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**Work in social enterprise**

## Social Enterprise Coalition

We are the national body for social enterprise. We are a membership organisation. We offer business support, do research, develop policy, campaign, build networks, provide training, share knowledge and understanding, and raise awareness of social enterprise and what it can achieve. Our members come from across the social enterprise movement – from local grass-roots organisations to multi-million pound businesses, as well as the corporate and public sectors. What unites them is their commitment to changing the world through business. They enable us to do what we do – both by paying membership fees and taking part in our work.

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**Thank you to everybody who contributed to this guide, taking the time to tell the stories of their journeys into social enterprise.**

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# What is social enterprise?

**Have you ever bought the Big Issue? Read it over a bar of Divine chocolate? Watched Jamie Oliver's Fifteen on the television? Shopped at the Co-op? Visited the Eden Project?**

**Then you already know a bit about social enterprise: a growing sector that is seeking to change our world for the better.**

Social enterprises are businesses, but it is how they work and what they do with their profits that is unique.

Unlike traditional businesses, they do not have to satisfy the needs of shareholders. Instead they reinvest at least half of their profits to make a difference – improving communities, people's lives, and protecting the environment.

They do this in lots of different ways: creating jobs for people who would otherwise be left out, providing vital community services for those in need, reducing carbon emissions.

It's this combination of doing business and doing good that makes social enterprise an exciting and rapidly-growing force, both here in the UK and across the globe.



Divine Chocolate  
Photo: Kevin Gould

# Social enterprise in the UK

**There are an estimated 62,000 social enterprises in Britain, contributing over £24 billion to the economy and employing a workforce of nearly a million people.**

Social enterprises operate in almost every industry and sector in the UK, from retail to recycling, employment to sport, housing to education. They're in our communities and on our high streets – from coffee shops and cinemas, to pubs and leisure centres, banks and bus companies. As with all businesses, social enterprises compete with other companies in their area to deliver goods and services.

Social enterprises are not just 'nice' businesses. They enjoy financial success and research shows they've continued to deliver through the recession; more than half of social enterprises have increased their turnover since the beginning of the economic downturn, in comparison to a quarter of private small and medium sized businesses\*. There are examples in this guide of enterprises that began with the help of grants, but whose success means they now earn their own incomes.

\*State of Social Enterprise Survey (November 2009). Social Enterprise Coalition.

# Why work in Social Enterprise?

Perhaps the most compelling reason is job satisfaction.

People working in social enterprise say their jobs are rewarding because of the attached social or environmental purpose, and for many work is a vocation rather than an occupation. Lots of people in social enterprise like using their business and professional skills to make a positive difference.

Social enterprises, perhaps because of the work they do, are often welcoming, inclusive and equal workplaces. They are also a natural home for female entrepreneurs and have more women on their boards than FTSE 100 companies. A quarter of social enterprises are owned by women, almost double the number of those running small private businesses.

Social enterprise is also known for providing jobs to people who traditionally come up against barriers when trying to find employment because of their life circumstances – for example, a disability, history of mental ill health or criminal record

**"Social enterprise in the UK has grown rapidly in recent years and is leading the way across the globe. It's an exciting, fast-moving area in which to work. New government policy combined with the economic crisis could see the social enterprise workforce grow."**

The 'Rights to Provide' and 'Right to Request' schemes soon to be rolled out by the government will see many public sector staff able to set up social enterprises to provide health and social care services in their communities. A move towards localism could see more and more councils want to commission and buy services provided by social enterprises because of the wider social and environmental benefits they bring to communities.

At the same time, charities that have been reliant on grant funding are looking to generate income through the selling of goods and services. The result is likely to be an increasing number of social enterprises operating in the voluntary sector.

This potential for growth is already being recognised by forward thinking corporates. NatWest Bank and the telecommunications giant, O2, already provide tailored services to meet the needs of the growing social enterprise market.

## Benefits of working in social enterprise

- You get to see your hard work making a difference.
- You're surrounded by really passionate people.
- Working for an organisation that does good things for the world you live in is a great motivator.
- Many social enterprises are employee-owned businesses - also known as mutuals and co-operatives. Staff have a stake in them and / or a say in how they're run. The result is often a loyal and happy workforce, with low sickness and absenteeism rates.

## Who works in social enterprise?

- People who combine business expertise and skills with a very real desire to improve people's lives, their communities or the environment.
- People who believe in creating a fairer, more equal society.
- People who aren't looking to become millionaires. While owners and employees of social enterprises can take home good salaries, it is worth bearing in mind that half of a social enterprise's profits are put back into the business.

# Bikeworks

**“I love getting up in the morning and seeing the change in people’s lives that they’ve been able to make with the support of our services”**

**Bikeworks started business in East London in 2007. Since then it has opened another branch in the capital and has been named Best Social Enterprise at the London Business Awards 2010.**

Bikeworks’ mission is to tackle environmental, social and economic challenges in London and create local solutions to global issues through the promotion of sustainable urban transport with cycling.

Founder Jim Blakemore, 36, was running his own bike hire company in Cambridge when a business partner, who was studying social enterprise, needed to come up with a project idea. The concept centred on bikes and Jim was so inspired, he decided to try and set something similar up in the real world.

“I put £2,000 of my own money in and we had a small grant to buy bikes from the London Cycling Campaign. We originally set up to train children, adults and disabled people how to ride bikes. We didn’t have premises

and I had twenty bikes stored in my spare room,” says Jim.

