

socialARK

Social Ark – Investment Ready Programme Evaluation

March 2022 – August 2022



About Social Ark

Set up in 2015, Social Ark is an award-winning charity that empowers young people from under-resourced communities to develop social businesses- guided by their own lived experiences. We also run youth engagement programs enabling school-age children to participate in meaningful social action.

We provide a standout programme of workshops, mentoring and personalised support that enables the young people we work with to focus on their assets and talents. In this way, they build on their goals, creating a springboard of positive action that results in sustainable change.

We've created the Social Ark Family, which consists of our supporters and young people that have been through our programmes. They sit on our board as trustees, and along with our youth steering group, they shape and steer our work. The Social Ark core and senior management team is made up of our alums and people from our own community. Our alums co-design our programmes and often co-facilitate them too, and they're always respectfully paid as the lived experience experts they are.

[@SocialArkCIO](#) | socialark.co.uk | info@socialark.co.uk

Charity Number: 1188519

The Investment Ready Programme

Social Ark entrepreneurs are relatable to young leaders trusted by the wider community, inspiring others from similar backgrounds. Covid 19- impacted the development of their start-up social enterprises.

They're committed to serving their communities; however, the uncertainty, lack of continued business and financial assistance, and access to hands-on support have put their enterprises at risk. Many of their projects are at an early stage, not constituted or/and they are unable to demonstrate the financial track record needed to meet funding requirements.

Following the success of our 'Covid Response Programme' in 2021, we secured funding from UnLtd again as part of the National Lottery Social Enterprise Support Fund (SESF) to replicate this programme in 2022. This enabled us to run an intensive learning and support programme (March 2022- August 2022) for 14 entrepreneurs whose enterprises were negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Over 20 weeks, consisting of weekly 2-hour sessions, we've been working online with industry experts, including Anna Goodwin, David McQueen, Edmund Coogan, Emma Hargreaves, Jayne Chase, Karen Leigh Anderson, Lisa Stepanovic, Marissa McCallam and Tom Bushwood, to deliver bespoke business learning and development workshops.

Sessions included:

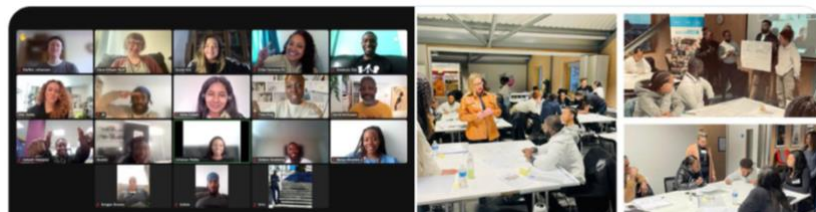
Brave Leadership	Public Speaking	Finance & Budgeting	Getting programmes into schools
Branding & Storytelling	Pitching & Presenting	Funders' Panel & Presentations	Impact Measurement & Evaluation
One Page Impact Reporting	Business Planning & Strategy	Legal Structures & Compliance	Policies & Procedures



Gideon Buabeng
@Gideonsnetwork



I want to say a huge thank you to Social Ark for giving me the opportunity and inviting me onto their investment ready programme for social entrepreneurs and lived experience experts. So far it has been nothing short of amazing, eye opening and inspiring! @ourpain2power 🌟



Social Ark Team Personalised 1:1 support.

An important part of the Investment Ready programme involved 1:1 business support, and the young entrepreneurs were able to access as much as they needed throughout the programme. Lisa and our expert facilitators provided support varying from finance and governance, marketing and branding to discussing progress and personal well-being. Support from Lisa mainly consisted of mission, vision and values, strategic business planning, impact measurement, fundraising and personal support. Our expert facilitators focused more on finance and governance, pitching and presenting, pricing, budgeting, accounts and marketing and branding.

These sessions were led by Anna Goodwin, Emma Hargreaves, Jayne Chase and Karen Leigh Anderson. The 1:1 support given is always tailored to the individual and their social enterprise to ensure they get the best expert guidance and support to allow them to thrive.

