

Social Impact Report 2021/2022



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A Call to Arms

When I wrote the introduction to last year's report, it was a time when the whole world hoped we were at the start of a return to more normal times.

We had moved quickly in 2020 to deliver emergency grants for Power to Change alongside the Social Investment Business, and for The National Lottery Community Fund with our partners Big Issue Invest, Resonance, the School for Social Entrepreneurs and UnLtd. Back then, as 2021 progressed and vaccines rolled out, I could only imagine that we were on a road back to normality, and that Key Fund would go back to primarily lending.

In the last year however, our delivery has been roughly 50/50 grants and loans.

As we now know, normal didn't return in 2021. We had to work hard to support the situation our clients were in. So, we continued to offer grants. **This goes back to our mission: to provide the right money at the right time.**

In sitting down to write this introduction, I feel more uncertain than ever about what the next 12 months will hold. With war raging in Europe, inflation at levels I've never seen in my working lifetime, and a climate crisis coming sharper in to focus, I fear community and social enterprises will face even more challenges in 2022.

Whatever happens though, I commit that Key Fund will continue to work with clients, helping them to support the most disadvantaged and marginalised. Key Fund was forged in response to inequity; with a focus on supporting the creation of diverse, successful and resilient communities, as expressed in our vision.

I'm proud then that, with our partners, we had such a solid commitment to equity and inclusion delivering the Social Enterprise Support Fund in 2021. We met some really stretching targets. We pushed ourselves to do better than the year before. There is learning in what we achieved. We built new networks with partners working in some of the marginalised communities that maybe don't normally access our services. We are passionate about building on this success, to make sure that we are accessible to all the communities we serve. We'll be working hard in the year ahead to expand and embed this work. It's vital we do.

We know that the challenges mentioned above will be felt most by the very poorest and the most marginalised. These are the people who will be the ones making devastating decisions to just get by. That will put a huge strain on our community and social enterprises.



As a support organisation, this is a call to arms. We will have to do so much more, and most likely with less money. The funding available will need to stretch further. The only way to achieve any meaningful support then, is to join forces. To work together. We need our partners and our funders to come with us. To pull in all of our expertise, knowledge and networks to try and address the challenges that are going to come, which will be huge.

This report shows us why. We have to continue to focus on our mission.

I'm continually amazed by what our clients achieve. They face the seemingly unsurmountable, head-on: a young person failed by mainstream education supported to shine; a bereaved elderly woman who finds a renewed zest for life; a veteran whose life is saved. These incredible social and community enterprises lift up those who need it most.

We have work to do.

Matt Smith, CEO

Battling On



In 1999, Christina moved to Kosovo and Bosnia after taking a job with Oxfam and stayed for a further four years supporting war refugees.

Back in England, as Head of Grants and Donors Services for County Durham Community Foundation, an application came across her desk: "It was from a gentleman seeking a grant to set up a charity. I was surprised to see he'd been in Bosnia. I wrote on the application, 'Bosnia! Our paths will cross.'"

Garrett had served ten years in the army, with tours of Bosnia and Northern Ireland, before training as a Scenes of Crime Officer with the police.

In 2012, Christina met him at a work event. She said to her friend, "I've just met the man I'm going to marry." They did so 18 months later.

Before though, his world had come crashing down. "He'd had flashbacks and nightmares from Bosnia. He took a week off work, which ended up as a year."

He did 12 sessions of NHS Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It didn't work.

Christina explained. "He was at rock bottom, suicidal. So, he engaged privately a psychotherapist who used neuro-linguistic psychotherapy (NLP). It shifted his military trauma."

Garrett set up Veterans at Ease to offer veterans the choice of NLP, which wasn't available on the NHS. All its therapists are ex-Forces.

"It's veterans supporting veterans. A lot of the time that's the key to getting them through the door," Christina said. "We pick up the extremely complex cases of PTSD who have perhaps been through the NHS and are at the point they say there's no other hope. We say there is, engage with us."

NLP is not offered on the NHS as it is not recognised by the regulating body, NICE.

"America is way ahead. Their initial clinical trials show an 85% success rate for NLP, compared to the NHS's 35% success rate for CBT. We are mirroring those results."

To date, they've supported 500 veterans, with around 40% presenting suicidal thoughts.

They've been chosen as the delivery agent for the first clinical trials of NLP in the UK with Kings College London and Belfast University.

"It is revolutionary. In 10 years, it will completely change the way people look at and hopefully access therapy."

After it registered as a charity in 2011, its trustees secured a Big Lottery grant of £386k to cover four years. In 2015, when Christina joined, she quickly realised they had no contingency plans. It had three offices, four therapists and company cars.

"We couldn't stop the haemorrhaging of money."

By July 2017, they were close to shutting.

That summer, they made everyone redundant except Gareth who went to 40% salary. Christina became Treasurer and started looking at the future from a business perspective.

The only way forward was to open a trading arm.

They tapped into the fact the North East is home to 22% of the British Army.

"We have more than the average number of veterans in the area and supporters of the military. So, we took the decision to go down the route of charity shops."

Key Fund gave the initial grant and loan investment to open the first shop in Whitley Bay in 2018.

"The beauty of Key Fund is it gave us enough money to start up. It was a loan against the enterprise. It wouldn't affect the charity reputationally or force it to close if it went pear shaped."

They now have five charity shops in the North East, two with therapy centres on the premises. The shop pays for the rent and running costs at the centre.

Key Fund gave a further £100k investment in 2021 to expand into Norfolk and Tees Valley, where they are on track to open five more shops.

"It fits our ambition to become a national charity. In Covid when we went online, people came from all over the country asking for support."

Turnover will be £400,000 this year, with a projected £1m turnover by the end of 2023. They currently employ 31 full and part-time staff.

Trading is more vital than ever. During Covid, the team were successful with grants, but workload increased for the therapists, with a 180% uplift in demand.

"We're also supporting the emergency services. What happened in Covid nobody has experienced outside combat medics. It's going to explode in terms of the mental health need to those frontline services."

Without Key Fund, Christina said they wouldn't have been able to expand.

"I have a lovely relationship with Key Fund, they've been very supportive. They talk you through things and make sure it's right; they show their support."