The business meant he could give up his commute to Cambridge each day and live and work in London. He was soon joined by business partner Dave Miller, 35, a former development manager for a charity, who also wanted to set up a bike-based social enterprise.

Soon the pair won a contract from Newham Council to teach people to ride bicycles. The income enabled them to open the first Bikeworks premises in East London where the business expanded. They were awarded money from local government and corporate sponsors to start their ‘cycle into work programme’ – training homeless people to gain accredited professional qualifications in bicycle mechanics and instruction. Glenn Barnard, 43, went through the programme and is now an employee at Bikeworks.

“I heard about this place when I was living in a hostel. The homeless charity Crisis referred me. My employment

prospects before this were very limited. The best I could have hoped for was a dead end job on minimum wage. Your self-esteem is at rock bottom when you’re living in a hostel, but my self esteem has improved. I live off my own money and don’t take off the state. It gives you pride.”

In 2010, Jim and Dave opened new premises in West London, which houses training facilities and a retail space selling old and new bikes. The company recycled 1,000 bikes in the last 12 months alone. The business also offers services to businesses and runs a cycling club for people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities, using a range of specially adapted bicycles.

Bikeworks is considering expanding its offer to young people who are unemployed or not in education, as well as those who have spent time in prison.

Dave says running Bikeworks as a social enterprise has a variety of advantages.

**“I prefer the business aspect of what we do to the straight forward charity model of being dependent on grants or public sector funding. It gives something back to the community - which is how I think business should be done. It’s about the people we work with and those who benefit from what we offer.”**

Jim agrees. “I love getting up in the morning and seeing the change in people’s lives that they’ve been able to make with the support of our services. Using something as simple as a bike can have such a huge impact.”

Glenn speaks highly of the pair’s entrepreneurial spirit. “I’ve got my own place now, I pay my own rent. That’s what Bikeworks has done for me. If it wasn’t for them I’d still be sitting in a hostel waiting for the dole every two weeks. The place has given me my life back.”

[www.bikeworks.org.uk](http://www.bikeworks.org.uk)





Bikeworks team

# The Movement Factory

**“I wanted to do something for local kids that would allow them to put their energy to good use”**

**Growing up on a Peckham estate in London, Leanne Pero didn't like what she saw going on around her. The area was known for its social problems and in the year 2000, it became infamous when Damilola Taylor was murdered there.**

Leanne, 15 at the time, was determined to do something positive with her life. “I wanted to do something for local kids that would allow them to put their energy to good use, I wanted to create a space where they could just let loose.”

With a £1,000 grant from Southwark Council she formed a dance club called Bruk Out (slang for dance), and put on a show at the newly built Damilola Taylor Centre in 2001. It was a great success. Next, with support from the government's local Youth Inclusion Programme she ran dance and singing classes in her area and in 2002, while still at school, produced the award-winning dance competition 'Get It On the Floor' - which still runs annually.

Leanne, now 25, ran classes while studying dance at Kingston College and kept things ticking over with fundraising events and income from her own private dance lessons. In 2009 she received a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery and in 2010 was approached by the Media Trust, who wanted to make a documentary about her work. Leanne was mentored on-screen by Debbie Moore OBE, the founder of London's famous Pineapple Dance Studios.

Debbie made an immediate impact, suggesting that Leanne changed her business name. “She said Bruk Out wasn't commercial enough so we changed to The Movement Factory,” says Leanne.

But this was more than just a cosmetic change. Debbie and her other mentor, Emma Sinclair of Target Parking UK, helped Leanne organise her finances and structure meaning she ended up with a much stronger, more efficient business. “Everything just clicked into place and I've found running the enterprise so much easier since.”



Today, The Movement Factory comprises a team of eight dance teachers and one administrator, and has opened three dance academies in London to help young people perform and compete at a semi-professional level. Leanne runs a growing portfolio of programmes and services, including dance training sessions for primary school teachers.

Looking back, she says starting a business so young had its challenges. “I'd say about 60 per cent of the reaction was negative. It can be hard being different from the rest of your mates. There's a lot of jealousy from people when you try to better yourself.”

But these days, all she gets is praise. Leanne's won numerous awards for her community work and business prowess.

[themovementfactory.uk.com](http://themovementfactory.uk.com)

# Livity

**“The young people...even when they have huge challenges in their lives, it doesn't stand in their way for a minute”**

**Youth-focused social enterprise Livity was established ten years ago. One of their ongoing projects is Live magazine, written by disadvantaged young people and distributed around South London.**

Callum McGeoch, a former editor of the style magazine Dazed & Confused, was a volunteer on an early issue of Live. “We offered to put the team in contact with celebrities to interview, but the young people said no - they wanted to run a local rap group on the cover instead. It was the right decision and it created an amazing buzz about the magazine in South London. It affirmed that Live was truly youth owned.”

At Livity's buzzing Brixton office dozens of young people aged 12 to 21 from a broad range of backgrounds help the business come up with creative approaches to socially responsible marketing projects. The company has recently worked on campaigns for Google and the Teenage Cancer Trust.

The young people involved, some of whom have big problems to overcome, gain access to professional mentors, accredited training and can use equipment to produce their own print and digital media. The social enterprise seeks to support young people into employment or back into education.

Steven started on Live magazine when he was referred to Livity while on bail by a local authority youth offending team. When he returned after serving 11 months in prison he started an Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media.

