design and Manufacture course to a group of 30 local unemployed Bengali teenagers and separately to a year 10 class at St Paul's Way Community School, east London.

In January 2008, Nick decided to take full responsibility for the development of The Furniture Group into a Limited Company. Now the director of the company, Nick has expanded its client base to include landscape designers and architects as well as Groundwork Trusts and Primary Care Trusts. Alongside designing and manufacturing custom made items of exterior and interior furniture, Nick also delivers woodwork courses to people with disabilities.

Nick combines his experience of teaching with his knowledge of the design and manufacture industry to deliver engaging, fun, tailor made training packages to community groups who wish to embark on either short or long term woodwork courses.

For more information, please visit www.furnituregroupuk.com



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