



Unlocking the Potential of Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education

UnLtd and HEFCE led a unique partnership from 2009 to 2011 to realise the potential of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education. This Report documents the impact of this £1 million investment and the 200 new social ventures created in 70 Higher Education Institutions. It establishes the scope, value and key ingredients for success of social entrepreneurship amongst staff and students. The recommendations made are vital to embed this approach and to realise the full potential of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education.



FOREWORD

Social entrepreneurs are the driving force of a wave of change across the world. A third of all new enterprise starts in the UK are now focused on a social mission. When a UK Prime Minister and a US President reinforce the importance of social enterprise, we know we may be at a tipping point. Social entrepreneurs are at the heart of a new blend of social commitment and enterprise. They are the glue that binds our society together and the driving force for social innovation.

Higher Education institutions (HEIs) around the world are discovering that their students and staff want to connect with this growing movement. From the world class business schools to more vocationally oriented universities, social venture competitions and incubator programmes are springing up to tap into this energy – and many English institutions are leading the way.

UnLtd and HEFCE were delighted to be able to work together to develop the Higher Education social entrepreneurship Awards Programme. In just 18 months, it has supported 200 social entrepreneurs directly at an average all-in cost of just £5,000, and directly inspired 70 institutions to engage in this new approach. The results are exciting: for those projects running 6 months to 1 year, an average of over 500 beneficiaries, 12 volunteers, 2 jobs and £5,800 in additional income raised, with 90% of social entrepreneurs saying that the experience had boosted their ability to run a venture.

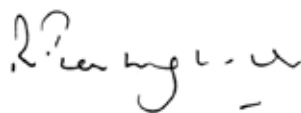
This initiative has proved that social entrepreneurship adds value to Higher Education. Social entrepreneurship enhances teaching, research impact and staff development, benefits which multiply as they are passed on to students. Three quarters of student Award Winners believe that the scheme improved their employability and almost the same proportion feel that their social venture has helped their studies. In a tough employment market, social entrepreneurship is vital for graduates. It enables them to demonstrate evidence of leadership alongside their academic studies, a vital component to

securing a job. It also opens up a route to job creation and over 80% intend to continue running their social venture when they graduate.

Higher Education funding is increasingly driven by student choice and in turn, student choice will be influenced by the benefits they gain. HEIs supporting social entrepreneurs and promoting this work will attract more demand and more funding.

There are challenges to overcome: conflicting priorities for time, raising awareness and understanding, making sure systems and processes are appropriate to this new approach; not least, future resources to sustain momentum and maintain a lean infrastructure to provide support. This Report identifies the key ingredients of success for supporting social entrepreneurship in Higher Education. It catalogues the winning combination of activities: small seed funds with development support, leadership and networking, involving successful social entrepreneurs and partners, often as role models.

HEIs have a gold mine of talent and enthusiasm on their doorstep – a rich vein which can benefit every aspect of university life. In the last 18 months, this partnership of HEFCE, UnLtd, HEIs and social entrepreneurs has shown what can be achieved. Our next task is to see how this momentum can be sustained and expanded. No one should be in any doubt – this is an idea whose time has come.



Sir Alan Langlands, Chief Executive, HEFCE



Cliff Prior, Chief Executive, UnLtd

ABOUT UnLtd

UnLtd is the leading provider of support to social entrepreneurs and offers the largest such network in the world. We resource over 1,000 individuals in the UK each year through our core Awards programmes which impact many tens of thousands more. We operate a unique model by investing directly in the individual and provide a package of resources; from funding between £500 and £15,000 to ongoing advice, networking and practical support.

ABOUT HEFCE

HEFCE is an advocate and supporter of all that is good and distinctive in Higher Education. We work closely with universities, colleges and other partners to achieve excellence and impact in education and research, and to provide opportunities for those who have the ability to benefit from Higher Education. Our responsibilities are to develop policies, distribute funds, safeguard quality and assure the proper stewardship of public money. We also provide advice to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.



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- £1 MILLION
- 18 MONTHS
- 200 SOCIAL VENTURES
- 70 HEIs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Higher Education and Social Entrepreneurship (HE SE) Awards – funded by HEFCE and delivered by UnLtd – involved an investment of £1 million to realise the potential of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education. This ambitious 18 month Programme ran from 2009 until 2011, awarding £625,000 directly to 200 staff and students, alongside development support, to set up social ventures in 70 Higher Education Institutions in England (HEIs). They serve as exemplars to individual HEIs and the sector more widely, proving the value of supporting social entrepreneurship in a Higher Education setting. This Report shares the learning we have gained through delivery and research, demonstrating the need to act on this opportunity to embed a culture of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education.

The Demand

- ★ **All HEIs:** Higher Education is an ideal context for social entrepreneurship. The HEIs represented by HE SE Award Winners demonstrate its broad appeal, in terms of their mission, location and size.
- ★ **Broad Appeal:** The 200 HE SE Awards represent students (70%) and staff (30%) and are equally appealing to those from creative fields and conventional business backgrounds. All staff and students in Higher Education have the potential to gain the ideas, motivation, support and resources necessary for social venture creation.

The Value

- ★ **Sustainable social and economic outcomes:** Those social ventures running 6 months to 1 year had on average 540 beneficiaries, 12 volunteer opportunities and 2 jobs, and half had raised an average of £5,800 in additional income. They create social impact in their local community (56%) and for their HEI (31%). 90% felt better able to run a social venture as a result of their experience and intended to continue. Social

venture creation in Higher Education is sustainable.

- ★ **Enhancing the student experience:** As a result of this scheme, 75% of student HE SE Award Winners feel they have improved their employability, 63% feel their social venture benefits their studies and 83% plan to continue running their social venture after university. Social entrepreneurship in Higher Education extends students' employment options.
- ★ **Personal and professional development for staff:** 89% of staff HE SE Award Winners feel their social venture is beneficial to their role. Social entrepreneurship in Higher Education provides teaching, academic and professional staff with an opportunity to innovate; this enhances teaching methods, research impact and extends their responsibilities.

