



Impact Report 2017



Building resilient and cohesive communities through social entrepreneurship



mayamada Social Ark comic

Learn • Love • Live

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A Word From Our Founder



Impact reports always seem to start with organisations showcasing amazing success stories, case studies, and smiling testimonials - ours will too. However, behind the smiles, our young people have continued to fight against inequality both locally and nationally. Our entrepreneurs have created the Social Ark family, and I feel that I owe it to them to explain why they felt such a 'family' was needed.

The Social Ark family was created due to the lack of relatable hands-on support available for young entrepreneurs from tough backgrounds. Our communities are changing and our young people complain about feeling pushed out, overlooked, and not taken seriously. Social entrepreneurship is on the up and our deprived communities attract well-meaning individuals, all determined to come up with innovative solutions to solve our toughest problems.

We believe it is our young people who are best placed to come up with the solutions. They want to welcome the new residents and are happy to work alongside them and enable them to learn from their life experiences. However, Social Ark young people are on their own journeys to become community and business leaders and they constantly tell us that they "don't want to be cured or fixed by people that have never walked a day in their shoes." They want the tools and support to fix themselves.

We want to influence organisations through our work and hope that those in positions of power recognise the long-term value of nurturing grassroots leaders. During 2017, the resilience of our young entrepreneurs was tested to the max. We supported personal issues including child abuse, racism, suicide, poverty, judicial court cases and high levels of deprivation. Against the odds, they have all continued to grow and develop social businesses that deliver outstanding impact. They are 'tender ready' and can compete in today's market. This type of social entrepreneurship empowers the whole community and instils an infectious 'can do' attitude. Our work addresses community cohesion head-on, it brings people together and changes lives.

I'd like to say a massive thank you to all of our supporters and especially to the Social Ark young people, for trusting me and the team and allowing us to be a part of your journey.

Lisa Stepanovic

Introduction

About Us

Social Ark CIC is a social enterprise based in Tower Hamlets that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to use their lived experiences in order to develop social businesses. Many of them have experienced poverty, a lack of education, disability, immigration, homelessness and the criminal justice system. Social Ark was set up with seed funding from Barclays and has also been supported by UnLtd, The Big Lottery Fund, The Postcode Lottery and The East End Community Foundation. We work with the local community, corporate volunteers and expert mentors who all contribute to the success of our programme.

Our Vision

An equal and inclusive society where young people are judged for where they want to go, and not where they've been.

Our Mission

To equip young people from tough backgrounds with the skills, know-how and support to transform their lives and the communities around them.

Our Values

Our values are at the heart of everything we do. Inclusiveness, equality, respect and empowerment for the whole community regardless of race, religion, class or other social barriers.

Why We're Unique

We understand the value of empowering young people who may have otherwise been overlooked or 'written off'. Many lack self-belief and often tell us they've had doors shut on them due to their backgrounds. Social Ark recognises the struggles of 'hard to reach' youth and the wrap-around care that we provide sets us apart from other organisations. We value lived experience over formal qualifications and welcome all entrepreneurial ideas that are in line with our values.

We have made our mark in the local community by insisting on our inclusive values. People from different cultural and social backgrounds are getting to know each other and having fun. We are determined to create a resilient community where individuals are defined by how they empower and champion each other, rather than personal wealth or social backgrounds. Residents have grown to trust us - they get involved in our various projects and are keen to support our work.

"We love attending the classes and sessions that Social Ark put on. If it wasn't for these free sessions, I wouldn't be able to afford getting involved in any community activities. It's great that Social Ark are providing these activities and supporting the development of young people from tough backgrounds at the same time." - [Saleen, local resident](#)

"I'm so glad Social Ark is part of our community. My daughter can't wait to apply to the entrepreneur programme. I never realised social entrepreneurship could be a viable career option. This is great for our young people and our communities too, it's a win-win!" - [Naseem, local resident](#)

[Social Ark works collaboratively in partnership with the local government, housing associations, corporates, education and other non-profit organisations. This report outlines some of what we have achieved in 2017.](#)


10 Things You Need To Know About Social Ark In 2017



In addition to supporting our entrepreneurs' businesses, we separately funded 114 free community activities in Tower Hamlets



