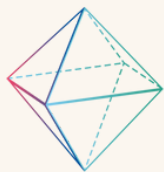


Social Innovator Stories



**Social Innovation
Connect**
UK



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WELCOME

Since 2007, The Melting Pot has supported social innovators, creating a community of people who, together, create change and address some of the complex problems faced by our society.

The Melting Pot is Scotland's Centre for Social Innovation. An inspiring community of people striving to make the world a better place. Through coworking, collaboration and learning we accelerate our members success and amplify the positive change they are creating for people and planet.

We have worked in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University to collate these stories of social innovators. Inspiring individuals who have set about to tackle different social problems from homelessness to climate change. Through sharing their stories we hope others can both learn and understand the role social innovation has to play in creating positive change in the world.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

With Thanks to Glasgow Caledonian University, Social Innovation Connect UK and our Social Innovators in helping us to collate these stories.





CONTENTS

04 The Remade Network

A grassroots network of repair social enterprises creating jobs, tackling climate change and reducing inequality.

06 Emotion Works

An educational programme for emotional learning and wellbeing in early years settings and primary schools.

08 Edinburgh Tool Library

A tool library building a community as well as building things.

10 Invisible Cities

A travel company training people who have experienced homelessness to become walking tour guides of their own city.

12 Bikes for Refugees

A charity supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged refugees and asylum seekers through the free distribution of bicycles.



Meet Sophie

Sophie Unwin: Remade Network

Sophie established the Remade Network. She successfully launched the Edinburgh Remakery, before moving from a one-shop model to offering a more diverse range of services governed by the needs of local communities.

About Remade Network

Remade Network works with a range of local partners to stimulate a culture of repair, to reduce the pressures on natural resources and celebrate the creativity and resourcefulness within some of Scotland's poorest urban areas. Its work comprises three core activities:

- 1. Training and education.** The organisation recently delivered a six-month training programme for young people, teaching repair skills and providing paid work experience in the refurbishment warehouse.
- 2. Repair shops and pop-ups.** Due to Covid, this began as a simple hatch in an established community centre where people could drop off electrical goods and textiles to be fixed and picked up at a later date. Once restrictions lifted, Remade Network opened premises on the high street in Govanhill, offering affordable repairs, interesting workshops, refurbished tech for sale and recycling points. It also operates pop-up repair surgeries across the city.
- 3. Digital inclusion.** Remade Network distributes free or heavily discounted refurbished computers to charitable organisations based in Glasgow to improve digital skills amongst their service users.



What helped Sophie along her social innovation journey?

Sophie highlighted that growing her enterprise from a one stop shop to a network of services, was challenging but support such as:



- ▶ A network of social innovators with whom she could share ideas, challenges and work together to find solutions.
- ▶ Access to an affordable social innovation learning programme that wasn't too time intensive but provided useful tools and learning.
- ▶ Mentoring from others who had been on a similar journey.
- ▶ Physical space to work and meet other innovators.

"When you're doing something new, you don't necessarily feel confident in what you're doing, because it feels like an experiment all the time. You're creating your own pathway, setting your own direction, but you need people travelling with you. And you also need people who have travelled before you, who've encountered some of the same problems and who can put them into perspective. Just normalise them, I'd say."

SOCIAL IMPACT

- 2,500+ computers distributed
- 20 community groups engaged
- 40 jobs created for young people

 remade.network

 @remadenetwork

 @remadenetwork

Meet Claire

Claire Murray: Emotion Works



Claire was motivated to improve children's emotional literacy early on in their school career. She has translated her teaching expertise, ability to collaborate and solid concept into a successful business providing wellbeing training and resources that could be applied to various activities and scenarios within the Scottish syllabus.

About Emotion Works

Emotion Works offers a suite of training programmes and resources to help teachers and early years practitioners to deliver emotional education to children. As well as supporting mainstream educators, Claire has also designed programmes and products to teach children with additional needs and is now creating Gaelic materials too.

Having been a teacher herself, Claire created Emotion Works to complement the Scottish Curriculum and be flexible to address the different needs or topics covered in a typical classroom.

As the unprecedented impact of Covid took hold of our schools in 2020, Claire quickly adapted the resources she already had to support her 'tribe' of teachers facing the challenges of home-schooling. This led to Emotion Works launching more online learning packages, to reach even more schools around Scotland beyond the pandemic.