**“I love working here because I'm involved in such a broad range of things. We do stuff for so many big brands. I work on presentations, brainstorming events, I upload content to the websites and I'm looking after the company's Facebook group too.”**



"There are so many amazing people here and everyone has a story to tell. I don't know what I'd be doing if I wasn't on the apprenticeship – maybe in a 9 to 5 or thinking about going into education, but my CV is going to look great thanks to this opportunity. Livity's opened my eyes to social enterprise. One day I'd like to start my own."

Callum, who is now Livity's Creative Director, says of his job: "There's never a dull moment. One day we might be devising a TV show, the next a national lyric writing competition. The young people I work with stimulate me every day. I'm continually amazed by their openness to trying things – it keeps us enthused. Even when some of them have huge challenges in their lives it doesn't stand in their way for a minute."

**[livity.co.uk](http://livity.co.uk)  
[live-magazine.co.uk](http://live-magazine.co.uk)**

**“Our services are ground breaking because team members have the freedom to suggest and try new ways of working with clients”**

Miia Chambers is Director of Development at P3, a social enterprise working with some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The organisation offers people successful and lasting routes out of social exclusion and homelessness through a variety of innovative and effective services, including housing solutions, welfare to work, offender resettlement and alternative education.

Miia, who moved to the UK 20 years ago, had been working in the statutory sector as a policy advisor and most recently in a London council in a commissioning role, before joining P3.

“I had worked for a social enterprise for six years in the nineties and decided to move back into a frontline organisation. The statutory sector was very interesting and gave me so much insight. Knowing how it works on the other side helps so much in this job.”

P3 is a large social enterprise with a turnover approaching £10 million, employing 230 staff across the Midlands and London. Almost twenty per cent of the team were once users of similar services.

“That’s one of the great things about working here – the mix of people. We have a diverse workforce in terms of where people are from and their experiences, but the thing that binds us together is our passion and commitment to delivering services that truly work for those we’re here to help.” P3 has twice finished in the number one position in the Sunday Times UK Best Companies To Work For Top 100 List .

“Employees are given ownership and credit, and as a result feel valued and appreciated. People are encouraged to use their strengths. I think a happy workforce has a lot to do with the fantastic outcomes P3 delivers. Our services are ground breaking because team members have the freedom to suggest and try new ways of working with clients.”

Like all social enterprises, P3 is under constant pressure to generate income to ensure its survival. Every penny counts. Generating good social and financial return is critical – for the organisation and the funders.

**“We have a business to run and that is the biggest challenge. But it’s made easier because we are making a difference and I like working with people who have similar values. There’s no clock watching here. The days go by very quickly, there’s never enough time in the day to do everything we want to do.”**

P3 is something of a pioneer in public service delivery. The models it has developed - the way in which it works with people - can be replicated in other locations.

A major part of Miia’s role entails working in partnership with other progressive and impactful organisations across the public, private and civil society sectors. “We want to continue to transform public services. We can make change happen here on the frontline, delivering good outcomes as well results for the public purse.”

Under new government schemes there are going to be more organisations like P3 delivering public services. Miia says professionals moving out of the public sector and into social enterprises will have a completely difference work experience.

“For those who have been in the public sector for years, perhaps constrained by bureaucracy, this is an opportunity to have the freedom to be innovative. It is tough running a social enterprise and having to find the finance, but it’s also very exciting and rewarding. I think if you’ve got the drive, and a passionate team by your side, the rest is manageable.”

Miia once played professional tennis for Finland. Public service delivery couldn’t be more different.

“I’ve come back to what I always wanted to do. I studied social policy at university and I always knew I wanted to make a difference in society. I still mentor the number one female Finnish tennis player, so I get the best of both worlds.”

[www.p3charity.com](http://www.p3charity.com)



# Ripplez CIC

**“I’m not knocking the NHS, but this a chance to take the good parts from what we’ve already achieved and improve upon them”**

**The changes the government is implementing in the NHS could see more and more people, who would never have contemplated starting their own business, forming their own social enterprise.**

Such is the case with Christine Tully, who has recently launched Ripplez CIC, formerly Derby City Primary Care Trust’s Family Nurse Partnership. The enterprise has been formed under the government’s new ‘Right to Request’ scheme whereby groups of NHS staff can set up their own not-for-profit companies and bid to deliver NHS services.

Derby’s Family Nurse Partnership was set up in 2007 and among the first of similar schemes in the country where family nurses (with midwifery or health visiting backgrounds) would visit young parents. They start working with young parents and their families during early pregnancy up until the child is two years old. Their three main aims are to help with pregnancy, child development and independence.

Christine says: “We had some really good outcomes. Some of the young people we’ve worked with are now in college with aspirations they may never have had. We support them in their parenting but also help them with their budgets, help them get a house, help them stop smoking.”

Young parents are able to gain a qualification equivalent of two GCSEs from the Family Nurse Partnership programme – many of whom have no previous qualifications and are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The social enterprise is made up of seven family nurses with Christine as the lead. There’s also a business manager and business mentor involved to help the team through the launch phase.

Christine decided to take up the ‘Right to Request’ due to uncertainty about the future of NHS funding for the Family Nurse Partnership. “Funding may have only lasted another year so we felt that the social enterprise option would be the best way to continue caring for families.”

