Social entrepreneurship for the age sector, older people and communities

Dr. Hannah McDowall
UnLtd: who we are and what we do

UnLtd is a UK-based charity which supports social entrepreneurs - people with vision, drive, and passion who want to change the world for the better - to start-up and scale-up social ventures.

**UnLtd Awards**

We provide a package of funding and support, to help these individuals make their ideas a reality.

- financial support for a venture idea
- 1:1 support by a Development Manager
- Connections to organizations and markets
UnLtd’s ageing work

Social entrepreneurship for and by older people:
Largest older social entrepreneurship support programme in the UK
>200 people of over 50 years old and >80 social ventures addressing ageing issues supported in the last two years.

3 Programmes of work:

- **Bradford pilot**: 17 social entrepreneurs of 50+ to start up a venture of any social focus in Bradford (supported by Bradford metropolitan council).
- **Engage**: 30 social entrepreneurs of all ages running ventures addressing ageing issues in England and Wales (supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation).
- **Ignite**: 120 social entrepreneurs of 50+ running ventures of any social focus in Northern Ireland (supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies).
Ageing issues most commonly addressed include:

- **Adult social care**: Social ventures address the social and physical needs of recipients and givers of care. Some work in people’s homes and others in residential contexts. Work to promote a dementia-friendly society falls into this category.

- **Intergenerational projects**: Through their activities, ventures bring communities together, build new relationships and pass on knowledge between generations.

- **Reducing isolation**: Ventures target isolated older people with a great range of activities either group based or 1 to 1 such as befriending.

- **Extending healthy lifespan**: Promoting mental and physical health of those in middle and older age.

- **Sharing skills**: Ventures provide a means of enabling older people with a wealth of experience to pass it on to others, sometimes paid, sometimes voluntary.

- **Poverty**: Ventures provide employment opportunities to older people. Ventures provide advice or support to improve older people’s financial situation e.g. fuel use or benefits entitlements.

*Less likely to be capital intensive ventures such as technical solutions – more likely to be social solutions, low level support that improves wellbeing*
Reach of social ventures for older people

The majority and small

- Small geographical reach
- Utilise community assets; spaces, volunteer help, networks
- Low cost
- Show community specificity
- Lead by one or two social entrepreneurs
- Informal/un-constituted
- Run by people over 50
- Beneficiaries reached: 2012 annual survey returned 124 ventures addressing ageing issues, total beneficiary No = 140,000

These ventures are highly valued by those that access them but with small reach and dependent on small number of leaders are patchy and precarious; only some people benefit and they may not be sustained. Social ventures are not the ONLY method of addressing ageing issues – part of a wider picture of provision.
Reach of social ventures for older people

The minority scale

• Most expand through a franchise model
• Can struggle to find a place in a fragmented ‘age sector market’
• Sources of innovation
• Higher proportion of younger social entrepreneurs – but need to recapture full cost of labour

E.g.1 Menopause Self Care
Isabella Quigley Moriarty, South West England

• Service: Support for women going through the change support groups and individual.
• Markets: Private interest, funding from economic regeneration funds and job center. NOT health service.
• Innovation: Identified a life transition not recorded in literature.
• Scaling Model: Franchising.

E.g.2 www.grannynet.co.uk
Verity Gill, National

• Product: Social network website for grandparents providing substantial regular care for grandchildren with retail function.
• Markets: Commercial; advertising, retail function. Difficulty getting sponsorship / partners
• Innovation: first UK networking site for grandparents, but now competition from gransnet.
• Scaling Model: Hierarchical
Conclusions:

*how do we maximize the potential of social ventures working on ageing issues?*

**Scaling out**

- Supporting more people to start up social ventures addressing low-level support needs
- Change in culture to endorse social entrepreneurship by people in later life
- Linking social venture support with other age-friendly initiatives

**Scaling up**

- Finding a place in the market
- Pairing older and younger social entrepreneurs for design and delivery
Contact and further information

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Social Entrepreneurship for and by those in later life: publications and events

- [www.unltd.org.uk/research](http://www.unltd.org.uk/research)
- Publications
  - Golden Opportunities: The Role and Potential of Social Entrepreneurs in an Ageing Society (November 2011)
  - Case study Brochure (March 2012)
  - Ignite interim report (June 2011)
  - Engage interim report (July 2011)
  - Engage final report (August 2012)
- Events
  - Toolkit Launch Autumn 2012
  - Ignite Conference – Northern Ireland late 2012 or early 2013
- Other Resources
  - Toolkit for older social entrepreneurs and their supporters – Available Autumn 2012