Over 600 local people directly benefited from our entrepreneurs' businesses



We have shared our learning with UnLtd, Spirit of 2012, Comic Relief, The Active Change Foundation & The Prince's Trust



We've worked with 25 volunteers & mentors ensuring our young people access professional support



We have set up our Continued Personal Development offer for the young entrepreneurs'




Social Ark has directly nurtured the development of 18 social businesses



We've delivered our Grassroots Empower Programme to 80 local young people



We provided over 1400 hours of learning including 3-hour weekly entrepreneur workshops and over 1000 hours of 1:1 support



We've spent over 260 hours attending our entrepreneur's events



Social Ark has ensured all businesses have an in depth understanding of the importance of policies and procedures. We have separately funded business insurance and extra training to ensure our young entrepreneurs meet all legal requirements and are 'tender ready' and able to confidently deliver in the community

What's Next.... 2018

This April, we are launching our 'Step Up' social entrepreneurship programme. 10 young entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds will use their lived experiences and learn the skills needed to set up social projects and businesses. Our impact will be far reaching as the young people will be supported to pilot their projects in the local community. This type of grassroots social entrepreneurship creates a ripple effect and brings individuals from all backgrounds together, creating new opportunities and empowering the most isolated and excluded. We expect that at least 80 individuals from the community will benefit from each project. Therefore, we estimate that at least 810 individuals from marginalised backgrounds will directly benefit from our programme.

What's Included?

- 20 half-day learning workshops which will teach leadership and business skills
- Weekly 1:1 sessions for extra support
- A corporate & specialised mentor from their chosen field
- Help to pilot, test and evaluate their project
- Out of hours additional support for personal issues and arising challenges
- Help to access funding
- Access to the Social Ark peer network

Our Continued Personal Development Programme

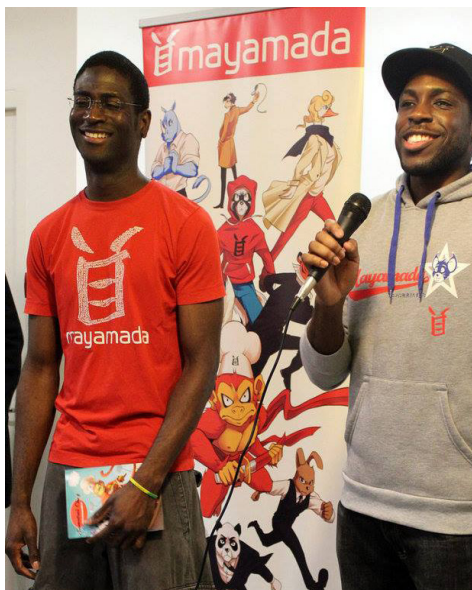
Continuing the support of our entrepreneurs who have already been through the programme is extremely important to us. We realise that as their businesses grow, they often need additional support and guidance. As well as facilitating our weekly drop in sessions, we will also be hosting monthly expert learning sessions, additional 1:1 support and networking events as part of our Continued Personal Development programme.

Cheryl Ndione - Founder & Director, Purple Moon Drama

"Social Ark has really helped me with ongoing guidance and best practice advice for my startup company. It's great being part of a network of people facing similar challenges. The Continued Personal Development programme has been invaluable to me and my business."

Nigel Twumasi

Co-founder of mayamada



Nigel's passion to inspire creativity in young people comes from his own experience in seeing the lack of creative support in mainstream education. Nigel wanted to address this through his socially conscious manga brand, mayamada. The #BeCreative Academy is a series of workshops aimed at building creative confidence and raising aspirations among young people. He now successfully delivers in schools and youth organisations throughout the United Kingdom. Social Ark helped Nigel to establish proof of concept, supporting him right through the ideas stage to delivery.

Nigel - "The #BeCreative youth workshops were brand new work for me. Although I knew how to teach young people how to create stories and characters, I wasn't sure how to package my passion, or how to reach out

to schools and youth organisations and get them to buy into my creative workshops. Social Ark helped me to test and pilot the project. They helped me to embed proving impact and evaluation into everything I do. The extra support I've received through their Continued Personal Development programme has been great. I've been supported with putting on events, received safeguarding training, had access to business mentors and helped with proposals. I'm in a great place with the workshops now, and I'm excited to be a peer mentor to a new Social Ark entrepreneur."

