



Rural SEN – 20th April 2023

Notes

Participants:

Ailsa Clark - Inspiralba, Aimee Spence – Inspiralba, Carmen Paputa-Dutu - Firstport, Clare Gee – Voluntary Action Orkney, Clarrie Murdoch - Impact Hub Inverness, Duncan Thorp - Social Enterprise Scotland, Eva Milroy - Dumfries & Galloway College, Hannah Clinch - Tacit Tacit, India Whitwell - Voluntary Action Orkney, Jennifer Hunter - CodeBase, Jenny Lyall - Growbiz, Lorraine Thomson – Interface, Mika Schröder- UHI Shetland, Pauline Lockhart - Community First UK, Reeni Kennedy-Boyle - Fyne Futures, Sarah-Jane Burns - CodeBase, Selina McMorran - Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, Thomas Henderson - South Ayrshire Council.

After some brief introductions, the group were introduced to our three speakers; Jennifer Hunter & Sarah-Jane Burns from CodeBase, Duncan Thorp from Social Enterprise Scotland & Carmen Paputa-Dutu from Firstport.

TECH INNOVATION - CODEBASE

We were first joined by Jennifer Hunter & Sarah Jane Burns from [CodeBase](#). The main aim of CodeBase is to help people build better businesses with a focus on building culture, community and education that promotes and supports tech innovation.

To do this, CodeBase work with start-ups, scale-ups, corporates, governments, academia and the 3rd sector to help support innovation ecosystems, using worldwide start up best practice and tailoring it to local realities. Jennifer is the Head of Regional Engagement at CodeBase and covers Argyll and Bute, all the way to Fife.

Jennifer provided the group with some examples of how the services CodeBase offer can be of benefit for social enterprises, particularly from a rural context. They spoke about the Techscaler Project. Techscaler is a programme for creating, developing and scaling tech startups. CodeBase connect organisations or individuals with the experts, teach them world-class playbooks, and host spaces for fellow founders and start-up folk to work and hang out. More info about the Techscaler Project can be found here - <https://www.techscaler.co.uk/>.

Jennifer and Sarah-Jane then showcased some examples of social enterprises who have benefitted from the Techscaler Project. Examples are as follows:

- <https://homesforgood.org.uk/>
- <https://auticon.com/uk/>

Additional Links:

- Tech for Good Summit 2024: <https://www.digit.fyi/skilled-volunteering-how-the-scots-tech-community-can-give-back/>
- Another organisation doing good things with a tech platform who were winners in the Culture category of AccelerateHER, a programme and network for female founders: <https://www.grandbequest.co.uk/>
- Scottish Tech Army, a catalyst for a step change in the application of technology for public good in Scotland: <https://www.scottishtecharmy.org/>

Watch the full CodeBase presentation here - <https://vimeo.com/820824327>

Duncan spoke about how various Educational institutions have been members of [Social Enterprise Scotland](#) (SES) for some time, including University of Edinburgh, University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University.

Previously, there has been some collaboration between SES and these academic institutions such as signposting university staff and students to websites for information and resources, making introductions to social enterprises between universities and social enterprises, promoting surveys and research etc.

Recently, SES held a webinar where University partners were invited along and given a platform to speak about what they have been doing in terms of social enterprise development. This was followed by a more in-depth meeting towards the end of 2022 to explore this topic further.

In this meeting, they identified two main strands of the project; producing academic research and developing practical business support for social enterprise development. They have planned for the group to meet quarterly.

In terms of next steps, the group will be looking to formalise and write-up official Terms of Reference. They are also planning to build a better resource on the SES website so that Universities can share their activities in relation to social enterprise with ease. SES are also involved with the [Third Sector Research Forum](#) in order to look at how they work with third sector partners around research to partnership opportunities.

They are looking to hold a second meeting for Academia in May in which they will look at the [Social Enterprise Census 2021](#) and gather contacts around that.

Additional links:

- Link to 2022 Webinar with Academic Institutions: <https://vimeo.com/693142987>
- Evaluation Support Scotland Website: <https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/>

Watch the full Social Enterprise Scotland presentation here - <https://vimeo.com/820824865>

SOCIAL INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2023

Carmen started the presentation by talking a little bit about [Firstport](#), Scotland's agency for start-up social entrepreneurs and social enterprise. Firstport support individuals all across Scotland to start, develop and grow their ideas into businesses with social impact at their core.

[The Social Innovation Challenge](#) is a programme that funds and supports innovators to kick-start solutions that tackle some of the most pressing challenges of our time.

The programme is centred around a new theme each year, the theme for 2023 is focussed on issues connected with the rising cost of living. The programme will award up to £50,000 in grant funding to support the development of a new social enterprise solution, as well as tailored support to launch and implement the solution.

Firstport are looking for new social enterprise ideas for removing the deep-rooted obstacles that prevent individuals and communities from living fulfilling and dignified lives, particularly in light of the current, well-publicised rising cost of living.

Those who can apply include; established social enterprises, unincorporated groups or community associations and individuals with an idea for a new project. However, the grant can only be released to incorporated social enterprises operating in Scotland. If an applicant who is not yet incorporated wins, Firstport will support them with the incorporation process before they pay out the award.

To apply, applicants must submit an Expression of Interest form and book a 30 min chat with Firstport. Following this, applicants will be able to submit an application which consists of an application form, a budget request and an online form with personal information. The application deadline is Monday 31 July 12pm.

Additional links:

- Expression of Interest Form - <https://www.firstport.org.uk/funding/social-innovation-challenge/sic-23-eoi/>
- Fine Tune your Social Enterprise Event (in-person): <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fine-tune-your-social-enterprise-for-start-ups-registration-616432224377>

Watch the full Firstport presentation here – <https://vimeo.com/820824600>

UPCOMING LEARNING EXCHANGES

The Rural SE Hub have some big ideas in terms of Community Learning Exchanges in 2023. It is hoped that more in-person exchanges will be possible as these have proved to be extremely valuable in the past. However, there will still be some learning exchanges which will be virtual as this allows more people to get involved.

At the moment, the Rural SE Hub are looking to hold an exchange which would look at employability schemes led by community organisation and would showcase examples of good practice. The exchange would look at organisations who have a lot of experience in the field of employability, namely Fyne Futures based in Bute and CEIS Ayrshire based in Ayrshire. This exchange is still in the application stage at the moment but the Network will be updated as soon as confirmation is given.

In terms of the mental health project, it was suggested that it would be useful to hold a virtual community learning exchange on this topic to get a little bit more background and prompt some interesting discussion.

The other idea in the pipeline for a future community learning exchange centred around the increasing cost of living and what community-led organisations are doing to help alleviate this crisis. Discussions are currently underway at the moment to hold an exchange which will look into women in social enterprise.

NETWORK UPDATES

The group then decided to do something a little different and have each attendee speak a little about the organisation that they represent and any updates they may have. It was decided that this should be a permanent feature of Rural SEN meetings going forward.