Their plan is to have shops and therapy centres in the most prolific armed forces areas in the country. "We've ridden the storm, come out the other side and used our time during Covid to expand – we've come out of it stronger."

Funded by
**Northern Impact
Fund and the
Regional Growth
Fund**

Amount awarded
Loan

£121,000

Grant

£33,000

**EDI Group
Lived Life
Experience**

Supported
87 individuals



To date they
have helped
up to 500
veterans

Spotlight: Veterans at Ease

Andy Wilson

Assistant Manager in
the South Shields shop

As a kid, Andy was in the army cadets. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1985, a path he knew he'd take, but problems in his personal life changed the direction.

On tour in Germany, his wife racked up debts on his bank card, then 'did a runner'. "I lost my wife, my house, in the space of weeks." The army paid off his debt, and he took a second job as a bouncer in a squaddie bar to pay them back.

He employed more bouncers as business boomed. Then he was seconded to the Gulf War.

After the war, he left the army to focus on his business. He expanded and qualified as a licence manager, with an ambition to manage his own nightclub.

One night, he got into a fight.

"I put a guy in hospital pretty bad, and got arrested." He lost his job as a licence manager. Then he lost his bouncing contracts, as one of his men sold drugs on the door, tarnishing his reputation.

He took up agency work and remarried in 2014.

"I started drinking heavily, and arguing with my wife and would go missing for days on end. My best pal witnessed an outburst, and said I think you have PTSD."



Spotlight: Andy Wilson, Veterans at Ease

Andy dismissed it. A year later, he stormed out after a row, drunk.

“I headed down to Scotswood Bridge, and thought I’m jumping, I can’t deal with this anymore.”

He was stopped at the statue there called, Yesterday, Today, Forever.

“It’s of an old Shire horse with a miner holding the reigns, and on the back of the horse are two children. All I thought of was my kids. If I jumped, I’d never see them again. I was found by the police unconscious, gripping onto the legs of the horse.”

Encouraged by his military pals, he reached out to Veterans at Ease.

“The therapy made things bearable and easier to live with. It totally re-programmes your way of thinking around trauma.”

The PTSD resulted from his time in Iraq, and trauma from childhood.

“My parents didn’t have a good marriage. They used to run a pub. My dad stood on the flat roof with two knives in his hand, my mother was in the carpark with the police, and dad was threatening them, saying you’re not taking my kids. Eventually, the police stormed the pub and got me to safety and had my dad pinned down, which wasn’t nice to witness as a three-year-old.”

Veterans at Ease offered him a role of Logistics Officer, then assistant manager at the South Shields shop.

“I would be dead if I hadn’t sought their help. They saved my life.”

Andy performed a play of his experience at Scotswood Bridge. “It was one of the most emotional things I’ve had to do.” In the audience was the Mayoress. “After, she saw me and burst into tears. She said, ‘I want to tell you - that statue; I commissioned and paid for it to be built. To hear your story is so moving, I haven’t got words to describe it.’”



Inclusion Matters



Based in Rotherham, Diversify was founded by Sara Cunningham and Dawn Purvis.

Both women, now in their mid-thirties, were working for a small charity that delivered diversity training around disability. After the charity folded, the pair decided to not only continue its work, but build on it.

Diversify was founded in February 2019. The team offers business consultancy in diversity and inclusion subjects to help businesses in relation to law, fair HR policies, and good practice. It also delivers workshops in schools across the country to help schools become fairer and more understanding environments.

Dawn explained, “We’re trying to bring awareness through personal stories and experiences. If you stand in front of people and say I have a disability, and this is how it affects me, you get more empathy, rather than lecturing people on what they’re meant to do and not meant to do.”

Sara was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in her early twenties and had suffered workplace harassment, winning a tribunal case; her employer was found in breach of disability laws. Dawn, who has chronic fatigue syndrome, had also struggled with her career due to her illness.

"At my worst, I was sleeping 20 hours a day, but was still exhausted," Dawn said. She struggled with post exertion malaise. "It's difficult to plan your life because you're not sure what will trigger it, and your baseline of energy can be depleted so quickly."

With no assets, Key Fund gave a £32,075 loan with a £5,425 grant to help set up their Community Interest Company: "We wouldn't have been able to start if Key Fund hadn't given us the funding at that time."

During the pandemic, furlough and Covid grants ensured they survived. "We were ready with the database, processes and marketing and the first workshops were ready to go, with four or five bookings, and then Covid hit." Dawn said.

To date, Diversify has reached 24,810 children and 2,265 adults, a figure rising month-on-month. It employs four staff and a small team of freelancers to deliver its workshops.

Profits from its corporate clients go towards lowering costs to schools in poorer areas. With a turnover of £180k in 2021, the ambition is to become less reliant on grants.

Both Sara and Dawn are members of the LGBTQ community. Their team all have lived experience of discrimination, due to their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability.

"Schools and teachers talk to us a lot, and often contact us if they have an issue or problem at school. One had an issue with racism. A black pupil had hand sanitiser put in his bottle of water as bullies said he needed to be cleansed."

Bullying is the common thread, and their workshops focus on misogyny, LGBTQ, disability, gun and knife crime, and race.

"Anybody who has been bullied is at a much higher risk of self harm. I was self-harming at 13. It's a common teenage thing," Dawn said. "Trans people are also at much higher risk of suicide, and of being physically bullied. I think that's part down to the big deal in the papers about trans rights, and people are either for or against. Just as they're trying to work themselves out, they find themselves in the middle of a massive political argument, which is only going to make them feel worse as they're aware some people hate them."

Dawn feels the divisiveness of our age necessitates the work of Diversify.

"Everyone has an opinion now on social media. If it's someone with lots of followers who has an unkind opinion and they're an influencer it's going to have an effect, whether it's someone who writes their favourite books like JK Rowling or some other celebrity. Now you have 11-year-olds on social media and they can form opinions from there."

The isolation of Covid, she believes, made children more vulnerable, not helped by the wider news agenda.

"They are feeling more anxious and unsure. I did a workshop for nine-year-olds the day before the Ukrainian war started and a little girl was saying she was really worried as they have nuclear bombs and was terrified that they'd press a big button and we'd all be dead."

Dawn sees a strong future for Diversify as the organisation become less reliant on grants.