Alla Taha - Business Mentor

"Social Ark CIC is a fantastic initiative that really supports people from disadvantaged backgrounds and gives them advantages to excel in their community-led business ideas. Having volunteered with Social Ark supporting Nigel for almost 5 months, I am continually inspired by the dedication and support of Social Ark. This organisation is exactly what the community needs, and I can thoroughly recommend volunteering here. The opportunity to use your skills to help empower people in your local community is so valuable".



Megan Kavanagh

Founder of Megzi Pearls



Megzi Pearls was created because Megan is passionate about floristry. She wanted to bring women, and mothers, together from all backgrounds, including those from similar backgrounds to her own. When Megan first came to Social Ark, she was in a very different place. Although full of passion, she lacked the skills or know-how to make her idea into a reality. Social Ark introduced Megan to the world of social entrepreneurship and provided her with floristry training. She was supported to pilot and test her idea and was matched with a master florist mentor.

Megan - “Being a single mum on benefits and having not done so well at school, I never dreamed of owning my own business. Social Ark has taught me what it means to be socially conscious. I have learnt the importance

of having inclusive values and the power of bringing underrepresented groups together. Although I was really passionate about being a florist, I didn’t really know much about flowers or business. Social Ark taught me the skills needed to run my business and made sure I was matched with a master florist mentor who has supported me the whole way. I’m really proud of my personal journey; a highlight for me was being commissioned to provide my services at a wedding in the Tower of London for a member of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. I wouldn’t be where I am today without Social Ark; they are always going above and beyond for us young people.”

Neil Bain - Master Florist/Expert Mentor

“It has been a pleasure to be a mentor to Megan and to support her to realise her potential and believe in herself and what she can achieve. As a mentor, I’ve provided help and support at all levels, intrinsic and extrinsic, physical and verbal. I have been able to show Megan how to make-up designs and motivate her to do and engage in activities. I feel that being a mentor has helped me grow; it has allowed me to share my experiences and expertise in my subject area of floristry. I have developed in my own role as an artist-teacher and above all, I have gained a lifelong friendship and new links within the community.”



Sandy Abdelrahman Founder of Skaped



Skaped is a social enterprise that inspires young people to think about human rights through the creative arts. Sandy and co-founder Thay started this enterprise because they were passionate about informing young people about their rights and responsibilities. Social Ark has helped Skaped to pilot and test their idea, and have provided on-going continued support. Skaped have positively influenced young people from across London and their workshops have been commissioned by The Prince's Trust charity and other youth and community organisations. Sandy and Thay are role models and exemplary social entrepreneurs who live and breathe their values. We are extremely proud of Skaped and were blown away when Sandy was chosen from hundreds of applicants to represent the United Kingdom as a 2017 Youth Delegate at the United Nations in New York.

Sandy - "Social Ark believed in us, and supported us to shape Skaped. Social Ark is our community family, we all work together and help one another to take that next step. The team care about every member, they understand and respect our individual life stories and the importance of how we can use our lived experiences to help the wider community."

Liam Hilton - Fairbridge Programme Executive - The Prince's Trust

"Skaped came in to deliver a Human Rights workshop with our 16+ young people. They had a relaxed, down-to-earth approach which encouraged others to open up and communicate. Skaped had a good rapport with the other young people. They came across as passionate and informed about the issues pertinent to the session. Skaped provided a range of different materials and activities, utilising digital media to stimulate the young people and keep their attention focused. The young people came away with a positive perspective on the workshop, with some rating it as their favourite session when asked upon exiting the programme. This is testament to the quality of Skaped's delivery and their ability to develop relationships with the young people."



Moses Adeyemi

Founder of the SilverLine Programme



Moses Adeyemi is the founder and CEO of the SilverLine Programme, which uses mental and physical training to improve wellbeing. Moses is an ex-offender who came to Social Ark as a 'last stop' after constantly experiencing doors being shut on him, due to his background. Before coming to Social Ark, he was tempted to go back to his old lifestyle because other organisations that he reached out to hadn't taken him seriously. Social Ark believed in Moses and supported him to create a sustainable wellbeing and fitness programme. He is now successfully delivering the tried and tested SilverLine fitness programmes to public services, as well as youth and community organisations across the UK.

