

Award winning construction programme encourages children into carpentry

An award-winning programme for nursery and primary school children is encouraging young people into construction careers from an early age.

The West Lothian Woodworking Initiative which is funded by HCI Skills Gateway at Edinburgh Napier University, encourages young pupils into construction through interactive carpentry and joinery workshops.

The supervised workshops allow children to craft their own figurines using recycled timber and handheld tools.

Graeme Binnie, programme founder, established the initiative to help bridge the skills gap and create more opportunities for women and young people to get involved in the construction industry from a young age.

The workshops also establish alternative pathways for creative learners beyond academia, and train practitioners to deliver the workshops in their own classrooms.

The West Lothian Woodworking Initiative won the College Development Network's (CDN) innovation award in 2023. It has been rolled out in over 60 primary schools across West Lothian to date, bringing new access routes into construction to local children.





Graeme Binnie said: “These workshops are an integral part of creating an inclusive and engaging educational environment for pupils of all ages.

“Not everyone is a traditional, academic learner, and introducing hands-on activities in the classroom has proven to have a transformative effect on students passionate about practical learning.

“Numerous schools have expressed keen interest in integrating the programme into their day-to-day curriculum and are supporting this drive for real, tangible change in our education system and the construction industry.

“I’m proud to deliver the West Lothian Woodworking Initiative and I hope to be able to extend its reach to further support practical learning for primary pupils as well as practitioners across Scotland.”

Yvonne Young, early years officer at Stoneyburn Primary School who participates in woodworking within her school said: “I’ve

seen an incredible transformation among the pupils since we started working alongside the West Lothian Woodworking Initiative.

“The programme not only introduces construction to our pupils, but it also creates an exciting new way of doing things for both the children and teachers alike. It’s a fantastic opportunity for us to learn new skills too and adapt to a fresh way of teaching.”

Kirsty Connell-Skinner, Programme Manager at HCI Skills Gateway, said: “It’s an honour to support the West Lothian Woodworking Initiative and continue the push towards closing the significant skills and gender gaps facing our construction industry.

“Although women working in the sector recently hit an all-time high of 15.8 per cent, there’s still much more that needs to be done and the first step towards that is encouraging a greater diversity of young people to consider a career in construction so we can ensure we have a diverse and sustainable future workforce.”