

# **WG Scrutiny Committee: Inquiry into youth entrepreneurship**

**Provision of research and evidence on UnLtd's experience supporting and developing young social entrepreneurs through strategic partnerships.**

May 2013

## INTRODUCTION TO UNLTD

UnLtd is the foundation for social entrepreneurs and the leading provider of support to social entrepreneurs in the UK. Our mission is to reach out and unleash the energies of people who can transform the world in which they live: people who we call social entrepreneurs. We work for a world where people act to make it better.

UnLtd operates a unique model by investing directly in individuals and offering a complete package of resources; from Awards of funding, to ongoing advice, networking and practical support. In 2011-12 UnLtd made grant-based awards totaling £3.3M which generated an estimated £200M of volunteering opportunities for over 62,000 people and £45M wage value of jobs created by social ventures reaching a total of £1.2M beneficiaries in the UK.

We reach 1,000 people each year to help them turn their idea of a better world into a reality, supporting them in the early stages of setting up their social venture. But we know that there are many more people in every community who could be successful social entrepreneurs, if only they could access the help they need. We find entrepreneurial talent even in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is often the residents of a community who have the passion, ideas and commitment to find sustainable solutions for that community.

## WHAT WE DO

Our approach is to offer seed funds, local development support and networking opportunities in a tiered set of awards, from first steps to going to scale. We are focused on people more than their enterprises, and on the early stages of their journeys. We are constantly improving and sharing our knowledge of what works in supporting social entrepreneurs, through innovation, piloting, research and development and encourage peer to peer learning and support between our cohorts of UnLtd award winners.

## HOW WE DO IT

UnLtd reaches 1,000 people each year to help them turn their idea of a better world into a reality, supporting them in the early stages of setting up their social venture. We know that our core model works in terms of both social and economic impact. We know it works in terms of building the skills and confidence needed to become successful leaders for social benefit. We know that the model is scalable, and that it works across all sectors of the population.

Our strategy is to increase the help available, by inspiring and assisting other agencies to start their own social entrepreneur support services. As you'll see on the next page, we have already made significant progress, working with disadvantaged communities, the youth sector, secondary schools, further education and the higher education sector.

### Enabling young people

Young people are central to UnLtd's work. Over our ten year lifetime, we have supported over 4,000 young social entrepreneurs. Early exposure to entrepreneurship is a powerful predictor of entrepreneurial activity in adulthood, so UnLtd aims to give young people their first taste of leading a social venture. UnLtd Award Winners are more likely to live in deprived than in affluent areas – 41% come from the 20% most deprived parts of the UK. Most are in education or employment when they receive their Award, but 11% are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Evaluation report: "I can do anything if I can do this" The outcomes of supporting young social entrepreneurs: <http://unltd.org.uk/2013/01/08/live-unltd-report-2012/>

### Higher education

UnLtd and HEFCE lead a unique partnership to embed a culture of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education. Initially this £1 million campaign directly funded and supported the creation of 200 new social ventures by staff and students in 70 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across England. Our aim is to establish an effective eco-system for the development and growth of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise activity within Higher Education Institutions in England which can then be replicated across the UK. Informal partnerships already exist among a small group of universities and UnLtd in Wales and discussions are underway on where opportunities can be created for students start their own social ventures and gain support in these institutions.

Research Paper: Unlocking the Potential of Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education: <http://unltd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Unlocking-the-Potential-Hefce-UnLtd-Final-Report-June-11.pdf>

### Further Education

The FE Pioneers programme involved seven colleges testing and learning about the most effective ways to provide support, resources and knowledge to make it easier for young social entrepreneurs to start-up and thrive within Further Education. Colleges started promoting the programme in September 2012. Each college has adopted their own approach to running the programme, although all have matched their UnLtd awards of £13,000 with in-kind resources, typically staff time. This is now in the process of being rolled out to a further 30 FE colleges across the UK with a cluster of colleges in south east Wales applying to participate.