The Challenges

- ★ **To social venture creation:** Staff and students face distinct challenges when setting up a social venture. These include conflicting priorities for time, gaining recognition for their work, finding support and navigating the structure, systems and processes within HEIs. HEIs need to provide dedicated support and develop a strategic approach to ensure the success of social venture creation.
- ★ **To a culture of social entrepreneurship:** Only a small proportion of HEIs are investing in social entrepreneurship and leading a culture of social venture creation. Student and staff energy will not create a culture of social entrepreneurship on its own. Leadership, strategy, recognition, infrastructure, resource and support within HEIs and across the Higher Education sector, is essential alongside this to promote a culture of social entrepreneurship.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

To Staff and Student Social Entrepreneurs

The success of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education is dependent upon visible social ventures working within HEIs, highlighting the value of supporting social entrepreneurship and encouraging others to consider setting up a social venture. We recommend:

1. Staff and students promote their social ventures and successes within their departments and across their HEIs. They should contact any enterprise support functions available within their HEI to raise awareness of their work, ask for support and highlight any challenges.
2. Staff and student social entrepreneurs create a local network to share common experiences, identify common challenges and take action which will help improve support for social venture creation within their HEIs.

To Individual HEIs and The Sector

Overall, HEIs which invest in social entrepreneurship will find untapped demand, attracting further funding and more students. Social entrepreneurship enhances the student experience and increases employment outcomes. It also improves teaching quality, research impact and creates public value. To enhance these benefits, we recommend:

3. HEIs tailor their existing enterprise resources, support and infrastructure to social venture creation (for instance knowledge exchange, student enterprise, volunteering or public engagement functions). This should include an individual to champion social enterprise and promote exemplars of social venture creation.
4. HEIs promote a culture of social entrepreneurship relevant to their staff, students and existing culture of activity. This should include active leadership and strategy, formal recognition, infrastructure provision and

support across departments.

5. Cross-sector networks (including membership and support organisations) should identify ways to build upon the momentum developed around social entrepreneurship through this Programme.

To The Government

This initiative has proved that social entrepreneurship adds value to Higher Education and vice versa. The government needs to consider how best to create the environment within which social entrepreneurship within Higher Education can thrive. We recommend:

6. Government incentivise HEIs to promote and support social entrepreneurship.
7. Government recognise successful social entrepreneurship and social venture creation within HEIs.

The Next Steps

The HE SE Awards scheme is now complete. The results demonstrate the value of continuing momentum for social entrepreneurship in HEIs. The development of future support mechanisms needs to connect with the energy of students and staff, to have support through leadership in HEIs and to have the brand recognition which will inspire and draw people in each year. This Programme has built momentum in a relatively short period of time, but further efforts are needed to help this initial work mature and become truly embedded in the sector.

INTRODUCTION

Why Social Entrepreneurship in Higher Education?

Social entrepreneurship and the social economy is growing rapidly. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reports that 238,000 people are starting a social or community venture in the UK every year. This is particularly prevalent amongst those in full time education and graduates. Almost 40% of those starting a social venture with an UnLtd Award have a degree level qualification (*Ramsay and Danton, 2010*). However, the Higher Education sector is only recently beginning to capitalise on to this potential for social innovation. Whilst knowledge exchange initiatives (including public engagement, volunteering, and student enterprise) have successfully been embedded within many HEIs, there are surprisingly few examples of similar efforts to encourage social venture creation amongst staff and students. HEIs are under increasing demands to prove they are providing high quality outcomes for research, innovation, teaching and graduate employability. This Report demonstrates how social entrepreneurship can meet these demands.

In 2009, UnLtd and HEFCE forged a partnership to deliver the Higher Education Social Entrepreneurship (HE SE) Awards, an ambitious £1 million, 18 month Programme, to realise the potential of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education. The HE SE Awards enabled 200 staff and students to start up new social ventures, alongside high-profile initiatives to build awareness, understanding, expertise, learning, infrastructure and strategic level buy in to social entrepreneurship across the sector. These start-up social ventures have served as exemplars, allowing individual HEIs and the sector more widely to see how social entrepreneurs can be supported in a Higher Education setting.

This Programme has found a great deal of untapped demand for social entrepreneurship in Higher Education, which provides staff and students with ideas, networks and resources to create social ventures with substantial

socio-economic outcomes. In turn, social entrepreneurship enhances the student experience, graduate employability, teaching quality, research impact and job satisfaction, as well as enhancing the contribution of HEIs to their communities more generally.

This Report documents the impact of the HE SE Awards Programme, sharing the learning gained through delivery and research. It highlights key ingredients for success and provides recommendations to HEIs and those delivering support within this sector. Overall, it demonstrates how and why further recognition, understanding and strategic level buy-in across the Higher Education sector is necessary to capitalise on this culture of social innovation and create substantial socio-economic outcomes.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARDS PROGRAMME

The Higher Education Social Entrepreneurship (HE SE) Awards launched in Global Entrepreneurship Week – November 2009, and ran over an 18 month period until June 2011. It included two main elements; the Core Awards Programme and the Impact Programme.

HE SE Core Awards Programme

Of the initial investment of £1 million, £625,000 was awarded directly to social entrepreneurs through financial Awards. Awards were aimed at staff and students within HEFCE funded HEIs. The assessment criteria sought to find people with an entrepreneurial idea to benefit their community (geographical or interest) and with some evidence to highlight a need for their project and the Award. The Programme provided:

★ **191 Catalyst Awards** (averaging £2,500 each of start-up funding) to staff and students who have an entrepreneurial solution to a social problem.

★ **9 Development Awards** (of £15,000) allowing the most promising social entrepreneurs time to develop and scale up their projects.

★ **Development support for all Award Winners:** One-to-one coaching from an UnLtd Development Manager, tailored to project and skills development needs.

★ **Training and events:** Providing Award Winners with further exposure to the sector, offering valuable networking opportunities and ensuring their personal and professional development.

★ **Expertise through UnLtd Connect:** Access to a network of experienced business professionals from all sectors, who volunteer to provide direct one-to-one consultancy, mentoring and specialist services such as legal advice.

HE SE Awards Impact Programme

Alongside the Awards, strategic work set out to build capacity across the sector and raise awareness, understanding, expertise, resources and buy-in to social entrepreneurship. This involved:

★ **A steering group:** 10 high-profile representatives from across the sector met quarterly to guide the delivery of this Programme and ensure its strategic impact.