"I had many 1:1's with Karen Leigh Anderson that helped me incorporate my CIC. Emma Hargreaves helped me get the branding right and develop a tagline for my company. Social Ark helped me with programme design, finance, policies, procedures, and everything". Tiwa King, Founder of Beyond a Song CIC



Peer Support and Peer Group Sessions

A fundamental part of the programme was the unique monthly peer support and peer group sessions conducted in person and over Zoom. These sessions were used as wrap-around support for our entrepreneurs to address any issues they faced and to give that personal arm around the shoulder that is sometimes needed.

Our project manager Katakylie Addae-Kodua, Social Ark alum, led on collecting feedback after learning and peer sessions this enabled us to adjust as necessary and ensure we were, monitoring and measuring effectiveness. Assisted by JR Josephs, also Social Ark alumni, who led on programme support for entrepreneurs. The group kept in touch through WhatsApp, inspiring and motivating each other. Both of these paid roles enabled the entrepreneurs to earn while they learn.

Online monthly peer group sessions allowed the entrepreneurs to shift away from learning activities and spend some time on reflections and exploring ideas. These sessions almost became therapeutic, where much advice, open, honest sharing and bonding took place. Our in-person sessions included a group dinner out with our long-term friend David McQueen. A fun night out was had by all. We had the pleasure of being catered for by Jerk and Juice, an Eastend celebrity chef Gary Tomlin. Salsa dancing, laughing and joy, this is just what we needed. For many of us, it was the first night out following the pandemic lockdowns.



"I have had the pleasure of working with Lisa and the Social Ark team, it's always been a privilege, working with them as a group, and also doing one-to-one sessions with the fabulous social entrepreneurs. They have always been quick to learn, and I have seen their confidence grow in leaps and bounds. I love working with them and will continue to do so as long as they want me" – David McQueen.

Outcomes

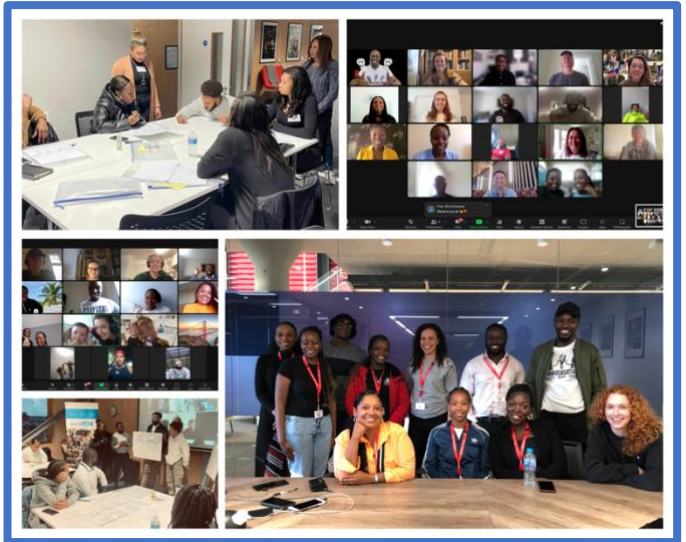
Social Ark understands what a start-up social entrepreneur needs to become sustainable. We knew that in order for all 14 entrepreneurs to achieve the outcomes below, we needed a commitment from them. Being quite ambitious, we set our expectations high from the onset. True to the Social Ark ethos, we recruited staff from our own beneficiary group, this ensured beneficiaries were able to work with a group they knew and trusted. It also provided a reliable income for those staff members while they continued to develop their businesses and be part of this programme.

"When I saw the project management role was advertised, I jumped at the opportunity. I learned all about project management and participated in the workshops. This benefited my social enterprise as well as my personal growth and development. Social Ark is a great place to work and develop".

Katakylie Addae-Kodua, Founder of Xconversation.

By the end of the programme, we told the funder that our entrepreneurs would achieve the following:

- Have impact measurements tools in place
- Up-to-date impact reports
- Financial budgets and management accounts
- Business proposals and funding bids.