What supported Claire on her journey?

When Claire began the journey of establishing Emotion Works, she felt down on her luck having been let down by a previous employer. A friend and mentor encouraged her to get involved in a programme where she would be surrounded by like-minded individuals; changemakers like her, who passionately believed in something and were willing to work hard to make a difference.

Claire found confidence, inspiration and encouragement within the learning programme and from the facilitators. It helped her realise: *"these things actually are possible. I think it was a turning point. It gave me the belief that social change is possible as a result of one person..."*

Coming from a career in teaching and the public sector, Claire also gained a lot from spending time focusing one business area at a time and understanding how to grow an actual business from the seedling of a great idea.

Claire also highlighted finding time every week for headspace and time to truly focus on her idea was essential. Putting this time aside helped her recognise that *"You weren't just playing at having an idea and making it up. You actually felt it was a serious proposition you were working on."*



SOCIAL IMPACT

- Won the Scottish Business Woman of the Year 'Social Impact Award'
- Supports c.600 primary schools

 emotionworks.org.uk

 @emotionworks

 @EmotionWorksCIC

Meet Chris

Chris Hellowell: Edinburgh Tool Library



Chris started out running a small tool lending scheme out of a disused police box in Leith. Fast forward 7 years and Edinburgh Tool Library boasts 7 employees, 50 volunteers and 4 locations! As the first and biggest tool library in the UK, Edinburgh Tool Library is now helping other communities across the country set up and learn from its experience.

About Edinburgh Tool Library

Edinburgh Tool Library's premise is simple – it's like a book library, but with tools instead of books. However, Chris has grown it into something much more holistic, using tools and DIY to engage, equip and upskill communities across Edinburgh, through:

- 1. Tool Library membership.** Any adult can pay an annual subscription of £10-£30 and borrow unlimited tools from the dedicated library in Edinburgh, thus reducing costs, waste and carbon footprint.
- 2. Skills training.** The organisation has two venues where its volunteers run events and workshops for members and the general public to learn DIY skills or practice woodworking. It also holds special workshops for disadvantaged groups such as refugees, asylum seekers, LGBT young people and domestic abuse victims, teaching participants how to build, fix and create with confidence.
- 3. Community builds.** Anyone can come to special classes where they can learn skills whilst making something useful for other charitable or community organisations. Examples include Little Free Libraries, accessibility ramps, benches, potting sheds and bird boxes.



 edinburghtoollibrary.org.uk

 @edinburghtoollibrary

 @edinburghtoollibrary

 @EdinToolLibrary

SOCIAL IMPACT

- 1,400 members and 30,000 loans
- Over £1.5 million saved by sharing
- More than 20 community builds

Chris's advice for others...

The most important aspect is finding others who understand what you are trying to do and developing relationships with them. "Entrepreneurship can be quite a lonely road, so having other people that really understand this to talk to and get advice from was hugely significant."

Also making sure you understand the business model of a social enterprise versus commercial and charitable organisations. "When you're starting a social enterprise, you can be standing so close that you can't be objective about stuff. Sometimes you just need somebody who is independent from your project...and see things with a different perspective."

Having access to a shared workspace and its wider community is also beneficial. "Sitting in your own flat, working on your own on something is tricky. Going into a space and seeing friendly, familiar faces, or meeting others who are further along their journeys of entrepreneurship was really helpful."



Meet Zakia

Zakia Moulaoui: Invisible Cities



Multi award-winning tour guide company, Invisible Cities, has gone from strength to strength since Founder, Zakia, set it up 7 years ago. It began as a pilot in Edinburgh and has grown to 4 cities across the UK, with more franchises opening soon. The organisation acts as an authentic voice in the tourism sector, offering visitors an alternative guide to beloved cities.