### Create Your Career – Schools

Over the last 12 months Live UnLtd has been running a campaign with Melody Hossaini, social entrepreneur from BBC's The Apprentice. The campaign was to encourage young people aged 11-15 to think about how they can make a career out of a social venture or by being involved in social entrepreneurship. Together with Melody, we have worked with around 15 schools and over 150 individual young people. In the future we are looking to develop materials to support teachers to build social entrepreneurship into the curriculum and from September are looking to find the UK's top 100 young social entrepreneurs who we can fund and support on their journey to create their social venture. This campaign and support materials will be called Start Something Social. A handful of Welsh schools will be identified to test this pilot programme- potentially a new module under the Welsh Baccalaureate curriculum which is due to be expanded across Wales.



### Disadvantaged Communities

Big Local Star People Programme. Big Local is a ten-year programme that aims to achieve lasting change in 150 areas in England, known as Big Local Areas. UnLtd has experience of working in areas where there is little history of entrepreneurial behaviour. We have developed outreach and support strategies that work well with emerging leaders allowing them to channel their enthusiasm and passion into transforming their neighbourhoods. 154 Awards have been made to Star People and Star Partners empowering local people to lead those unique ideas for transforming their areas.

## SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are central to UnLtd's work. Over our ten year lifetime, we have supported over 4,000 young social entrepreneurs.

In July 2009, we brought together our work for 11 to 21 year-olds under the banner of 'Live UnLtd'. The programme is funded primarily by the Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief and UnLtd's Millennium Awards Trust endowment.

Live UnLtd aims to get young people involved in social entrepreneurship and to increase their skills, confidence and aspirations to create social change. Early exposure to entrepreneurship is a powerful predictor of entrepreneurial activity in adulthood, so Live UnLtd aims to give young people their first taste of leading a social venture.

To date, we have done this mainly by giving Awards directly to young people. 'Award Winners' are given cash and one-to-one support for about 12 months to help them start up and lead their own social projects.

Between July 2009 and June 2012, we made 790 Awards to young social entrepreneurs. Live UnLtd also aims to find new ways to support young social entrepreneurs and share knowledge of what works. Alongside our direct Award-making, we are working with other organisations to significantly expand the support available to young social entrepreneurs.

Current partners include further education colleges, schools, community groups and youth sector charities, and we are looking to broaden this range. Social entrepreneurs themselves can be a rich source of support for others, so we are also developing new peer-to-peer support models.

Anecdotal feedback and observations on the current Big Ideas Wales programme from students, teachers, role models and partner organisations suggest there is a gap and need to highlight social entrepreneurship as a route to employment and enterprise. Ongoing impact evaluation and progression routes from academic studies to practical modules and investment need development in order to ensure the success of future young social entrepreneurs.



## WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MAKE TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

### Developing skills

Skill development is a clear and consistent finding across our research into Live UnLtd. For example, 88% of young social entrepreneurs whose Awards ended in 2011-12 developed at least one skill as a result of running their project. Broadly speaking, these included:

- Skills gained from the overall experience of running a project – ‘personal development’ or ‘life skills’ that have a more general application, such as communication, negotiation, or teamwork. These are sometimes more widely referred to as ‘soft’ skills
- Skills gained from the ‘nitty-gritty’ of running a project – practical and specific skills such as budgeting, marketing, and project planning. These might be termed ‘hard’ skills
- Skills specific to their project activity – technical or vocational skills that relate to a specific sport, activity or sector, such as working with primary school children or people with disabilities.

### Employability

There is a close link between the skills that Award Winners develop and skills that employers say they need. Award Winners seem to recognise this. In-depth research focusing on this found that 23 of 29 Award Winners (79%) interviewed felt more employable as a result of running their project. Many felt better able to demonstrate and evidence the skills they had gained. Confidence and personal development- Eighty-one per cent of young people who finished their Awards in 2011-12 said that they had developed confidence. Our qualitative research shows that this happens as they negotiate the challenges of setting up and running their own project and as they develop skills and abilities. It is nurtured by the one-to-one support they receive from a Live UnLtd Development Manager.