★ **Ambassadors:** 25 passionate staff and students were recruited to promote and encourage social entrepreneurship in their HEI.

★ **Regional events:** 9 events were held in different regions across England, attracting 315 participants. These helped build

capacity, raise awareness and share best practice amongst social entrepreneurs and those supporting social venture creation within HEIs.

★ **An online toolkit:** A practical guide has been created for those setting up or supporting a social venture (<http://unltdworld.com/HEFCE>).

★ **Outreach activities:** 96 of the 130 HEFCE funded HEIs in England (74%) were engaged in the HE SE Awards through direct outreach activities by UnLtd staff (these included presentations, ideas generation sessions, workshops and meetings with those supporting social venture creation).

★ **Research and Evaluation:** This has gathered substantial qualitative and quantitative evidence, demonstrating the value of the HE SE Awards and identifying actionable recommendations to improve the support for social venture creation within HEIs. This included an evaluation survey with HE SE Award Winners (96 responses) and monitoring data (200 HE SE Award Winners). It also involved in-depth interviews with six Award Winners (repeated at six months and one year), three delivery staff and 10 stakeholders, alongside two focus groups (with 15 HE SE Ambassadors and 14 students studying social enterprise) and six site visits.

★ **A national conference:** The HE SE Awards Programme culminated in a conference on June 16th 2011 at the University of Sheffield for 250 attendees (300 applicants) representing social entrepreneurship within the Higher Education sector. This celebrated the Programme achievements and ensured this initial work could be taken forward and embedded in the sector.

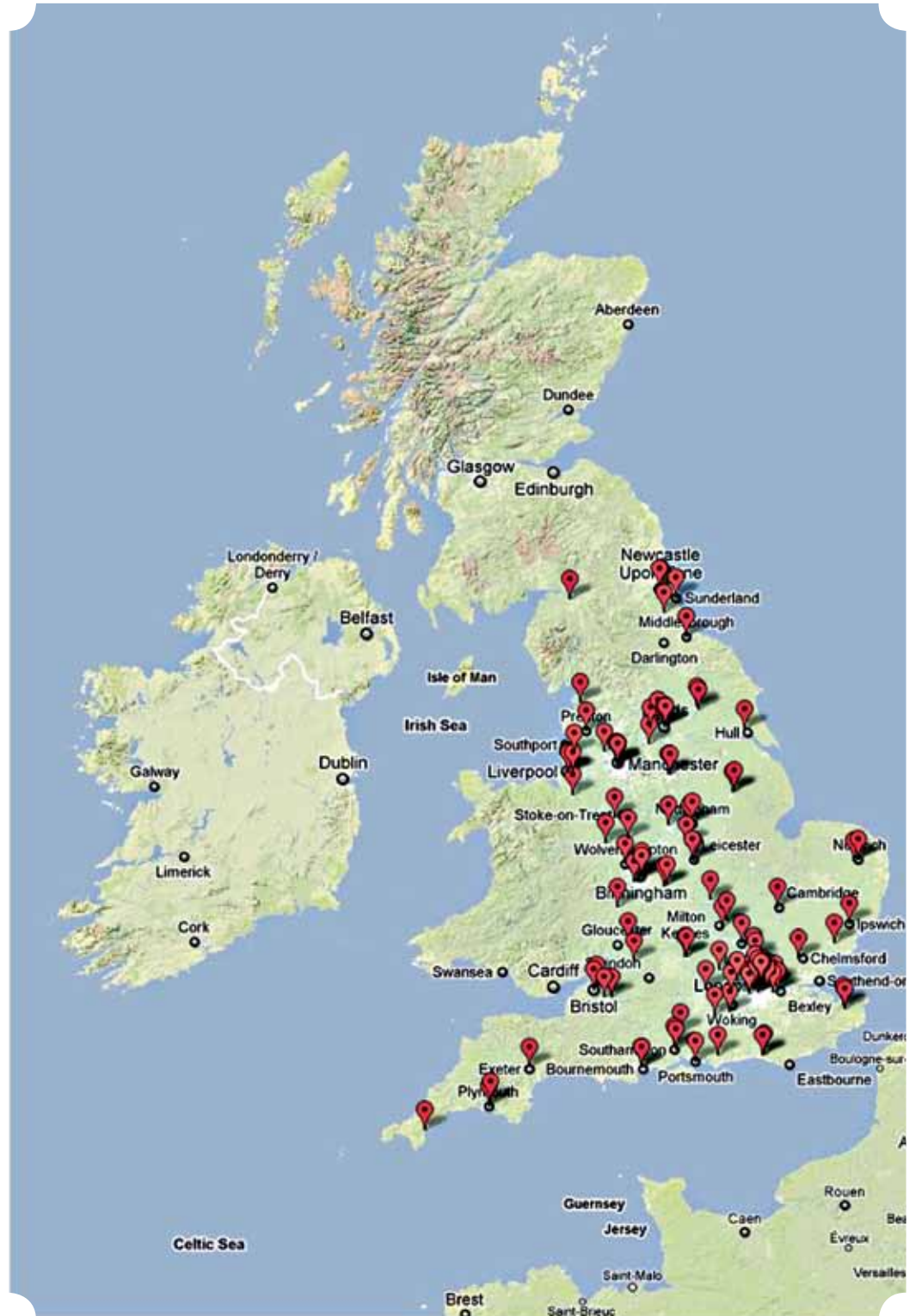


WHO ARE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

- 70% STUDENTS, 30% STAFF
- 48% MALE, 52% FEMALE
- 28% MINORITY GROUPS

MAP: HE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Figure 1: Locations of HE Social Entrepreneurship Award Winners' HEIs



WHO ARE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

The HE SE Awards have attracted a diverse range of people across the Higher Education sector and showed the potential of social entrepreneurship to appeal to a broad range of staff and students:

- ★ **Roles:** Of the Award Winners on this Programme, 33% are undergraduates, 34% are postgraduates, 30% are academic staff and 11% are professional staff (a small proportion have overlapping roles, hence percentages do not add up to 100%). Overall, this is equivalent to 70% students and 30% staff.
- ★ **Disciplines:** HE SE Award Winners represent a huge variety of academic fields. Whilst management and business studies (including social and community entrepreneurship) is the most common discipline (19%), this is closely followed by creative arts and design (17%) and social science (17%).
- ★ **Demographics:** They are almost equally split in terms of gender (48% male and 52% female) and minority ethnic groups are strongly represented (28%), mirroring wider UnLtd data for social entrepreneurs overall.
- ★ **HEIs:** This Programme targeted all 130 HEFCE funded HEIs across England equally and has created social ventures in 70 HEIs. Whilst 10 of these have been particularly receptive to the Programme (see figure 1), these are diverse in terms of their mission, size and location. There is no single 'type' of HEI suited to social entrepreneurship. Instead they have a number of key elements which facilitate social venture creation (discussed later).