They’ve already won a five-year contract with Derby City Primary Care Trust to continue their services, secured a contract for Burton and have received money from the Social Enterprise Investment Fund. The challenge will be seeing what other business they can attract.

**“We’ve got some interest from other social enterprises and philanthropists. We’re looking for funding streams and need to prove we’re a quality service.”**

They also have plans to expand. “We’re looking into mentoring young people and working with job centres to get them into employment. We need to show we can work this as a business first, but we’d like to expand and open a centre in Derby where young parents can go. There’s nothing available to them at the moment.” Christine’s been a nurse since 1969, so doesn’t this make a bit of an unexpected change?

“I could have retired instead, but this change has been motivating. I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t find the work worthwhile and rewarding. I’m not knocking the NHS, but this a chance to take the good parts from what we’ve already achieved and improve upon them.”

[www.ripplez.co.uk](http://www.ripplez.co.uk)



# Give Me Tap

**“As well as helping to reduce pollution and waste in the UK, we give 70% of our profits to water projects in the developing world”**

**As a student at the University of Manchester back in 2009, Edwin Broni-Mensah used to like taking a break from the books to go for a run. His energetic regime meant he drank lots of water, but he resented having to keep buying new bottles and wished he could just pop into a local cafe for a refill.**

“But there was this stigma with asking for tap water. I felt awkward and found myself continually buying new bottles. It seemed crazy when there’s a clean, free supply from the tap. And, I felt bad when millions of people around the world have no access to clean water.”

The predicament led him to create a social enterprise called Give Me Tap. The idea is simple – a person buys a one-off £7 branded aluminium bottle from his company, and participating restaurants and cafés will fill that person’s bottle up with free water whenever they like.

“As well as helping to reduce pollution and waste in the UK, we give 70 per cent of our profits to water projects in the developing world.”

Give Me Tap is supporting the All4One Namibia Water Project, and has already drilled its first borehole to deliver clean water to 1,200 people in the Namibian Kalihari area. As well as providing drinking water, it enables local people to irrigate vegetable farms.

Just over a year after it started in Manchester, more than 50 restaurants and cafés have signed up to Give Me Tap and Edwin has expanded the business to London and York. There are plans for trials in France, the Netherlands and Ireland. He has also launched a new iPhone app which allows people to see the location of their nearest free tap.

“My ambition is that you will never be more than a few minutes’ walk from a cafe which will happily refill your water bottle for free,” says the 26-year-old.

A string of awards and prizes have helped Edwin get his business off the ground and organise his expansion plans. He’s also in contact with a wealth of experienced social entrepreneurs and works with a development manager, a business mentor, a branding coach and PR specialists.

“I’m the only person working full-time on this at the moment, but I have fantastic support. As well my mentors, there are four people volunteering their time.”

Edwin was cited as one of the top 50 'brightest and boldest' and 'ones to watch for 2011' in the North of England by the Institute of Public Policy and Research. He has also been named the most outstanding black student in Britain by Future Leaders magazine.

“My target is to help 10,000 people access water in the next year and by 2015, I want to have helped one million people get better access.”

[www.givemetap.co.uk](http://www.givemetap.co.uk)



Give Me Tap

# Viewpoint Research CIC

**“Working at Viewpoint makes me feel that I’m part of normal everyday life rather than being left out and different to everyone else”**

**Social enterprise Viewpoint Research CIC was formed in 2006 as a telephone research service specialising in customer satisfaction surveys.**

Its mission is to provide employment opportunities to people who find it difficult to find work due to a disability or other disadvantage in the workplace. It has two offices, one in Sheffield and another in Leeds, where a team of blind and partially sighted research assistants are employed.

