

Want to make your own home furnishings but don't know where to start? **Maxine Gordon** joins some absolute beginners at the York School of Sewing



All their own work

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People want to have something they have made themselves

Short bursts of humming fill the room – and all eyes are on the task at hand. Eight women are carefully negotiating their way around sewing machines, stitching colourful pieces of fabric together to make a pin cushion. The end result looks impressive, with the dinky square cushions edged in neat piping and finished with a ribbon loop handle. Best of all, says tutor Nadine Paver, once students have made a pin cushion they can easily scale it up to a sofa cushion.

Jan Stone, from York, is one of the group taking part in today's class: Beginners' Sewing Techniques. She said: "I've been a knitter and done crochet for years but want to make soft furnishings so I want to learn how to do patchwork and make quilts and cushions."

Like many of the women on today's course, they've scanned YouTube and watched videos on sewing basics. But nothing beats coming to a class. Fiona Messham, from Nunnington, describes herself as an "ambitious beginner" who has taught herself some skills via the Internet but wanted to come on a course to learn more. "It's easier in a class, you learn better than watching a video." She has

already made some cushion covers but wants to make curtains and blinds. "I want to get my confidence up first because buying the fabric is expensive."

Becky Procter, from York, is a novice and thanks to workshops at the York School of Sewing she has progressed from learning to thread the sewing machine to making a range of seams and an invisible zip. She holds up a piece of white fabric, turning it over to show me the neat fastener stitched in place. On the fabric she has written simple instructions. "This is my template, so I know what I am doing when I try this at home," she says.

The York School of Sewing opened in April at the Eco Centre, Amy Johnson Way, Clifton Moor. Nadine set up the business two years ago, initially running classes from village halls and community centres. The new base is already proving popular, with students coming from as far afield as Lincolnshire, the North East and Scotland to attend workshops.

There is a packed programme of tuition aimed at all skill levels – from beginners' classes to specific projects such as making a shirred summer dress or cushion. There are regular day courses titled Your Project where Nadine helps students on a specific work in progress. Certain courses are tailored specifically for home furnishings, others for fashion, including workshops on how to make your own knickers!

Nadine, 51, set up the business following redundancy from the NHS where she had worked as a commissioner. For Nadine, it was like coming home – she was trained in clothing and textile design and had worked making costumes for film and TV before joining the NHS. And the timing couldn't have been better – recent years have witnessed a huge revival in knitting and sewing and all things home made.

Nadine said: "People want to have something they have made themselves. It's a lovely feeling when you have finished something."



For more information about the workshops, visit yorkschoolfsewing.co.uk