Unusual Suspects

UnLtd's model of funding and support is person-centered and is based upon trust. Instead of requiring a formal business plan, applications are assessed by the applicants' vision, drive, passion and commitment to

develop their project, as well as their potential to increase their skills and vision in the process. This model is both accessible and attractive to staff and students in Higher Education. The HE SE Awards have attracted those with innovative ideas to create social change based upon their research, studies, role or personal experience. They also provided a smaller proportion of staff and students already considering knowledge transfer or a business start-up with an alternative model to conventional enterprise. In either case, the HE SE Awards provided a catalyst for 89% of Award Winners to set up a social venture for the first time.

"We have developed and patented a machine which can recycle plastic bottles and turn them into frisbees or bowls in a matter of minutes. It makes the process of recycling more tangible and more meaningful to people. We've taken it to design fairs and won a few Awards and we are now in the process of developing two high profile corporate partnerships to pilot our machine to promote waste reduction at music festivals.

This all started off as a project, a module at uni that sparked off other ideas, but then you think actually you want to take this on, but you're always held back by money and support, and that's where the HE SE Awards came in. This money is enabling us to prove the concept, to see how it works and to take it to the next stage. It gave us the confidence that we could do it and the people on the UnLtd team were there to support us if we got stuck and it's been great to just get the ball rolling and only now is it taking off."

*Ben Atkinson-Willes and Charlie Cook,
Future Industries, HE SE Catalyst Award
Winners, Graduates, Kingston University*

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HE? ON AVERAGE, AWARD WINNERS:

- REACHED 542 DIRECT BENEFICIARIES
- ENGAGED 12 VOLUNTEERS
- CREATED 2 JOBS
- 53% GENERATED TURNOVER WITH A MEDIAN OF £5,838

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

The Higher Education and Social Entrepreneurship (HE SE) Awards created 200 new social ventures across 70 HEIs in England. These are creating positive social and economic outcomes, while benefiting staff, students and HEIs themselves.

Social and Economic Outcomes Complementary to HEIs' Aims

The majority of Award Winners specify their primary social aim as benefiting their local community (56%) and improving community cohesion (44%). In addition, a third of Award Winners identify their HEI as a primary beneficiary of their social venture. They are doing so in a number of ways.

Common approaches include providing training to local people and raising aspirations of young people under 18 both of which were helping to increase access to Higher Education. Another common activity is providing services to students within their HEI in order to improve their experience and success. Finally, many are creating initiatives to create volunteering opportunities and to improve students' employability prospects. Overall, their efforts create substantial value for HEIs and are complementary to widening participation agendas, creating public benefit and enhancing the student experience. A survey of HE SE Award Winners found that in total, the 96 respondents had reached 47,578 beneficiaries, generated 881 volunteer opportunities and created 76 jobs either directly (employed by them) or indirectly (employed by others). Of those 49 social ventures which had been running for 6 months to 1 year, they had on average reached 542 direct beneficiaries, engaged 12 volunteers and created 2 jobs.

Sustainable Social Ventures and Social Impact

Although the HE SE Awards provided relatively small cash injections of around £2,500, on the whole, these social ventures are performing well and are becoming sustainable. They:

- ★ **Generate turnover:** In total, 96 HE SE Award Winners who responded to the survey have generated an additional £1,136,850 (primarily through additional grant funding or investment as well as turnover). 3 social ventures were responsible for a substantial proportion of this, leveraging £500,000, £250,000 and £60,000 in additional grants. For those Award Winners who have been running for 6 months to 1 year, 53% had created additional turnover, with a median value of £5,838 – double their initial Award.
- ★ **Plan to continue:** 90% of Award Winners are intending to continue running their social venture beyond their UnLtd Award. They are planning to do so primarily through income generation (83%) and grant funding (79%), along with a range of other income sources. Given that students only remain within HEIs for a limited period of time, 12% of Award Winners set up their social venture so that it could continue to be run by others, while 83% plan to continue running their social venture after leaving university.
- ★ **Plan to grow:** 87% of Award Winners specified that they are planning to grow their social venture. These social ventures are performing well given that they have been operating for a relatively short period of time (6 months to 1 year). In addition, the social ventures set up by students were as effective as those set up by staff, both in terms of performance and outcomes. This indicates the value of Higher Education as a context for social entrepreneurship.

ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Social entrepreneurship adds substantial value to students' experience at university. Overall, those responding to the evaluation survey felt they were gaining a unique set of skills and experiences from setting up and running their social venture, which, as a result:

- ★ **Added value to academic studies:** 63% of student HE SE Award Winners stated that their social venture directly or indirectly related to their studies because they were applying their academic knowledge, training or skills in a practical context. Many had also gained inspiration to set up their social venture from their degree. In addition to this, 36% of students specified that their social venture was providing a direct benefit to their studies (38% specified an indirect benefit and only 26% specified no benefit). Whether they were from management and entrepreneurship disciplines or social science and creative backgrounds, students felt their practical experience of setting up and running a social venture was allowing them to develop additional insight and working knowledge of their degree subject.
- ★ **Improved employability:** 75% of student social entrepreneurs felt they had improved their employability as a result of running their social venture because they had gained and could evidence transferable skills. 83% intend to continue running their social venture after they leave university, indicating that they see this as sustainable and a potential employment route.