"Basically, at a time when everything is so divisive it's about putting more kindness into the world. All we're saying is people are different, don't treat them differently because of it. It's just an understanding of others, and for people to have a little more humanity."

Funded by
Northern Impact Fund

Amount awarded
Loan
£32,075
Grant
£5,425

IMD
9% most deprived

EDI Group
LGBTQ and
Disability

Worked with
Over 11,000
individuals

We wouldn't
have been
able to start
without Key
Fund

Spotlight: Diversify

Monique Russell

Monique Russell, 27, grew up in Nottingham.

"I was quite a wayward child. I had different learning needs within school, so was quite boisterous and got into trouble."

Monique was from a single parent home, and a single child.

"At the time, my mum was working two jobs so we had enough money for the electricity and gas. I was in an area that had a low social demographic."

She grew up in an area that had problems with gang crime.

Her life changed after a guest speaker spoke at her school assembly. It was Richard McCann. Richard's account of surviving childhood trauma became a UK bestseller. It told the harrowing story of how he and his sisters were left motherless when the Yorkshire Ripper killed their mother, Wilma. Richard went into care, struggled with drug addiction and imprisonment, before turning his life around as a family man and career as a motivational speaker.

"I was so engaged; it was like wow," Monique said. "I wasn't engaged at all with school, or the teachers or curriculum, but someone coming to speak to us on a level with such transparency, it shook me. I just remember from there; it changed my whole direction. Knowing he changed his life around and how happy he was it was amazing because it was real and raw."

Monique now delivers workshops for Diversify.

"The reason I do the work that I do is it's important to say to pupils that you can actually achieve, because I did. I didn't have much confidence in myself, and I don't think a lot of teachers saw what I could achieve.



Spotlight: Monique Russell, Diversify

As cliché as it sounds, it only takes one person to plant a seed. Someone came into my school, and did that for me, so I was able to push myself and get into university.”

Monique studied creative writing, and her life experiences bled into doing panels and workshops.

“I started off doing mediation and mindfulness workshops before I collaborated with Diversity Now and they saw I had a lot to offer with my own experiences.”

“My role within Diversify is an advocate,” she explained. “I travel up and down the country and give workshops on different diversity issues, such as LGBTQ and disabilities, physical or mental. At Diversify everyone has their own backstory, so we’re able to engage on a personal level, it isn’t someone just speaking at you, you’re able to articulate and come from a place of truth and transparency.”

Issues she sees include gang crime and knife crime. “It’s very prevalent up and down the country, London or Leeds - it’s the same dynamics. Bullying is the big issue, whether it’s to do with homophobic, transphobic, or disability, weight, or social demographics – bullying is always going to be a problem.”

Monique is aware of how formative situations can be when you’re a child.

“Words have so much weight, and a lot of the time people grow up and had things said in primary or secondary school that follow them into adult life. That’s why as clichéd as it sounds it’s always important to be kind. It can make children go into adulthood not feeling valid, or feeling insecure, when ultimately, we all deserve to be validated.”

For Monique, her ambition is to engage with as many pupils or businesses she can, and have a meaningful impact. “It’s about coming to a place where we all understand equality.”



Enabling the Disabled to Holiday



Disabled access is a human right.

So, when Charles and Jo - parents of 13-year-old Kit - discovered London had no accommodation that is fully accessible for those with complex physical disabilities, they were stunned.

It all began after they set up a Facebook group, Accessible Holidays and Day Trips.

Charles explained: "AbleStay was inspired by an amazing woman called Emma Moss. Emma is a wife and mother living with Motor Neurone Disease. Emma posted in the group in Dec 2019 asking for advice, 'Does anybody know of where we can stay in London?' She listed her requirements - profiling bed, ceiling hoist, fully accessible bathroom, changing table, wheelchair access and adjoining carer bedroom - all the things needed by our son and thousands of others. When there was no response, my wife Jo and I did some research."

He found a hotel chain that offered accessible rooms, but they were woefully inadequate and guests had to compromise.

They spoke to Srin Madipalli, the Head of Accessibility (Homes) at Airbnb who is also a wheelchair user. He confirmed their findings that specialist holiday accommodation wasn't available for people with more complex physical disabilities and their families.

"That was the point we thought, we're going to do something about it."

Charles said: "Going by the government's own figures with the 'Changing Places' programme there are at least 250,000 people living with a disability who require a Changing Places facility. If they are travelling, they never leave home without their carers or family, so that figure rises to around a million. The number of fully-accessible properties in England and Wales to meet the needs of a million people is 13. The un-met need is massive."

Their Facebook pages have 28,000 users – parents, carers, those living with a disability and health specialists – covering a whole spectrum of disabilities.

Charles spent ten years serving in the British Army before becoming a business development director, a job he gave up to work full-time on AbleStay.

"You have to have a certain skill set to make something work," Charles said.

Kit has quadriplegic dystonic cerebral palsy. He suffered brain injury at birth.

"Kit requires total postural support. Kit has no fine motor control, he is unable to walk, stand or sit independently, he can't even roll over in bed; we get up usually three times in the night to turn him. Kit is also non-verbal, so he uses a communication device to talk. He attends mainstream school, has a great bunch of mates, loves football, has a season ticket to Manchester City, loves going to watch Harrogate Town play, and loves life."

Charles and Joanna were awarded significant funds towards his life care after the hospital admitted failings. Although they had the finance to find bespoke solutions for Kit, Charles and Jo are aware other families face extreme financial hardship caring for a family member with disabilities.

They set up AbleStay in February 2021.

"When we talk to people about AbleStay and why we're doing it, and then talk about the numbers affected by this, the response most have is, 'wow, surely there should be a law against that, surely there has to be some provision?'"

The couple used their own funds to pay a deposit and take on the £670,000 mortgage on a bungalow in London.

After being turned down by the banks, Key Fund invested £70k towards the specialist equipment and alterations to meet high-end support standards.

The bungalow will be rented out from £300 per night (sleeping six).

Furthermore, Charles is tapping into his corporate networks to seek charitable donations that will fund families who can't afford to rent the bungalow.

It means carers – and siblings - of those with a disability also get much-deserved respite. Kit has a younger brother, Oliver.