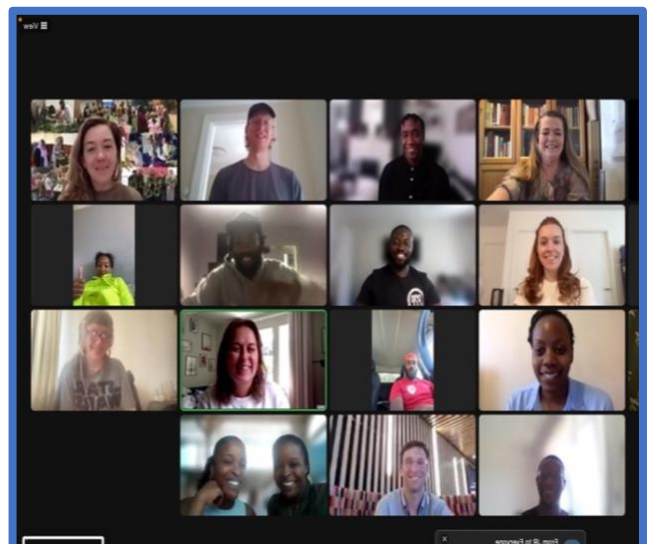


We excelled in the outcomes we set out to achieve, with a 95% attendance rate. Each entrepreneur has learned how to measure impact and has frameworks and tools in place. They each have an impact report of their work to date, financial budgets and management accounts, and a proposal funding bid. 14/14 report an increase in income, and collectively Social Ark has supported them to receive over £600,000 in funding, investment, and income. In addition, 100% reported improved leadership and business confidence with an average of 3 points on an accredited 10-point scale.

Additional unintended outcomes showed us that 90% were more confident in pricing their services. Collectively, they reached 1500 beneficiaries. 100% have clearly identified their vision, mission and values. 100% reported having improved bid writing skills.

Our entrepreneurs told us that:

- 13/14 told us the programme exceeded their expectations
- 14/14 developed new and improved networks
- 14/14 have more confidence to take on new opportunities and challenges
- 13/14 have a greater awareness of social issues
- 12/14 Increased value of lived experience.



Over the course of the programme, we completed 40 hours of group learning. 80 hours of specialist business support, and we provided 20 hours of peer support. As a result, entrepreneurs' businesses became formally constituted, and all participants left with the knowledge of legal compliance, policies and procedures and have monitoring frameworks in place.

Here is some of what our entrepreneurs told us.

"I have never wanted to learn so much until this programme, I've managed to get all my policies in place and secured funding to run my projects over the next 12 months."

"The bid writing sessions were great. I now understand the right language that I need to use and what to write. I have submitted a new application and received £30,000 on this programme"

"David's authenticity has inspired me to be a much braver leader; I realise I must hold my USP and authenticity. David has inspired me. Representation is everything, I see in David what I can be myself"

"Throughout the programme, it's been about owning your lived experience. I'm now better able to navigate difficult conversations, especially negotiating fees and pricing. I'm much more confident when leading conversations"

"100% recommend this programme, I've learned so much! Learning from others gives me strength. Listening to professionals like David McQueen and Lisa overcoming difficulties shows that it can be done"

"The programme has gone beyond my expectations by meeting other social entrepreneurs and sharing experiences. I'd never have thought I'd meet people for life that I will keep in touch with, I love the whole group."

"The best thing about the programme is the group, who we are, and what everyone brings to the table. It's so inspiring after our peer sessions, and we come together and bounce off each other to do great work"

"It's more than support; you guys helped me with confidence and became my sounding board. I overcame my inner voice of doubt, and everyone supported me to stay on track and reminded me that mindset is key"

"You get out what you put in, be open to feedback. That is how you will learn by taking it in and implementing it. Support everybody in the way that you want to be supported. Your business is only as strong as your network; this is what I took from the programme"

"The best thing about the programme is the group and what everyone brings to the table. We come together and bounce off each other to do great work, collectively we're leading grassroots change"

"The best thing about the programme is the group, who we are, and what everyone brings to the table. It's so inspiring after our peer sessions, everyone has gone through what they have, and we come together and bounce off each other to do great work"

"I have now got my mission vision and values that actually speaks to me, and it was great how everyone in the group left with them in place, well-done everyone."

"Having as much 1:1 business support as I needed has taken my organisation to a new level. I've got all my policies and monitoring in place, and I'm legally compliant. I've also brought in 50k"

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone for making this another successful Social Ark programme. Special thanks to our young entrepreneurs, Alumni staff, expert facilitators and funders- we could not do this work without you!". Lisa Stepanovic CEO Social Ark



Social Enterprise
Support Fund