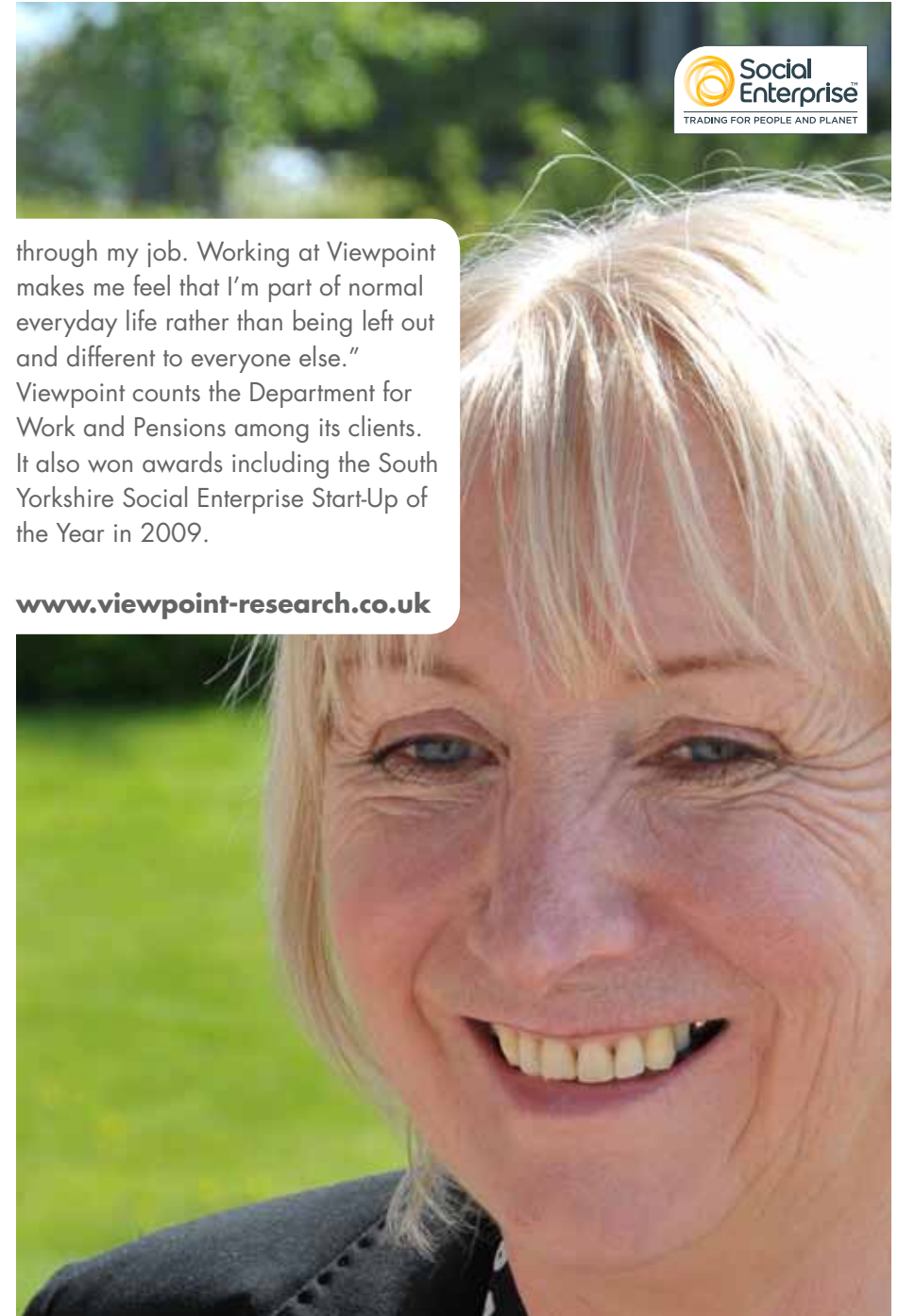
Marjorie Sayer, 56, who now works in the Leeds office, heard about an open day for potential new staff. “I’d been unemployed for quite some time, but I applied for the job at Viewpoint and got it.”

“We’re given training and specially adapted equipment, machines that read hard copy documents and software that reads on-screen text. We’re given a lot of support and time to adapt to new projects. The level of support is great. I’d worked in an office for nine months several years before starting at Viewpoint.”

“It wasn’t a positive experience because instead of helping me with tasks such as franking the post, they’d often just get someone sighted to do it instead. It made me feel inadequate.” Training at Viewpoint covers rapport building, customer service and handling difficult situations. Staff also work a maximum shift of five hours and are supervised on a ratio of one to four at all times. These procedures mean that there is a low turnover of staff.

Viewpoint employs 11 people across its two offices. Members of staff include people who are physically disabled, have mental health problems, or are blind or partially sighted. The majority of the staff were unemployed before joining the social enterprise. It also provides trainee placements.

Working at Viewpoint has changed Marjorie’s life for the better. “It’s made a big difference in terms of my confidence. When I first started I wouldn’t have gone to Leeds on my own to go shopping, but I do now as I’m more familiar with the place



through my job. Working at Viewpoint makes me feel that I’m part of normal everyday life rather than being left out and different to everyone else.” Viewpoint counts the Department for Work and Pensions among its clients. It also won awards including the South Yorkshire Social Enterprise Start-Up of the Year in 2009.

[www.viewpoint-research.co.uk](http://www.viewpoint-research.co.uk)

# Calverts

**“There is openness in everything that we do.... here you have a genuine say in how things are run”**

**Calverts printers and design agency is a workers co-operative. Co-operatives sit under the social enterprise umbrella and are jointly owned, democratically run organisations.**

Calverts formed in 1977, and is based in a two-storey warehouse on the borders of Hackney and Shoreditch, now a fashionable and hip part of London. Arthur Stitt has been a member of the team since the mid nineties.

“I came to London from Ireland in 1984 straight after finishing my printing apprenticeship. I had been working in traditional companies when a friend mentioned that Calverts were looking for a printer.” Arthur already knew quite a lot about co-ops by then. “I was living in Lewisham in a shared house that was run by a co-op and had been a member of a music co-operative. I was in a band and along with other musicians we’d make a donation, which enabled us all to share instruments as well as a space to practice.”

There are 14 employees at Calverts. Everybody is on the same hourly rate, whether a designer, printer or cleaner. Each person has a share in the organisation. There’s no hierarchical structure, instead teams look after the different areas of the business – from finance to the interior design of the office.

“There is openness in everything that we do. Nothing is a secret. We all see the books, so we all know how the numbers are looking. It gives a sense of ownership and that in itself is a great motivator. Here you have a genuine say in how things are run.”

While the positives are plain to see, Arthur says that a co-op needs people who want to make it a success. “All employees need to have energy, commitment and a belief in what they’re doing. People can’t let senior colleagues take home the worry, because that’s not how it works and not how we’re set up. We share the good times together and we share the stresses together.”

As well as having equal pay, Calverts has a flexible working system. “The work-life balance this job gives is a perk. I have a family and want to be able to spend time with them. I leave early two days a week to collect my kids from school. Yes, I do sometimes work from home when they’ve gone to bed, but it makes life much easier.”