Charles has secured free day passes, worth over £200, for each family that stays in London from Merlin Entertainments, who run major attractions such as the London Eye, Sea Life, Madame Tussauds and Lego Land in Windsor.

The bungalow already has a long waiting list, and aims to support 90 families in its first year. Charles has been contacted by 14 specialist overseas travel agencies wanting to book too.

Charles is now on track to create a further four bespoke properties after securing the support of a capsule investment company.

"In ten years, I'd like to say that AbleStay as a brand, has a property in every UK city that people want to visit. Thereafter, we wish to move abroad."

Without Key Fund support, they would have been stuck. It had taken five months to find the perfect property to convert.

"We had to know we could secure funding in order to make a purchase, and at the time we'd been turned down by all the larger and mainstream lenders. Had I not have found that contact with the Key Fund, there's every chance we'd never have been in a position to buy. The relationship we now have and the money itself, have been absolutely critical to where we are now. We are so thankful to Key Fund for enabling us to help so many people."

Funded by
Northern Impact Fund

Amount awarded
Loan

£54,000

Grant

£16,000

**EDI Group
Disability**



It means carers – and siblings of those with a disability also get much-deserved respite.

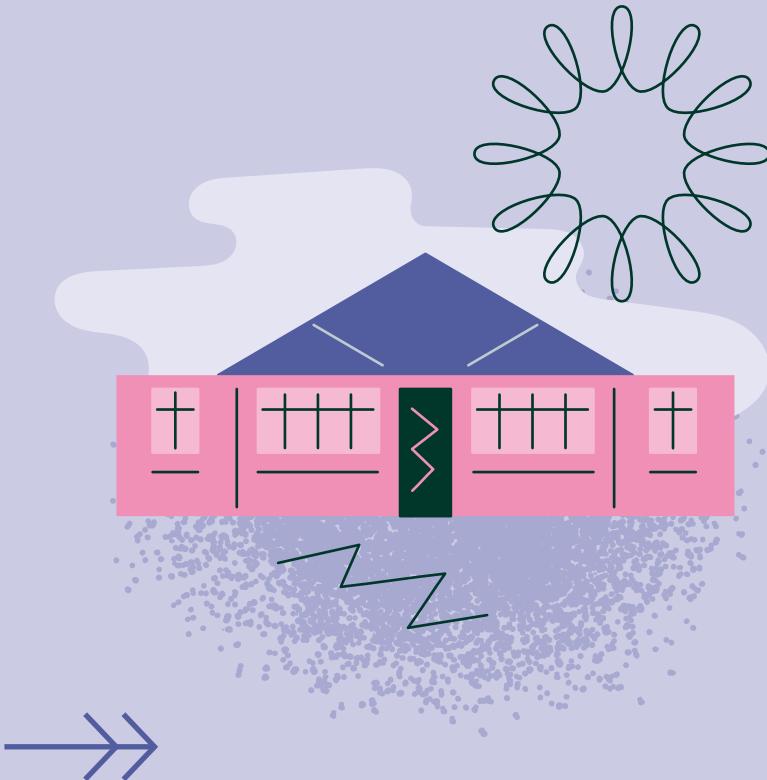
Spotlight: AbleStay

Jo van Berkel

Kit's mother Jo read the poem Welcome to Holland at her son's christening.

She explained: "When you're going to have a baby, it is like planning a fabulous trip to Italy. You read the guidebooks and make lots of plans. The day arrives, you pack your bags and off you go. But when the plane lands, the stewardess announces, 'Welcome to Holland'. So, you read new guidebooks, adapt your plans. You think life is going to take you off in one direction but it takes you on another. At the time, it is bewildering and overwhelming, but once you've settled, you realise it is a very rewarding and beautiful place to be."

An advocate of disability, Jo is committed to giving her son Kit opportunities, but she knows how all-consuming it is.



Spotlight: Jo van Berkel, AbleStay

"I call it extreme parenting. Your life is on a trajectory and all of a sudden, your child has a catastrophic brain injury, and your life has to go off on a completely different trajectory. It's so extreme."

Kit is dependent on an array of equipment, aids and devices. "A wheelchair enables him, it's his legs. His talker enables him to talk. His teaching assistants enable him to access the curriculum."

Before AbleStay, a family trip to London would necessitate four hotel bedrooms.

"It costs a lot; you can't live together as a family. Kit is fed via a tube, and you can't prepare his blends in a hotel room. It's not restful."

Leaving the house to go anywhere is like a 'military operation'.

"When we go away, we literally go in two cars, a big wheelchair accessible van and another car because we have to take so much equipment. In the AbleStay bungalow, all that will be there. It's going to feel like a holiday in a home that suits everyone's needs."

Jo understands the impact on the wider family to have respite in a place where everyone will enjoy staying.

She said: "When you go on holiday, you pour over brochures and expect it to be a treat. For Kit, there isn't even somewhere lovely for him to stay, it's always a compromise. Why should you, because you're disabled, go somewhere that's not a lovely environment? Why shouldn't people with complex disabilities have the same opportunities as able bodied people?"

The opportunity AbleStay affords for families like hers, is the opportunity to travel.



This year's stats

Loan £2.6m

Grant £2.5m

Total £5.1m

Average award size £55k

Leverage* £9m

Total Impact just over £17.5m

Businesses created/sustained – 93

Jobs created/sustained – 173

**IMD – 70% of the investments
were made into the 30% most
deprived areas**

* Leverage: additional funding as a direct result of our investment

Total Impact in 22 years;

Loan

£46m



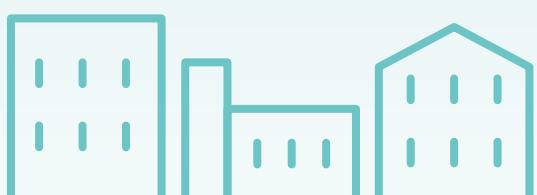
Grant

£21m



£1 = £4

For every £1 invested at least £4 of Impact is made



Business created/sustained

2855

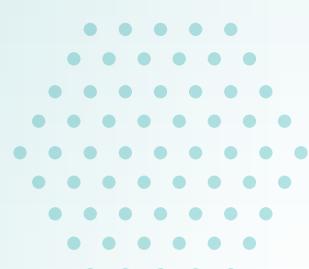
Jobs created/sustained

3906



Leverage

£52m





It's Really Neet



Sophie Maxwell was just 22 when she founded the Really Neet Project.