"The idea behind Student Run Self Help (SRSH) is to make mental health support more accessible by placing it in the hands of peers. We work closely with student unions and provide a package of training and support for students to set up and run a group. We have evidence and backing from experts to demonstrate that our model works and we have now launched 12 groups. These are based in University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes, University of Leicester, University of Manchester, Saint Andrews, University College London, Kings College London, University of Reading, University of Swansea, University of Lancaster, University of Southampton and University of Nottingham. We have trained 100 students and these groups are beginning to attract participants. This summer we are refining our structures and processes, as well as our training manuals, to ensure this model is sustainable. The biggest challenge we keep facing is gaining cooperation from Students' Unions. Some have been amazing. Others have been really reluctant to work with us. Convincing them of the concept – that students can set up and run these projects – has been unexpectedly difficult. Student Hubs and UnLtd have been an enormous source of support, especially the tea and biscuits. Having someone to turn to who will listen to you scream for a while and then make you carry on and do something useful has been fundamental to what we have achieved. We have now secured £65,000 funding for the next three years, to employ a staff member and help us deliver and replicate this project out in a more structured, efficient and professional manner."

Nicola Byrom, Student Run Self Help, Catalyst Award Winner, PhD student, University of Oxford

- OVERALL, 90% OF HE SE AWARD WINNERS FELT BETTER ABLE TO RUN A SOCIAL VENTURE
- 75% OF STUDENT HE SE AWARD WINNERS FELT THEY WERE MORE EMPLOYABLE
- 89% OF STAFF HE SE AWARD WINNERS FELT THIS SOCIAL VENTURE BENEFITED THEIR ROLE

DEVELOPING AND VALUING STAFF

Teaching, academic and professional staff represented 30% of Award Winners. Of those responding to the evaluation survey, 74% set up a social venture which related to their role. Further to this, 57% felt their social venture was directly beneficial to their role (32% specified an indirect benefit, whilst only 11% specified no benefit). These figures are higher than those reported by student Award Winners and show that for staff, their position has additional significance to the social ventures they create. As a result, staff felt their involvement in social entrepreneurship provided overlapping benefits, in terms of:

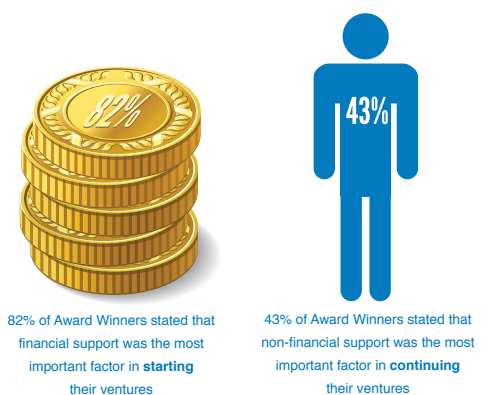
- ★ **Enhancing teaching:** Those involved in teaching set up social ventures which provided opportunities to engage students practically in the academic subject they taught. For some, students were integral to running the social venture and for others, students were primary beneficiaries because they were taking part within its activities. Overall, teaching staff explained their impact in terms of giving them a different type of teaching method, providing students with new skills and giving them experience of learning their subject by doing.
- ★ **Increasing research impact:** Many academic staff gained inspiration to set up a social venture through their academic research, whether this was a direct outcome of their research findings or an indirect involvement with research participants and in-depth study of a social problem. They felt their research could have greater social impact and in turn, a social venture would allow them to carry out research with clear practical outcomes.
- ★ **Personal and professional development:** Social entrepreneurship in Higher Education provides staff with an opportunity to be innovative and deliver their role in a new way. The evaluation survey and interviews found that academic, professional and teaching staff felt better able to deliver in their roles as a

result of their HE SE Award. Approximately one third also provided evidence that the value of their involvement in social entrepreneurship had been recognised formally by their department or university. For instance, they had been given a promotion, increased job security, additional responsibility to champion social enterprise or bought-out to dedicate time to their social venture.

WHY DO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS NEED SUPPORT?

The evaluation of the HE SE Programme showed clearly that this provided a catalyst for activity that would not have otherwise happened. Without an Award, 20% of HE SE Award Winners specified that they would not have been able to run their social venture and a further 62% specified that they would have struggled to do so. In addition, 74% felt that university support was important or very important to their social venture. Overall, investment and support facilitate new social venture creation and ensure its success.

Figure 2 : which support was more important to your social venture?



Cash Is Vital for Starting up, Support is Vital for Success

Social entrepreneurs felt the cash injection provided by an Award was vital to their social venture. When asked to choose which was more important to starting their social venture, 82% of HE SE Award Winners specified financial support, while 18% specified non-financial support (figure 2). When asked to choose which was more important to continuing their social venture, 43% of survey respondents chose non-financial over financial support.

Investment and Support Allows People to Learn by Doing

Staff and students within Higher Education attracted to social entrepreneurship have little or no experience of social venture creation. As such, financial investment, without the requirement of a business plan or solid evidence of future success, creates an opportunity to try something new and to innovate. It provides recognition and a proof of concept to themselves and others, acting as a catalyst to learn by doing but with less personal risk. Notably, the evaluation survey found that Award Winners gave most significance to their ability to learn by doing in terms of their increase in:

- ★ **Knowledge of social enterprise:** 92% agreed they had a greater knowledge of social enterprise.
- ★ **Ability to run a social venture:** 90% felt they had developed their ability to run a social venture.
- ★ **Knowledge of social issues:** 85% felt they had improved their knowledge of social issues.
- ★ **Confidence:** Coupled with the above, 82% had increased confidence.

“Cromocon is a unique system which calculates contrast and visibility (the latest addition is an iPhone App). The system enables designers, builders, architects and access consultants to manufacture, design and check that spaces can be negotiated easily by visually impaired people. My main aim is for the Cromocon system to become a standard for the design and building industry. It was inspired by my research over the past 8 years. I saw a need for a tool which was accurate and easy for designers to measure with, to see if there is enough contrast between two adjacent things for a person with low vision to be able to see it. The Award was a catalyst to turn this idea into a business. The benefit to me was having a tight focus and a small financial Award to start and complete a part of the plan – developing the Cromocon iPhone App and the website. The response to this for the business has been immediate and I now have potential customers coming from all around the world. Meeting experts, going to training events and just the support I've had from UnLtd, even just as friends to talk to has been amazing. I have developed the business model and marketing strategy and the next stage is to scale up. The most valuable outcome is in my teaching. Now my students are going to be ahead of the people they work for because they know about the Cromocon system. I also encourage and mentor them to set up their own businesses and to learn from my experiences, one of whom is now a successful UnLtd Award Winner.”