Most of Calverts’ business comes from artists, galleries, charities, social enterprises, councils and public bodies, but getting into the supply chains of larger private sector companies is something they’re planning.

“It’s easier to sell ourselves to like-minded organisations. They automatically know what we’re about and identify with what we do. People in the traditional business world sometimes see us as lefties in sandals, which is quite funny really, because we’re not.”

Arthur says that it’d be great to see more co-operatives in the UK.

**“They’re commonplace in Spain and Italy. The UK’s got some catching up to do, but you can’t make people set up co-ops, they’ve got to want to do it. One thing that would incentivise people would be tax breaks – then you’d see more people take an interest. It would be a more attractive proposition.”**

In the meantime the doors to Calverts are open to those wanting to find out more.

“We’re happy to show folk around and talk to people interested in starting up a co-op. We spend a lot of time at work so why not make it something you’re proud of, something with a social purpose.”

**[www.calverts.coop](http://www.calverts.coop)**



# Habitat Aid

**“People are only scratching the surface of what they can do with social enterprise... it’s an area which is only going to grow”**

**The shoots of the idea for environmental social enterprise Habitat Aid started growing when founder Nick Mann, 48, a former financial expert specialising in the Japanese economy, was looking for apple trees to plant in his renovated orchard in Somerset.**

“We were lucky enough to have 10 acres of land, but I found it very difficult to find good quality plants and seeds, and to access information about how best to use my land for my own pleasure and the benefit of wildlife.”

After trawling through various websites he located firms who could supply him with the quality plants he wanted, but realised not all of them were good at selling their products online.

“I eventually found the right fruit tree and wildflower specialists, but if you only sell one type of product in one area you don’t necessarily get picked up by the search engines, and if you’re a small business you might not be able to do online commerce at all.”

Habitat Aid, which started in 2008, brings these resources together on its website, selling trees, plants and seeds from suppliers who often have limited or no online sales facility themselves.

It also has a network of consultants in garden design, green roofs, swimming ponds, and meadow and wetland projects. Habitat Aid introduces the experts to clients. It also offers courses to designers and landscapers encouraging them to incorporate features such as meadows and wildlife ponds in their gardens.

Nick wants people to consider wildlife conservation when they’re designing and planting their gardens. “When people think habitat loss, they think about polar bears rather than what’s happening on their doorstep. Bees are disappearing because there aren’t enough flowers to sustain them.”

Habitat Aid gives away 50 per cent of its profits from online sales to partner conservation charities. Nick decided on a social enterprise model for his business for a number of reasons.



“The charities we’re working with need promoting and funding, and from a business point of view, being associated with them helps us.”

A great example of that mutual co-operation has been the recent success of wildflower seed packets developed and supplied by him for Hillier Nurseries - 50p from every sale goes to Butterfly Conservation and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

At the moment Habitat Aid is small and run by Nick single-handed, but he’s optimistic about the future. “I’m making a worthwhile contribution to the charities I work with and I’m making a living for myself. People are only scratching the surface of what they can do with social enterprise. It’s an area which is only going to grow.”

[www.habitataid.co.uk](http://www.habitataid.co.uk)

# Women Like Us

**“While we wanted to create a business that would be commercially successful on a large scale, we considered the social value of the business to be critical”**

**Emma Stewart and Karen Mattison set up their social enterprise, Women Like Us, in 2005.**

Women Like Us is a recruitment agency which specialises in finding part time work for women who have had children. Similar to other social enterprises, profits are reinvested back into the company. It also offers career support both privately and through public sector contracts, which offer London mothers the chance to improve their CVs and interview skills.

The idea came to Karen Mattison when she was picking her eldest son up from school.

“Talking to the other mothers, the realisation dawned that here was a group of talented women – many of whom wanted to go back to work, but who after time away raising their children, had lost confidence and didn’t know how to go about entering the job market again.”

Karen had previously been the CEO of the charity Mental Health Media. “I left to have children, returned to work as a consultant, providing business advice to public sector organisations and government departments.”

Business partner Emma Stewart had managed a media skills training organisation and had worked as a business and fundraising consultant. “Together we spotted a gap in the recruitment market and founded Women Like Us.”

Initially they approached women by targeting the mothers of their children’s classmates. They have gone on to recruit over 20,000 London based women in search of flexible employment opportunities, and have worked with over a thousand employers who have needed to recruit for quality part time job vacancies.

Emma says: “While we wanted to create a business that would be commercially successful on a large scale, we considered the social value of the business to be critical. We aim to support women – not just so they can find any job – but the right job which matches their skills and experience.”

**Hundreds of thousands of mothers need to find jobs which they can balance with their family lives. Women Like Us believes a quality part-time recruitment market can reduce worklessness, child poverty and the pay gap between men and women.**

Emma and Karen received recognition of the achievements won by their entrepreneurial spirit in 2010 when both were awarded MBEs for their services to social enterprise. They also visited Buckingham Palace to collect The Queen’s Award for Enterprise which was given in recognition of innovation.

Quite an achievement from an idea that was inspired by another day on the school run. The business has doubled in turnover each year since it was founded, and now turns over £1.6 million a year. Its client list includes companies as diverse as the BBC, Santander, London Fire Brigade and Save the Children.