It aims to make education accessible to vulnerable young people who struggle with mainstream education due to social or mental health issues alongside external barriers, such as homelessness, leaving care, or being a young parent.

“Our main principle is youth work before education,” Sophie explained. “If you get the youth work right, the education will follow. We can’t expect a young person who hasn’t got a roof over their head to come and sit in a maths lesson, we need to solve those external barriers and make sure they’ve got safety and stability.”

Sophie went through years of domestic violence in her own family home growing up. It led to disruptive schooling. At 14, she dropped out.

“I eventually ended up homeless at 16 and on my own.” Two years of homelessness followed.

“I always turned up to my local athletics track, so I was actively engaged in something positive all the way through that difficult time, and eventually trained myself as an athletic coach,” she said.

Sophie knew she was at risk of falling down a dark path.

“I was sharing rooms with people hooked on heroin or crack. The death of a friend to a drugs overdose was a catalyst.

“At that point I reconnected with education. I didn’t want to follow suit.”

At Sheffield College, her life transformed.

“I met an incredible tutor called Paul who taught me on the sport and leisure course. He was terminally ill with cancer, and spent the last two years of his life helping me to believe in myself and my education.”

Sophie moved out of the homeless hostels and got herself through university.

“Paul was a big inspiration. I’m sure he saved more than one life in his time on this planet.”

Straight out of university, Sophie set up the Really Neet Project.

Over a decade later, it has expanded to four sites in Rotherham, Barnsley, Telford and East London. Key Fund invested a £127,200 loan and £22,800 grant in March 2020 to help the expansion.

In the last two years, the enterprise has gone from a £500,000 turnover to £2.2 million; staff has risen from 15 to 40.

"Key Fund has been brilliant," Sophie said. "That was a key time because it was right at the beginning of Covid. Everything slowed down and the councils who fund our courses were paying really late. **Key Fund was instrumental in keeping cash flow in the business. Because we were able to keep going with that reserve in the bank we've been able to triple in size in the last two years.**"

Sophie has given TEDx Talks and spoken at One Young World, a global conference for young leaders, and shared a stage with Kofi Annan and Bob Geldof; she was selected to represent the UK with Megan Markle and Prince Harry on a gender equality global group.

Around 90 young people have gone through the four sites in the last year, with 130 expected next year.

"We have a music studio, we do art and woodwork, and run sport and occupational studies. We take our students to the Exotic Zoo in the Midlands, where they do Zookeeping, so it's very hands-on and engaging. With English and Maths, we strip out the curriculum to make it thought provoking, interesting and relevant."

They also offer to pick-up and drop-off students to remove any external barriers to accessing the courses.

"We do loads of enrichment. I'm a big believer of fun. Fun improves mental health and social communication, so we take them quad biking and rock climbing – anything that lifts their mood and makes them feel good about themselves. It all builds into a whole-person approach."

During Covid, as a special educational needs provider, they continued provision. They adapted to working outdoors with masked lessons to small bubbles on site. When fully closed, they sent educational packs, hosted virtual lessons and bought laptops for all their students, alongside arranging food parcels for their families. As an independent school, they didn't qualify for government schemes, so funded the laptops from their own money.

Despite it being incredibly stressful, they still expanded. "It made us stronger," Sophie said.

"Key Fund have been involved from the early days. Every time they've been involved, the funding or the guidance that they've provided has played a pivotal role in terms of the growth and the impact of our project."

Now, they have exciting and big plans for the future.

The ambition is to move away from renting their sites from corporate landlords to owning community assets and land, building Really Neet Super Centres.

"We're two years away from being able to develop our first Super Centre. We're in regular contact with Barnsley council, as it's set to be on the border between Barnsley and Rotherham, and meeting with architect students at Sheffield Hallam University to design the centres, and how to make them eco-friendly, so that's really exciting."

Not only that, the team aims to overhaul the national educational system, working with the awarding body, NCFE.

"It's been a long journey of trying to change the exam system," Sophie said. "It isn't fit for purpose, there's inequality - it's traditional, paper-based assessment. We're working to create immersive, technology-based assessment for young people. It will level the playing field, and that's really exciting."

Funded by
Northern Impact Fund and SESF2

Amount awarded
Loan

£127,200

Grant

£64,299

**IMD
2% most deprived**

**EDI Group
Minoritized ethnicities, LGBTQ and Lived Life Experience**



Spotlight: The Really Neet Project

Sean Flinthan

Sean Flinthan, 18, lives in Telford.

"I've never really done well in school," Sean explained. "I came out of secondary school in Year 8. Mainstream education can be very difficult, especially for people with autism and ADHD; it's very unsettling when the classes are too big, lessons can be quite difficult especially being around so many people."

Life with autism he says can make the world feel like a big scary place. "Everything can just be very overwhelming."

A love of animals gave him an outlet.

"I first started liking animals when I was younger, at the age of six. I used to like reptiles quite a lot so I bought a bearded dragon, he's a rescue, I've still got him."

He joined Really Neet a year ago.



Spotlight: Sean Flinthan, The Really Neet Project

"Really Neet is very comforting, with a lot smaller groups than school, it's very chilled out. It's very useful if you want to get away from school but still want to do your exams. I never used to have a great attendance at school, but I do here."



Sean now plans to go to college.

"They helped me to get into college to study Zoology and reptiles."

Without Really Neet, he says he would be stuck. "I'd have nowhere to go. Covid knocked around the education system, so I didn't have the chance to do exams in Year 11, so coming here has helped me loads, to do what I want to do. Really Neet is exceptionally great in my opinion."

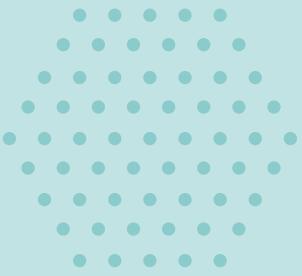
He's excited about his future.

"I want to do a Master's degree and get as much knowledge as I can. Then I want to set up my own business breeding endangered animals, from invertebrates to reptiles, conservational stuff - making it a safer environment for a lot more animals," Sean said.