About Invisible Cities

Invisible Cities trains and empowers people who have experienced homelessness to create, craft and deliver sightseeing tours in their own cities, highlighting monuments, people and places they have chosen themselves. Not only does the organisation deliver social impact in the form of employment and experience to the people they train, but it also acts to reduce the discrimination surrounding those who find themselves homeless. Its core work includes:

- 1. Unique tours.** Invisible Cities creates unique walking and virtual tours of four UK cities, and has recently developed its model into a franchise so that trusted partners can run similar operations in other locations. The franchise scheme has been set up to ensure the guides receive essential localised support for ongoing challenges such as housing, mental health, addiction, family liaison, access to food etc.
- 2. Employment opportunities.** At the moment, Invisible Cities employs 16 tour guides and has supported dozens of other trainees into positive destinations in the travel and hospitality sector.
- 3. Stopping the stigma.** Through the tours, guides and their personal stories, Invisible Cities aims to reduce the stigma and misperceptions of homelessness. Staff also deliver presentations to, and run events within, schools, communities and corporations to challenge negative narratives and promote inclusion.
- 4. Local projects.** A 'Guide Committee' has been established to allow guides to submit ideas for localised ways to spend a pot of money generated through tour sales. Projects funded this way are focused on improving the life quality of people experiencing homelessness, or connecting to local communities. Examples include welcome packs for Ukrainian refugees and a 'street barber' giving free haircuts and shaves.

The value of an incubator programme in developing social innovation initiatives:

Zakia credits having access to an incubator programme as being the “catalyst” to making her social business idea a reality. “Most valuable to me was having dedicated time to do things. Having a weekly workshop means that you have the mental and physical space to dedicate to your idea. That was the best thing for me because it gives you accountability.”

She explained that, on entering the programme, she just had a vague idea of training people with experience of homelessness to give tours in Edinburgh. By the end of the incubator, she’d gathered the knowledge and confidence to already begin training potential guides. Engaging with the homework, planning each step and actively, honestly talking about her project to her peers on a weekly basis motivated her to take action. “I really believe that if you talk about something, then it's real.”

Through the networking opportunities of the incubator, she discovered organisations that would go on to help her build Invisible Cities into a viable enterprise, through both funding and partnerships. Building her network in Scotland, becoming part of the social enterprise community and “having a seat at the table” were fundamental to the Invisible Cities journey.



SOCIAL IMPACT

- Trained over 100 guides in 4 cities
- Voted Best Community Tour in the World by Lonely Planet in 2021



invisible-cities.org



[@invisiblecitystours](https://www.facebook.com/invisiblecitystours)



[@invisiblecitystours](https://www.instagram.com/invisiblecitystours)



[@InvCities](https://twitter.com/InvCities)

Meet Steven



Steven McClusky: Bikes for Refugees

Bikes for Refugees established as a charity in 2016, after a chance meeting between Steven and Yaman, a Syrian New Scot. A bike was donated to Yaman to assist him with his resettlement. Bikes for Refugees was born! It started out being completely volunteer led. Now they employ 5 staff and are the only dedicated organisation providing this unique support to refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

About Bikes for Refugees

The strength of Bikes for Refugees lies in its simplicity. It distributes free bicycles to refugees and asylum seekers to help them navigate a new city and access essential support services which may be far away from their accommodation.



The project encompasses:

- 1. Bicycle distribution.** Most bikes are donated to the charity, which then refurbishes them and gives them to New Scots, with waiting lists that can extend to a year-long in Glasgow.
- 2. Welcome packs.** Provision of free bike accessories, plus information and signposting to other free services and local activities, for refugees and asylum seekers.
- 3. Community group support.** In the form of free community meals, bike fixing sessions, led rides and cycling skills.
- 4. Volunteer opportunities.**

Steven's advice to others...

He recommends finding time and space to pause, reflect upon and challenge existing practices. Take a step back, to strategise, forecast, analyse risks and develop contingency plans.

He also highlighted finding and connecting with a network of peers who can help you to feel less isolated on your social innovation journey.

Identify and understand your role as a founder and leader. "I was very much guilty of putting everything and everyone else before myself. Taking time out to focus on my role within the organisation, and the importance of that. Being reliant upon volunteers is not sustainable, and the work that I was doing in the organisation would need resources – no matter if it was me or another person in that role."

Formalise the key positions such as CEO and secure funding to make the roles a reality. His team has now grown to four staff members, with a Volunteer Co-ordinator also in place to train, resource and support the volunteers so crucial to the charity's ongoing activities.



SOCIAL IMPACT

- Refurbished and distributed over 1,800 free bicycles to New Scots so far



bikesforrefugees.scot



@BikesforRefugeesScotland



@Bikes4Refugees



@Bikes4Refugees