**[www.womenlikeus.org.uk](http://www.womenlikeus.org.uk)**



Emma (l) and Karen (r): Women Like Us

# Mutual Ventures



**“We like being our own bosses and doing things our way – it’s exciting and daunting in equal measure”**

**Mutual Ventures, which launched in January 2011, is a new kid on the social enterprise block.**

**Its three directors – Andrew Laird, Oliver Cappleman and David Fairhurst – all used to work in private sector consulting and were inspired by a shared belief in the emerging public service social enterprise market and so set up on their own.**

“The three of us had a meeting of minds” says Andrew. “In our previous lives we worked with some truly inspirational teams of front-line staff in the public sector and guided them through the process of becoming independent social enterprises. We decided we wanted to do that full-time.”

Mutual Ventures was recently awarded the Social Enterprise Mark, “We want the groups we work with to know that we share their beliefs, so being awarded our Mark at the Voice 11 conference was a big honour for us,” says Oliver.

Moving out of the large corporate world and into small business has meant some pretty big changes. David reveals: “We like being our own bosses and doing things our way, but the level of personal responsibility is obviously much higher – it’s exciting and daunting in equal measure”.

The team have had some notable early successes including being appointed as mentors to the Cabinet Office’s Mutuals Pathfinder programme.

The three gentlemen agree that the social enterprise world is very different from what they’ve been used to.

**“The field is made up of lots of small players, which means that the networks are fantastic and there’s a willingness to work together – it’s a much nicer way to do business,” says Andrew.**

Their clients get praise from David: “Setting up a social enterprise is not for everybody. We’re working with the innovators, those who are willing to try a different way of doing things. The benefits can be enormous, but it doesn’t come without hard work and determination”.

Oliver explains that Mutual Ventures also aims to run a number of social projects on a pro bono basis: “At the moment we’re establishing a programme to help disadvantaged young people set up their own businesses.

Full-time education may not be the right option for them, but they often have better natural business instincts than their more coddled peers - they’re natural entrepreneurs”.

Mutual Ventures has only just started its own journey as a social enterprise, but the directors already have plans to grow so they can offer their support to more front-line staff groups. The combined experience and expertise of the three founders is certainly a good platform on which to build.

**[www.mutualventures.co.uk](http://www.mutualventures.co.uk)**



(l-r) Andrew, Oliver, David : Mutual Ventures

# Thinking Flowers

**“Business can create an ethical ripple, which gets people thinking about issues they may never have considered before”**

**Lauren Craig, 28, first started her floristry social enterprise back in 2003.**

“I had witnessed a lot of street violence, murders, gun and knife crime so I wanted to work in something positive - I fell in love with flowers and they’re a product a lot of people want to buy”.

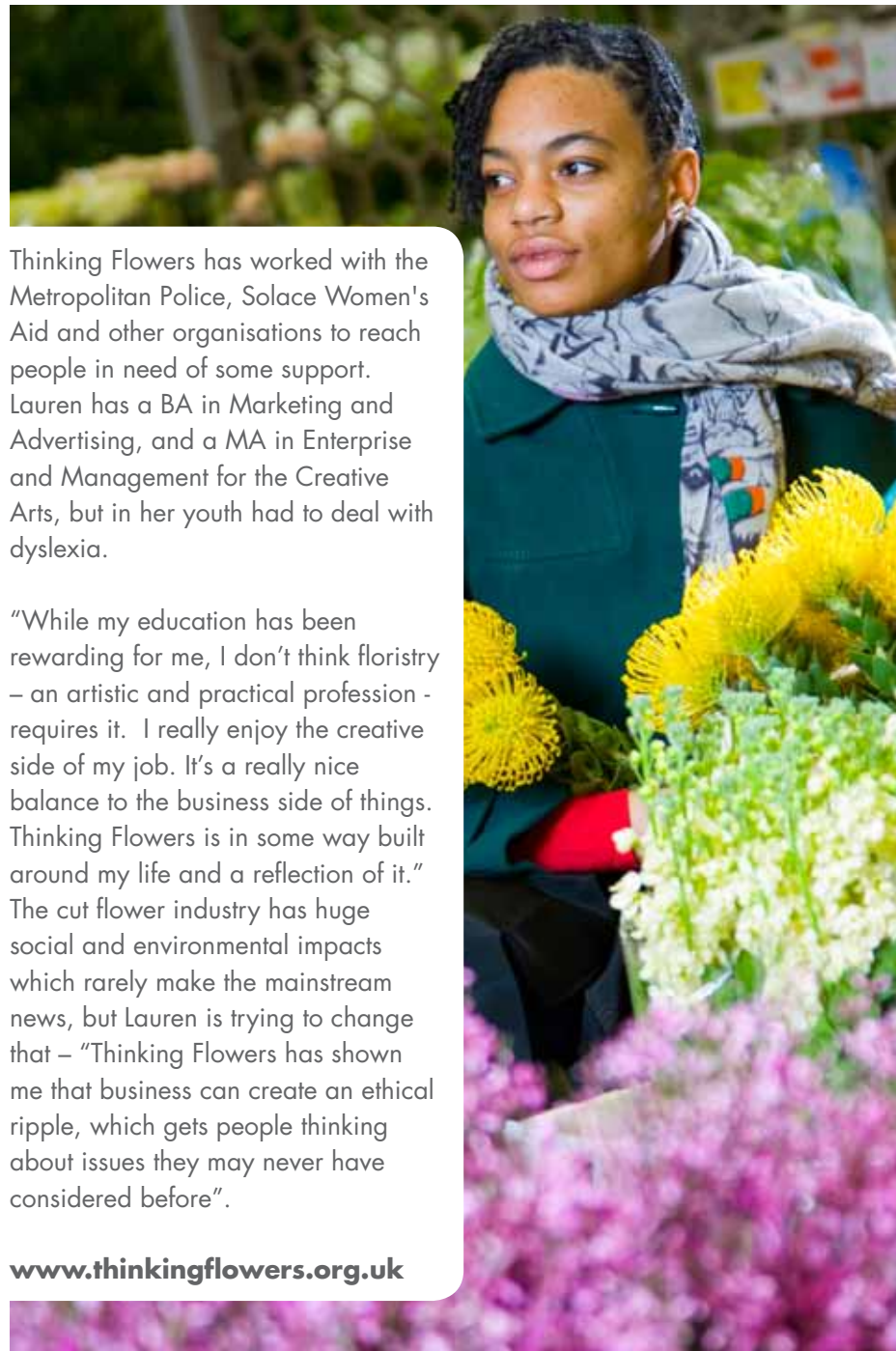
A day at the floral design consultancy starts as early as 2am when Lauren gets up to visit the flower markets. Then it’s over to the studio to prepare orders for clients. The team works with volunteers from all over the world - as far as Brazil, California and Pakistan.