"I want to help people too. Reptiles can play a big part in this world, especially in medicine, the career I want to go into with venom and genetics can actually help chemotherapy and breast cancer, which I think is really cool – scorpions and snakes play a big part in medicine for chemo."

The Really Neet team said they get 'choked up' by 'what an inspiring young man' Sean is.

Sean said: "For me, it's been about finding the right people to help you use your difficulties in a way that helps you shine and be the person you were meant to be."



Stitching the Community Together



Paula Gamester always had chutzpah.

"My dad was a welder and worked as a ship builder in Camel Laird and my mother a school dinner lady," she said, unable to explain how she ended up a serial entrepreneur. "It's just innate in me, I think."

Paula established several successful businesses, both in the UK and in Dubai UAE, where she worked with global brands such as Calvin Klein and Emirates Airlines, before she set up The Sewing Rooms.

"The sewing started when I was about 14. I wanted to have the height of fashion, and being the eldest of five, money wasn't available. So, my mother bought me a second-hand sewing machine and I started making my own clothes, designing my own. I turned my school uniform into a pair of hotpants and the blazer into a bolero. We were taught by nuns, who sent me to the headmistress. I didn't even get past registration. Everyone was saying, 'have you seen Paula with the hotpants on!'"

After working in Dubai, with 'obscene wealth' she returned to the UK, working at the local Chamber of Commerce as a business advisor, using her experience to help others. It led to an interest in social enterprise.

"I got really inspired by it. So, I left the Chamber and set up Connector Media all those years ago."

The Sewing Rooms, a manufacturing and training social enterprise, is a project of the Community Interest Company, Connector Media. It was established in 2007.

It began after Paula saw an opportunity.

"I heard Ikea was looking for a charity or a social business to make curtains. So, I got in touch with them. We didn't even have a sewing machine then; I just had the idea for a sewing project."

A delegation from Ikea visited her in Lancashire.

"I was fearless really, I'd not long come back from the Middle East, where I worked with all the top hotels and brands, so, it didn't faze me. We got the contract."

Profits generated from its trading activities pay for its social impact, which is generated from its sewing clubs and well-being courses.

Projects to date include Mindful Sewing with Refugees from Syria, teaching sewing and business skills to women in the criminal justice system, and working with disaffected teenagers as well as the elderly.

"Silver sewers started eight years ago with lottery funding. When funding ran out, we couldn't get rid of these women! They wouldn't go, so we carried on. Some have lost jobs, or they're bereaved, some are at a really loose end, ship wrecked really; they have all these different stories, and just love being together."

The purpose-built accredited sewing academy has provided training and support for over 4,000. They employ nine people, with a bank of sessional tutors and trainers for specialist projects.

After securing major new contracts to make soft furnishings for the Marriott Hotel and Premier Inn, they took on a loan of £90k to buy new equipment and take on new staff to service the contracts, moving into new premises, costing £30k per year in rent.

"Everything was looking rosy. Within six weeks of moving, Covid hit. All of our contracts ceased, and we had no money and we had to pay back this loan."

Paula said: "It was really a difficult time. I tried to get government contracts to make PPE, as we had a manufacturing department. We wanted to be part of the solution, but I couldn't get anywhere."

Paula and the team persevered and galvanised 60 volunteers, secured a Big Lottery grant, and began to make masks. Around 35,000 were donated to key workers and the most vulnerable. Paula also saw commercial opportunities.

"I thought to myself, businesses need masks and will pay." One of the biggest commissions was from Peel Ports in Liverpool for 4,000 branded masks for its workforce.

During Covid, the Local Authority chose them as an organisation embedded in the community to distribute aid to families in crisis, providing clothes or food.

"We were able to keep our staff, they were employed right the way through, and we were able to pay off the loan," Paula said.

But then, the bottom fell out of the mask market.

"The hotel work hadn't materialised as planned, and it's just been a rollercoaster. We found ourselves last December in a crisis point. I was worried I didn't have enough money to pay the wage bill, and that was when the Key Fund stepped in to help."

Key Fund gave a £19,200 loan and £5,800 grant.

The investment Paula said was 'critical': "I needed a quick turnaround to pay wages and Key Fund were absolutely fantastic. It gave me some breathing space to go out and secure more contracts, so we're steadily starting to grow again."

The team is still reeling from Covid; Paula recently suffered a bad bout of it, affecting her own health.

"To be honest, we don't know the full extent of the impact of Covid. I think it's having a terrible effect on people, their mental health and well-being. It's horrible. So, we try and bring joy and light and laughter whenever we can."

They've been designing their own product range and developing new business contracts.

"It's still a struggle, but there are little green shoots."

Funded by
**Northern Impact
Fund and SESF**

Amount awarded
Loan

£19,200

Grant

£5,800

**EDI Group
Women and Lived
Life Experience**



The sewing
academy has
provided
training for
over 4,000

Spotlight: The Sewing Rooms

Ann Stubbert

Ann Stubbert and her husband Nick were active on the West Lancashire charity committee.

In 1991, Ann was medically retired from her career in the NHS after an accident at work left her with spinal injuries.

“I worked for the NHS for a long time, I started off as a telephonist.”

That same year, tragically Nick died suddenly in their driveway.

Ann, now 80, said: “He was just 52. I lost myself. I found it very, very difficult, and I’ve been on my own ever since.”

Ann said; “I never knew my father, I was only two when he was killed in 1945, he was in the Royal Engineers and my mum never re-married, and I feel I’ve gone down the same path with my husband passing away so quickly.”

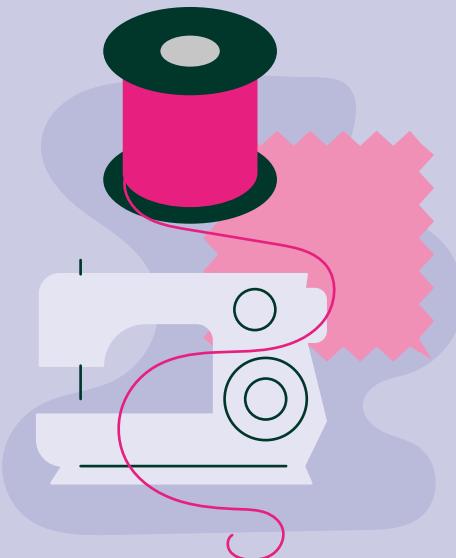
An old school friend, Maureen, had co-founded The Sewing Rooms with Paula. Ann believes The Sewing Rooms have put Skelmersdale ‘on the map’.