Professor Hilary Dalke, Cromocon, HE SE Catalyst Award Winner, University of Kingston,

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS WITHIN HEIs NEED:

- A SMALL CASH INJECTION
- SPECIFIC BUSINESS ADVICE
TAILORED TO SOCIAL
VENTURE CREATION
- GENERAL MENTORING AND
SUPPORT
- UNIVERSITY NETWORKS
RECOGNITION

Social Entrepreneurs Require Specific Business Skills and Expertise

HE SE Award Winners require new skills, knowledge and expertise to set up and run a social venture for the first time. This is particularly because their approach to enterprise is often defined by the social problem rather than enterprise or profit making. Our evaluation survey found that this group of social entrepreneurs valued practical support, both from UnLtd and their HEI. This includes business planning, writing grant applications, signposting to training opportunities, setting up a legal structure, obtaining legal advice, patent protection and other specific business advice needed when setting up and running a social venture.

Social Entrepreneurs Require General Mentoring

Our evaluation survey found that overall, HE SE Award Winners feel that general mentoring is the most important form of (non-financial) support provided by UnLtd, closely followed by signposting to other mentors and experts in their field (over 80% indicated that mentors and experts are important or very important to their social venture). In addition to this, 54% felt there was a specific person within their HEI who had made a significant difference to their social venture and identified this as a close colleague or a key point of contact for enterprise support. When asked to explain why, respondents cited that these individuals were acting as a sounding board for ideas and were providing encouragement. Overall, mentoring from a critical friend or expert, alongside general support from a colleague added a great deal of value to these social entrepreneurs.

Social Entrepreneurs Within Higher Education Face Specific Challenges

In our evaluation survey, 78% of HE SE Award Winners identified challenges which were specific to setting up a social venture within their HEI. Further in-depth qualitative research has found that these challenges are multifaceted. These included:

- ★ **Conflicting priorities:** 48% of HE SE Award Winners identify a lack of time as their biggest challenge, something which is specific to working within a university. As discussed above, setting up a social venture requires a great deal of time and energy, as well as new skills. In addition to this, staff and students must necessarily juggle their existing priorities and role. However, these Award Winners also identified a substantial overlap and mutually beneficial relationship between their role and their social venture. As such, a lack of time is a symptom of conflicting priorities, which in turn, signals a need for a culture change towards social entrepreneurship within HEIs and across the sector.
- ★ **Lack of general awareness and support for social enterprise:** 25% of HE SE Award Winners specify this as their biggest challenge. Whilst this was less significant than a lack of time, further qualitative research found that a lack of awareness of social entrepreneurship and its value creates conflicting priorities for social entrepreneurs in Higher Education.

"Finding out what other people are doing has been really valuable because the world of student volunteering, like other fields, can be quite insular, there are a clear set of peers within other HEIs. What I have done through UnLtd is actually talk to people in other institutions, who aren't really about student volunteering but do have a certain commonality of interest so social enterprise has helped us share best practice and ideas and that has been a real insight."

HE SE Ambassador

- ★ **Red tape and bureaucracy:** HEI systems and processes posed the biggest challenge faced by a small, but significant proportion of HE SE Award Winners. This was particularly the case for staff. For some, this was an issue of negotiating Intellectual Property Rights and the stake their university has in new venture creation. For others, the challenge was working within existing structures and processes designed for high turnover and quick growth technology spin outs. Again, this challenge is also created by a lack of awareness and support for social enterprise.

The challenges identified by HE SE Award Winners are often specific to setting up their social venture and unique to the context of working within their HEI. However, their combined experiences highlight that their challenges are also endemic to the Higher Education sector. Overall, further support within HEIs and across the Higher Education sector is vital to the creation of a culture which is conducive to social entrepreneurship.

“The problem with social enterprise is that the social bit kind of sits with people like us in volunteering and the enterprise bit sits with people like the Enterprise Department. We also overlap with Knowledge Transfer and with Public Engagement, so actually bringing it together can be quite difficult. But I think it is working well here now because social enterprise is creating reasons to talk to each other, not just to swap news, but to actually work together. Now we all know what each other does, how to support each other and can easily pass people on so staff and students can find the right types of support.”

HE SE Ambassador

“My social project is called ‘House of Bohemia’. It is an online art and craft group specifically for people who have an illness or disability. All applicants receive a free art and craft kit including a blank object to decorate. They get to keep their decorated object and are asked to take a picture of it for the website, which in turn, gives them the opportunity to communicate with other members of the group through a blog. The aim of the project is to try to overcome the isolation and inactivity that can arise through an illness or disability. I began House of Bohemia when I was doing my ceramics degree. I was interested in traditional houses and ceramics used to decorate their interiors and through this discovered a Victorian building in Wolverhampton called Bohemia House which became an inspiration for the business. For my final dissertation piece I created a black and white room full of ceramic objects I had decorated myself. I have used this on my website. During that time the business and my degree were intertwined. My ceramics work and research gave me ideas for the business. It was my artistic interests that created it. Since starting my Masters in Fine Art my ideas for the business evolved, so they felt quite separate for a while and this has been quite challenging. However, we’ve recently been having some really interesting lectures that actively encourage social/community art as the way forward in contemporary practice and now it feels that once again, House of Bohemia is starting to fit in really well with my uni work. Since my UnLtd Award I have designed and launched the website and kits. I am now building a partnership with the NHS Arts Coordinator to access participants and hope to have people involved soon.”

Lisa Abrams, House of Bohemia, HE SE Catalyst Award Winner, Masters Student, University of Wolverhampton

- 74% OF HE SE AWARD WINNERS FEEL UNIVERSITY SUPPORT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THEIR SOCIAL VENTURE
- 78% OF HE SE AWARD WINNERS FEEL THEY FACE CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO SETTING UP THEIR SOCIAL VENTURE WITHIN THEIR HEI

WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR SOCIAL VENTURE CREATION?