Thinking Flowers has already done a great deal to support people and the environment. It started a green disposal scheme to donate plant waste to city farms and community gardens, and champions the cause of farmers in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania – where female workers are frequently exposed to pesticides which can leave them infertile. It also supports British farmed flowers.

“I want people to enjoy flowers but to also think about where they’ve come from and not to view them as a disposable commodity. People can support the ethical flower industry by being a consumer conscious and looking for the Fair Trade and Fair Flowers labels. They’re a quick way to identify farmers who ensure better rights for workers and use fewer pesticides.”

Thinking Flowers has built up an impressive range of clients including the Tate Modern, British Library, Westminster Cathedral, the Royal Festival Hall, BAFTA, and was even commissioned to create an installation for the Obama inauguration celebrations at the House of Commons.

As well as supplying installations, Lauren’s social enterprise offers courses from holistic floral design and photography to business mentoring. These courses, which improve people’s health and wellbeing, have been delivered to groups including women with experience of domestic violence and the homeless.



Thinking Flowers has worked with the Metropolitan Police, Solace Women's Aid and other organisations to reach people in need of some support. Lauren has a BA in Marketing and Advertising, and a MA in Enterprise and Management for the Creative Arts, but in her youth had to deal with dyslexia.

“While my education has been rewarding for me, I don’t think floristry – an artistic and practical profession - requires it. I really enjoy the creative side of my job. It’s a really nice balance to the business side of things. Thinking Flowers is in some way built around my life and a reflection of it.” The cut flower industry has huge social and environmental impacts which rarely make the mainstream news, but Lauren is trying to change that – “Thinking Flowers has shown me that business can create an ethical ripple, which gets people thinking about issues they may never have considered before”.

[www.thinkingflowers.org.uk](http://www.thinkingflowers.org.uk)

# Further resources

## Jobs & Advice

### Social Enterprise Coalition

National membership and campaigning body for the social enterprise movement. Find jobs, inspiring case studies and links to other useful organisations.

[www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk)

### Guardian Jobs

[jobs.guardian.co.uk](http://jobs.guardian.co.uk)

### Third Sector Jobs

[jobs.thirdsector.co.uk](http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk)

### Escape the city

[www.escapethecity.org](http://www.escapethecity.org)

### Ethical Careers Guide

Your definitive guide to careers with a conscience.

[www.ethicalcareers.org](http://www.ethicalcareers.org)

### PrimeTimers

A social enterprise that finds professional help for voluntary organisations, charities and others looking for interim managers, consultants and mentors.

[www.primetimers.org.uk](http://www.primetimers.org.uk)

## Training, Support & Funding

### Funding Central

Provides access to thousands of funding and finance opportunities for charities and social enterprises, including grants, loans and contracts.

[www.fundingcentral.org.uk](http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk)

### School for Social Entrepreneurs

Provides training and opportunities, and supports people to set up new social enterprises and social businesses.

[www.sse.org.uk](http://www.sse.org.uk)

### School for Startups

UK's leading provider of business training for entrepreneurs.

[www.schoolforstartups.co.uk](http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk)

### Smarta

A website for business owners and entrepreneurs.

[www.smarta.com](http://www.smarta.com)

### Start Up Britain

A new campaign by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs.

[www.startupbritain.org](http://www.startupbritain.org)

### Striding Out

Provides professional coaching, training and networking support to entrepreneurs, career changers, professionals and young people.

[www.stridingout.co.uk](http://www.stridingout.co.uk)

### UnLtd

Promotes social entrepreneurship and provides start-up funding.

[www.unltd.org.uk](http://www.unltd.org.uk)

### UnLtdWorld

A social networking site that connects social entrepreneurs to the people, tools and information they need to change the world.

[www.unltdworld.com](http://www.unltdworld.com)

# Enjoy what you do

## Work in social enterprise

If you found this guide helpful you may also like to read 'Social Enterprise Explained' – for beginners, wonderers and people with ideas, big and small. Answers the basic questions and a must-have for anyone who might want to start, buy from, invest in, commission from, or support social enterprises.

Available to download from [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk)

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