“I’ve known Maureen over 75 years! We were in school together; she has been fantastic as a friend. Anything going on, she’ll always get me involved.”

Ann began attending the Sewing Room sessions.

“Oh, the Sewing Rooms, oh my goodness me,” she said fondly.
“I’ve got an operation next week, and just thinking about the Sewing Rooms, all the anxiety has gone quite out of my head about going into hospital!”

“The Sewing Rooms breathed new life into me, they really did,” Ann said.



Spotlight: Ann Stubbert, The Sewing Rooms

“Maureen and Paula were doing well-being classes, and we’d have regular entertainment and the friendships we all made was absolutely unbelievable. Everyone who came every week, you’d see them changing. At first, they’d be really nervous – I was one of them – you’d see them getting more confident, week after week.”

Ann still has the needle cushion – the first thing she ever made there. “I was so proud of it.”

“The Sewing Rooms brought back so much confidence to me that I never thought I’d see again.”

Thanks to her previous fundraising work, Ann was invited to be Mayoress of West Lancashire in 2018. Mobility problems meant she had to step down in 2019.

“I don’t want sympathy from anyone please. I had the most wonderful year as Mayoress, it was out of this world. I met the Queen.”

“The Sewing Rooms to me was a new beginning when I lost my husband,” Ann said, but she hasn’t been able to attend for two years due to the pandemic.

“Through the pandemic, I was vulnerable and couldn’t go out,” Ann explained.

“They’d come up the drive! Maureen was one of them. They’d come and talk through the window! If the weather was nice, they’d sit in the garden and talk through the window, so you always felt you had somebody who was there for you.”



Maureen Fazal, Director of The Sewing Rooms and Ann’s friend



Standing up for Community



Gulnaz Hussain grew up in Firvale.

"From a young child, lots of people came to our house with lots of issues. The advocacy support not available to them was taken up by friends and family," Gulnaz said.

"As economic migrants, my dad and other ex-steelworkers said we should set up something that helps our communities."

What began in a front room in the 1960s, evolved in 2013 into the Pakistani Advice and Community Association. In 2017, to reflect the increasing cultural diversity, it was renamed to the Firvale Community Hub.

Gulnaz went on to university to study Applied Social Sciences and began a career in community development work, but always volunteered at the hub, and helped its grant applications.

Key Fund was an early investor.

"I helped get their first grant from Key Fund, to secure their first manager. That was a long time ago!" Gulnaz said.

Firvale is located amongst the 3% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

Keeping her eye on the hub, Gulnaz realised it needed someone with vision to steer it through the challenges on its doorstep; she moved to a paid role in 2003. As CEO, she turned it around.

"We've gone from strength to strength," she said. "I wanted good things in the area. A lot of the community is very diverse, and there was a big struggle around resources and barriers because of misunderstandings around cultures."

Moving into a renovated former hotel, she helped create a community centre.

"We're grassroots and on the frontline, we put locals first. The social impact is from a range of different services led by demand."

The team works with migrants from Eastern Europe and Muslim communities, promoting community cohesion, and is a founding member of the Sheffield Roma Network.

The hub provides unemployment support, education and training, health and well-being services, and community advocacy. More than a thousand people a year pass through its doors. "In short," Gulnaz said, "we're problem busters".

Operating in a rented building though was restricting their expansion.

"Under a landlord, we had our hands tied and couldn't develop in a way we wanted to. So, the board said let's sit down with Key Fund, and we worked up a proposal."

Key Fund gave a £175,000 loan and £75,000 grant for the majority of the building purchase costs in 2019.

The hub now has a sustainable income stream, renting out offices in its building to the council. It's trading income stands at around £40k per year, with an annual turnover of £600k.

"It's been so amazing for the community to have this building. We've been able to direct our own projects and have ownership of them. It's been inspirational, it's been positive. We can make decisions and continue to expand our services, which are so needed - we're very busy; there are queues outside."

Language barriers and poor and cramped housing around transit communities were a major factor during Covid. The hub gave inroads to the local authority and public health bodies to access these communities.

They ran a letter box service to help those needing support, as well as a helpline, tackling complex situations.

"It's an area of deprivation and decline. We're dealing with lots of people on the poverty line, and lots of families in the migrant communities who struggle accessing the system."

Without the hub, Gulnaz said these people would feel disenfranchised in a system that doesn't work for them.

"We're a conduit and their voice. If we weren't here, they'd be further health inequalities, poverty and digital exclusion. We're trying to empower, so people don't become reliant, but are empowered by our services. I've seen the turmoil, the hardship, but the social impact of our work is huge."

Gulnaz is a commissioner on the Independent Sheffield Race Equality Commission, to help achieve racial equality and social justice city-wide.

"We've been known to be very assertive, and not fit in, and very complicated. In that, we've always shined through in terms of our social impact and the lives that we've helped for people in these communities."

The community hub is accredited to national standards with AQS in immigration advice and Matrix for information, advice and guidance, as well as being able to offer pathways to education and employment. It has a staff team of 19, with 30 volunteers.

Key Fund has an important role.

"Key Fund has stood shoulder to shoulder with our hub and taken us to the next level. They gave us our first grant to appoint a manager. So, historically we respect them. We were down and out, and felt brushed aside at that time, so whenever anyone did something for us it was really important. They made lots of things happen for us," she said.

"With Key Fund, I feel like I'm talking to people who know you, and are there to help – they talk the language we talk. They have a belief in our organisation and always helped us, supported us and guided us. The opportunities they give to local organisations is phenomenal."

With the cost-of-living crisis and divisions around migration already having a "massive impact" on her neighbourhood, Gulnaz is braced for the future.

"We're never out of turmoil," she said. "But I have hope. It can change for the better. It's having that hope. I've seen change. It's going to be tough, but when has it ever been easy for us? And we've come through."