Five types of support are particularly effective in supporting social entrepreneurship within HEIs. Dedicated enterprise support, a (social) enterprise champion and money are vital to supporting social venture creation; awareness raising, outreach and living case studies are vital to promoting social and entrepreneurial thinking more generally.

1. Dedicated Enterprise Support Tailored to Social Venture Creation

Those HEIs with dedicated frameworks or structures to support business start-ups have been more receptive to the HE SE Awards Programme, both in terms of generating applications and providing support to Award Winners. When this form of support is not offered, UnLtd Development Managers have found it challenging to generate applications. It has taken more time to find the right person to promote the programme, to identify what support there is for Award Winners and to connect them back to their HEI. Overall, 64% of HE SE Award Winners were aware of specific enterprise support within their HEI and reported using this for practical advice.

Health warning: Further capacity building is needed to ensure that dedicated enterprise support is relevant and tailored to the practicalities and the ethos of social venture creation.

2. A Social Enterprise Champion or Ambassador

This Programme has established 25 social enterprise ambassadors to promote and encourage social entrepreneurship at their HEI. These are both staff and students and they represent a range of roles, backgrounds and expertise. What they have in common is a passion and personal interest in social entrepreneurship. They provide valuable support to those setting up a social venture. This includes offering feedback on grant applications, acting as a sounding board for

ideas and acting as a critical friend for ongoing encouragement. These positions work particularly well when this individual is well known in multiple departments.

Health warning: Whilst one person can be integral to social venture creation, their efforts alone are fragile. It is important to establish a network of those involved in both doing and supporting social entrepreneurship. This will ensure that a culture of social venture creation is sustainable.

3. Seed Funding and Competitions for Social Venture Creation

This Programme has been particularly effective in HEIs where there is pre-existing funding and business planning competitions for venture creation, as well as those already taking part in regional and national initiatives to encourage enterprise creation (such as pitching competitions). In addition to this, the HE SE Awards have provided a catalyst for 200 social ventures. Small seed funds, development support and the recognition provided by an Award or competitions work to stimulate social venture creation.

Health warning: Business planning competitions can be off-putting to those individuals who are at the idea stage for social venture creation. Pre-application support can help ideas development and ensure success. More importantly, social impact rather than traditional financial metrics should be used to judge applications for money.

4. Showcase Living Case Studies

Social entrepreneurship is ill-defined and widely misunderstood. As a result, a great deal of activity exists under the radar within HEIs. Living case studies which are well known can serve as exemplars, helping to raise awareness and understanding of social entrepreneurship, as well as the value of supporting it. As a consequence they will also create a domino effect, encouraging other staff

and students to follow suit.

Health warning: Recognition alone does not motivate others to set up a social venture. Instead, it adds value to the wider support infrastructure and strategy which seeks to promote a culture of social entrepreneurship. Living case studies help staff and students to recognise social venture creation as a viable option for them both now and in the future.

5. A Clear Support Offer For Social Venture Creation

The delivery of the HE SE Awards has been hampered in some HEIs because of the difficulty in identifying the 'right' points of entry. More often than not, the issue has been a lack of clear communication, awareness and referral within HEIs. Once a key contact had been made in an HEI, progress was swift in terms of organising outreach workshops, disseminating information about the Awards and generating successful applications. A clear support offer which is well communicated will ensure future programmes can make an impact within HEIs. In addition, it will ensure that those who do set up a social venture can easily find and access support available.

Health warning: Social entrepreneurs can come from any background or discipline; they may be put off by conventional enterprise in the first instance, despite needing a catalyst to realise their ideas and business support to create a social venture. Ensure outreach extends across departments, and is tailored to social venture creation. Referral and general awareness is integral to ensure those setting up a social venture make use of the support offered, as well as helping external initiatives can access staff and students.

"Mapping for Change provides participatory mapping services to communities, local authorities and developers. We have developed technology, expertise and innovative tools which empower communities to take ownership of the changes they want to make in their localities. For instance, we have helped enhance the impact of an interlinking Community Cohesion Programme between three schools and are now developing a toolkit for all schools. We have helped charities visualise their data to inform their decision making as well as projects which help communities to influence decision making on issues such as green spaces, anti-social behaviour and local environmental conditions. Since receiving our UnLtd Award, our work has been of benefit to 1,000 beneficiaries, we now employ someone full time to work on the venture and we have 7 student volunteers helping run it. It has really allowed us to focus on the business, not just on delivery but looking at the operations, structure and strategy in a holistic way. Being able to meet other social enterprises who have that link with the university has really helped, because this is new territory on both sides. You can go to all the social enterprise research conferences you like but doing it is a completely new story. Mapping for Change connects research with impact and funders want to see that. We have now raised an additional £59,000 of which £25,000 is grant funding and Muki has become a Knowledge Transfer Champion, helping develop awareness, understanding and strategy around social enterprise at UCL."

*Dr Muki Haklay and Louise Francis,
Mapping for Change, HE SE
Development Award Winners,
University College London*

- 58% OF HE SE AWARD WINNERS FEEL THERE IS A STRONG SOCIALLY ENTERPRISING CULTURE AT THEIR HEI
- IF HE SE AWARD WINNERS COULD MAKE ONE RECOMMENDATION, 75% WOULD INCREASE RECOGNITION FOR THE VALUE OF SOCIAL VENTURE CREATION WITHIN HEIS

WHAT CAN HEIs DO TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

A wide range of HEIs have been receptive to the HE SE Awards. For instance there are 7 HE SE Awarded social ventures at the University of Salford and the University of Leeds and 6 at the University of Sheffield, University of Northampton and Coventry University. There are also at least 4 Awarded social ventures at Aston University, Birmingham City University, University of the Arts London, Newman University College, University College London and the University of Plymouth, Leeds Metropolitan University, Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Manchester. In addition to this, Southampton Solent University, University of Teeside and Newman University College generated a great deal of interest in the HE SE Awards, particularly towards the end of the Programme. These HEIs are diverse in terms of their mission, locations and size. Within each, social entrepreneurship also looks and feels very different. This evaluation has found that HE SE Award Winners are providing the impetus for a number of HEIs to develop elements of their leadership, strategy, resources, support and infrastructure for social entrepreneurship. There are 5 key elements to this which together, promote a culture of social entrepreneurship.