We call this journey of development a ‘Confidence Curve’. It can result in Award Winners feeling they can do anything they put their mind to. Some Award Winners develop resilience, perseverance, commitment and positive ‘can do’ attitudes. In some cases the experience seems to help young people strengthen ‘character’: grit, determination and ability to not only weather the ups and downs, but to emerge stronger for it.

We have found that Live UnLtd Awards support personal growth for three main reasons:

- The creative and practical learning environment helps young people to develop new skills, and to apply skills learnt through formal education in a meaningful way
- A Live UnLtd Award lets young people lead and take ownership of their own idea, and to ‘learn by doing’. Creating impact at scale and in depth most Award Winners work at a local, community level, while some operate on a much larger scale, reaching out to hundreds or thousands through events, services or products they provide.

A sample of 121 Award Winners who completed their Awards in 2011-12 reported that in total, 14,985 people had directly benefited from their work so far. Numbers varied from two to 2,000 people per project. Most frequently, Award Winners reported that they had 40 beneficiaries. Using this as a multiplier, we estimate that over 30,000 people have directly benefited from our 790 young social entrepreneurs' projects since 2009.

Other young people are the main beneficiaries Award Winners report creating a wide range of social impact including, for example, health and wellbeing, tackling unemployment, addressing drug and/or alcohol abuse and promoting environmental or green issues. However, they often share common aims and report similar outcomes, namely:

- Providing positive activities for young people: In our 2011 survey, 71% of Award Winners stated that their projects addressed a lack of activities for young people in their area. Many stressed the importance of keeping activities free or low-cost so that young people who are unemployed or from low-income families could take part.
- Creating links between people from different social backgrounds: Award Winners often say that their projects help other young people to gain a sense of community (67%) and/or form new friendships (67%) through enjoying an activity that gives them shared goals. This suggests that projects can help to create a stronger sense of belonging and social capital amongst young people.
- Challenging negative portrayals of young people: Often Award Winners aim to show that, given the opportunity, young people do not cause trouble. Some 40% of respondents to our 2011 survey were addressing negative perceptions of young people through their projects. Common approaches include showcasing other young people's talents and positive attitudes through performances, events and local media.
- Encouraging growth in skills and personal development: Just as Award Winners develop skills by running their projects, the young people they work with often gain skills too. Our 2011 survey found that 84% of survey respondents provided training in a specific sport, while 40% reported that their projects gave participants a form of work experience and 73% volunteering experience. Award Winners also reported that their participants grew in confidence and improved their skills in communication, teamwork, and self-discipline.
- Raising aspirations and inspiring others: Some Award Winners acknowledged they had become role models amongst their peers and their participants and were setting a positive example to others. They were showing that young people were proactive and capable of creating positive social outcomes. Some evidence suggests that this influences other young people to think about social issues and how they might set up their own projects.

### **The broader relevance of young social entrepreneurship**

Since Live UnLtd started in 2009, the social and economic landscape in the UK has changed considerably. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen to over one million. The longer-term impacts of this include reduced employability, poorer wellbeing and reduced self-confidence.

Given reduced employment opportunities, skills have become even more critical for any young person seeking work. However, a majority of employers state that they are not confident about finding the highly-skilled employees that they need. Meanwhile, young people in the UK may lack a sense of belonging and 'stake' in their communities. Contributory factors are likely to include low confidence and aspirations; lack of 'resilience' and ability to respond positively to challenges; little connection with others in their communities; lack of shared values; and a belief among young people that they are not treated fairly.

Our evidence suggests that although it is by no means a 'silver bullet', promoting young social entrepreneurship could help tackle some of these issues by:

- Helping young people to develop skills that employers need, particularly 'soft skills' that are key to employability
- Providing an opportunity that gives similar benefits to work experience
- Helping some young people progress directly into self-employment
- Building the confidence and 'character' of young people, and improving their resilience
- Helping young people feel part of their communities, through supporting young social entrepreneurs to set up peer-led projects that benefit other young people and give them a 'stake' in their communities.

For further information on the UnLtd model of supporting young people, please see 'The Confidence Curve' report illustrating our model of how young people create social change through social entrepreneurship <http://unltd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/The-Confidence-Curve.pdf>