Funded by
Power to Change

Amount awarded
Loan

£175,000
Grant

£75,000

IMD
3% most deprived

EDI Group
Minoritized Ethnic

Worked with
Over 8,000
individuals



Spotlight: Firvale Community Hub

Maxine Zokari

Maxine Zokari, 62, was born and grew up in the area. Aged 20, she left to live in Doha with her husband who worked in the military police, before he moved the family to Yemen, where he was originally from.

"I've got 8 children, four boys and four girls and 29 grandchildren," Maxine said. In Yemen, the marriage broke down. Her husband moved to America and at the age of 40, Maxine returned to Sheffield and got divorced.

"It was like my life was actually over at 40," she said. "It was really rough in Yemen." Maxine had been in a violent relationship. "I had regular beatings from him, rape."



Spotlight: Maxine Zokari, Firvale Community Hub

Firvale Community Hub became a friendly and safe place for her to turn.

“I don’t know what I’d do without that community centre, they’re absolutely brilliant.”

Recently, Maxine suffered a family bereavement.

“When my niece died, I went and sat in a room with them and they let me cry, and let me pour it all out, that’s how good they are. Gulnaz said, ‘Anytime Maxine, come in, have a coffee, have a talk.’ That’s what you need round here, people that care.”

The hub helps her fill in forms for her son, who has cerebral palsy. She also has epilepsy and angina, and attends the ‘Food and Mood’ group, with weekly classes on health and well-being.

“My weight was bad because I was comfort eating. I was 19 and a half stone when I started going to this fitness awareness class and my weight has gone down to 14 stone.”

She attends meetings to discuss what the community can do on issues in the area, such as littering and anti-social behaviour.

“This is what we need. Without them we’d be nothing round here, and a lot of people would agree with me,” Maxine said.

“Without them, who would we turn to? Nobody? You’ve got a problem - you go to the community hub. They have a million percent my vote. They are absolutely fantastic, you should see what kind of people they are - they make you feel welcome, they never turn you away.”



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

We continue to believe that Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion has to be at the heart of everything that we do - supporting the creation of resilient and successful communities. This is what we have been working on this year.

Diversifying investees

We are in dialogue with our investees and other social enterprises to make sure we are as accessible as possible to the communities most in need. We are also monitoring the makeup of our investees and the communities they are serving. Taking part in the delivery of the Social Enterprise Support Fund 2 that was referenced in Matt's intro has supported our focus on this due to the rightly challenging targets on this contract.

Working with partners

We understand that we can't single handily remove structural barriers to finance. That's why we are actively collaborating with other social investors to share knowledge and best practice and have signed up to Diversity Forum's sector wide Manifesto.

Marketing

We have integrated an EDI lens into our marketing and communication strategy. This means cultivating long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with social enterprises led by/supporting marginalised groups to act as critical friend; diversifying our infrastructure and community led organisations networks and building trust in Key Fund and social investment more widely.

Inclusive workforce

We have invested resource dedicated to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work.

We are on a long-term training journey. This year we are reflecting on our power, privilege and personal bias and further developing our inclusive behaviours.

In order to actively remove barriers to entering the social investment sector we are setting up a training scheme for young people from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds in the social investment sector.

Our gender pay gap is 6%, the salary for a male member of the team is 6% higher on average.

Governance

We have diversified the membership of both our Investment Panel and Board. We are integrating an equity, diversity and inclusion lens into our governance, strategic aims and decision making at Board and Investment Panel level. We have a staff and board EDI Working Group that oversees the implementation of our annual EDI Action Plan.

We are on a long-term training journey. This year we are reflecting on our power, privilege and personal bias

Better, Together

It's been a year since I started as Chair of Key Fund.

At the very start, I spoke of my belief that our sector – and Key Fund – play a vital role in narrowing the inequity gap. Back then the gap was wide. Today, with the clouds of war, crippling energy prices, soaring inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, worryingly it looks set to widen and deepen.

Key Fund operates primarily in the North, which has the greatest inequalities within its regions, as well as comparatively with the rest of the UK.

The work of Key Fund is as urgent as it's ever been, and the board is not resting on its laurels.

This year, three long-standing board members retired. We worked hard to ensure the transition of three new members was careful and considered, not only to replace the skills lost but add experience that we felt was needed, particularly around Inclusion, Diversity and Equity.

Being able to meet face-to-face once more has helped grow robust relationships. **We've embraced training and team building, investing time and expertise to be the best board we can to support Key Fund's ambitions.**

During lockdowns, many of our clients went on repayment holidays as trading stopped. That clearly had an impact on our own financial position. I'm proud then of how we were able to both support our clients and come through that period in a better position than predicted, thanks to being nimble and flexible. We worked with new partners so that we could offer emergency grants at that time of uncertainty, a lifeline for so many of our clients and the communities they serve.

Partnership working was, and is, critical. This is the year I hope more organisations than ever across our sector will join us to work towards a common cause. **Covid taught us how to put egos and competition to one side. We can be better, together.**

We have to work collaboratively to work smarter, to do more with less. Key Fund has a strong reputation for reaching underserved communities, which is why many funding organisations work with us. We are well placed then to truly listen to our communities to really understand the kinds of support needed.

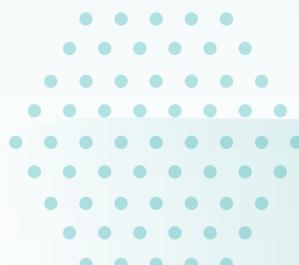


Social and community enterprises never fail to instil a sense of inspiration. They are run by remarkable people doing essential work in that gap between what people need and what the state can provide. The case studies in this report are humbling to read. They also give a renewed sense of urgency to our work.

I'm beyond proud of Matt Smith and all the Key Fund team, who continue to meet the on-going challenges head-on, with passion and with care. As a board, we work to instil confidence, to provide support and leadership, as well as challenge and scrutinise this incredible organisation so it continues to move in the right direction.

As more people in our communities make impossible decisions during this cost-of-living crisis, the Key Fund's mission to get the right money and support into the right places at the right time, couldn't be more important.

Sam Keighley, Chair





Growing
Enterprise in
Communities

Are you a potential client or investor?

Get in touch with us now and request a free information pack. It will contain all the relevant information you need to take the next step.

Remember that without you, there is no us!

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