1. Active and Visible Leadership

Knowledge exchange activities, including enterprise creation, student volunteering, public engagement and knowledge transfer are widely embedded across the Higher Education sector. In contrast, social entrepreneurship is relatively new and largely undervalued. This is beginning to change. HEIs which have a strong network of social entrepreneurs, individuals who champion social enterprise and dedicated support functions are taking note and beginning to develop strategy around social enterprise. Leadership is integral to creating wider recognition and awareness of social entrepreneurship, helping to remove barriers and reducing the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs. A strategic approach can help expose social entrepreneurship, a great deal of which may be under the radar

(for instance, within active student societies, volunteering, knowledge transfer, community engagement). In turn, creating a culture of social venture creation provides a unique selling point for HEIs, whether in terms of the student experience or the wider public value they create.

2. Formal Recognition of the Value of Social Entrepreneurship

We have demonstrated social entrepreneurship adds value to both students and staff, value which feeds back to HEIs. This needs formal recognition. In our evaluation survey, HE SE Award Winners were asked to recommend one thing HEIs could do to make it easier to set up a social venture. Over 75% advocated for increased recognition of the value of social entrepreneurship within their HEI, particularly in terms of their role. Common recommendations include:

- ★ Providing accreditation for the work involved in social venture creation.
- ★ Giving Awards to buy out staff time for social venture development.
- ★ Publicly promoting social ventures and treat them on a par with other enterprise activities.

Formal recognition is particularly important for staff involved in social venture creation. They become vital ambassadors who encourage students to set up a social venture, as well as other staff. They also feed their experiences back into their role, whether this is teaching, research, administrative or professional. Recognition would enhance this value and ensure that those individuals who are vital to promoting social venture creation are less susceptible to the changes, funding reductions, restructuring or redundancies across the Higher Education sector.

3. A Strategic Approach to Position Social Enterprise Support Infrastructure

Social entrepreneurship is a diverse field. This is a considerable strength, attracting staff and students from a huge range of disciplines and backgrounds who would not conventionally engage with enterprise or venture creation. It also overlaps with existing support functions for knowledge exchange, including student volunteering, enterprise departments, knowledge transfer and public engagement. Dedicated social enterprise support is therefore incredibly difficult to position and if positioned badly, can struggle to attract staff and students. For instance, many universities support social venture creation through existing business schools or enterprise departments and as a result struggle to attract creative or arts students. A strategic decision should be made to position social enterprise support to complement existing departments and current activity around social entrepreneurship, as well as ensuring that this is attractive and accessible to catalyse new social venture creation. This should be accompanied by clear communication and promotion of what support is available, where this support can be found and who is the main point of contact. Most importantly, existing knowledge exchange activities need to be tailored to support and promote social venture creation.

4. Dedicate Infrastructure to Social Entrepreneurship

Tailoring existing enterprise support and infrastructure to social enterprise can add a great deal of value to promoting a culture of social venture creation amongst staff and students. This Programme has worked well where there is existing support for enterprise, particularly if there is an enterprise champion passionate about social venture creation. For some HEIs, capacity building, resource and expertise can effectively tailor existing support to promote a culture of social venture creation. For others, establishing dedicated

infrastructure and resource can help promote a culture of social entrepreneurship more widely. For instance, Southampton Solent University and the University of Northampton have established social enterprise hubs with space for social venture start-ups run by students and local community members. This approach is valuable in taking social entrepreneurship outside of the HEI setting and embedding this within local activity. However, new social enterprise infrastructure will not necessarily add value to all HEIs. Instead, further resource, expertise and capacity building is needed to tailor existing knowledge exchange and enterprise development support to social venture creation.

5. Share Effective Practice, Regionally and Nationally

The HE SE Impact Programme has demonstrated high demand for regional events, competitions and the national conference in June 2011. Awareness and interest in social entrepreneurship is gaining momentum across the Higher Education sector. However, questions remain as to how social entrepreneurship should be defined, how to support this alongside current activities and how to take this forward strategically. There are no easy answers to these questions and social entrepreneurship in Higher Education is a diverse field. Best practice sharing and cross-sector networks are both vital to ensure HEIs provide an effective support offer for social venture creation, as well as building capacity to promote a culture of social entrepreneurship across the Higher Education sector.



WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR?

The HE SE Programme has been incredibly successful in terms of a rapid take up amongst a broad range of HEIs. It has involved a modest investment and a relatively short period of time to catalyse activity which has gained a significant profile. Ideally, a longer time period would have extended the reach of the HE SE Awards and helped this approach to mature. Future work should build upon the success of this Programme – which has begun to stimulate a culture of social entrepreneurship. Sector-wide initiatives will ensure this matures across the Higher Education sector and should involve the following:

This Programme has built momentum quickly in a relatively short time, but further effort is needed to help this initial work mature and become truly embedded in the Higher Education sector. This would allow the full potential of social entrepreneurship in Higher Education to be realised - which as this report shows, would benefit students, staff, HEIs and communities alike.

- * **Regional and national events to build capacity:** The HE SE Impact Programme has demonstrated high demand for regional and national events. Individuals who both support social venture creation and those working within HEIs promoting a culture of social entrepreneurship, value opportunities to share effective practice, expertise and raise awareness of their efforts.
- * **Cross-sector support networks to continue momentum:** Membership bodies and networks have been fundamental to the success of the HE SE Awards Programme. These include Enterprise Educators UK, SIFE, HEEG, NACUE. Future work needs to create deeper and more lasting networks around social entrepreneurship.
- * **Partnerships to provide new learning:** The HE SE Awards Programme involved a new partnership between UnLtd and HEFCE. Both brought expertise in delivery, as well as additional 'brand' power, adding weight to the Programme. UnLtd brought additional experience in supporting social venture creation, whilst HEFCE brought expertise in how to adapt this for HEIs. This was a successful partnership because of the substantial learning curve involved on both sides.

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Author: Dr Nissa Ramsay

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