Moses - "It's great to be part of the Social Ark family. As an ex-offender, it was difficult because I found that people didn't take me seriously. Social Ark was the bridge between where I was coming from and where I was trying to go. The continued support that I've received has been vital to the sustainability of the SilverLine Programme. I've had help with business proposals, evaluations and much more. Being able to access that critical friend and sounding board that has your back 100% has also been invaluable. I'd like to say a massive thank you to the Social Ark team, and especially to my mentor, Sarah Castro, who have stood by me every step of the way."

Sarah Castro MBE - Business Mentor

"Mentoring Moses has been an absolute pleasure and quite a journey. I'm not sure who got more out of it, me or him! There have been ups and downs and, at times, it's been quite difficult standing by this amazing young man and encouraging him to be resilient and come back stronger when others refused to give him a chance. Moses has created an exceptional wellbeing social enterprise. His commitment and level of professionalism cannot be underestimated. The SilverLine Programme can stand out and compete with all similar businesses out there. If those in positions of power would only recognise our young people's potential and the value of their lived experiences, they would be queuing up to work with them!"



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS!



Kathleen Britain - Director, Head of Charities

“Social Ark is a dynamic and innovative enterprise in Tower Hamlets enabling meaningful support for disadvantaged young people across the borough. The social enterprise provides a sustainable approach to support new local services. Social Ark CIC has been very rewarding to work with. Barclays is thrilled to engage with an organisation that makes such a significant impact on people’s lives.”



James Butler - Public Affairs Manager, SEUK.

“Every now and again, a social enterprise comes along and catches your eye. Social Ark CIC is one of those businesses which is proving hard to ignore. Its impact is phenomenal and the drive and commitment of it’s staff are inspiring examples to other social enterprises. It has already achieved great things, but I’m sure that it’s one to watch in years to come as it grows and continues to have even more impact.”



Balgees Barendilla - Operations Director, Active Change Foundation

“Social Ark is providing young people with the confidence, skills and platform to turn their passion and life experiences into a career while improving their communities. Their team has inspired our young people through their interactive training and personal anecdotes. They are inspiring a new generation of social entrepreneurs that are focused on change, not only profit.”



Dermot Finch - Director of Operations, The Prince's Trust Group

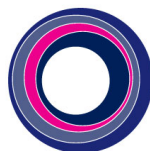
“I’ve known Social Ark since its very early days. Lisa and the team offer an authentic, grassroots package of support for young social entrepreneurs in Tower Hamlets. They are a small, credible complement to the work that The Prince’s Trust does in the local area, and we’ve shared our experiences and learnings over the past year or two.”

Unmesh Desai - GLA Assembly Member for the City & East London

“Social Ark is an extraordinary organisation that nurtures young people from tough backgrounds to become grassroots social entrepreneurs and community leaders. They recognise the value and significance of young people’s lived experiences and their ‘no qualifications needed’ policy is a testament to that. With Social Ark, there is no ‘hard to reach’ and through their learning programme and wrap-around support, they’ve successfully engaged the ‘unreachable’. The innovative social businesses created by the young people are professionally delivered and have positively impacted the communities they serve. Social Ark’s inclusive values underpin everything they do, and I am extremely proud to support this life-changing organisation in East London.”

Sarah Castro MBE - Ambassador and Business Mentor

“Social Ark is one of the most credible organisations that works with disadvantaged young people that I’ve ever come across in London’s East End. They are producing social entrepreneurs that care about the environment and the communities around them. No other organisation provides the wrap-around care and support along with standout business skills, ensuring the projects created are sustainable in the long run. I’ve never witnessed such professionalism from young people - their attention to detail, expert proposals and evaluation methods set the bar for other ‘entrepreneurial’ programmes. Social Ark is a breath of fresh air, they never give up on any young person, no matter how challenging. It’s time to take notice of this life-changing organisation, they’re starting their own grassroots revolution!”



bromley by bow centre



school for
social
entrepreneurs



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