

The Platform Project: Creating Young Entrepreneurs

The Platform Project is a not-for-profit project, Community Interest Company, which supports young people in Swindon interested in setting up their own businesses.



The founder Sadie Sharp explains what they do: “We run youth enterprise projects as a rapid development vehicle to help young people transition into work or self-employment.” The social enterprise runs a number of small-scale innovative youth-led businesses, including the youth magazine #iDare, a digital media marketing agency and a printed goods business, where the young adults do everything you would in a normal business including managing social media, liaising with customers, making decisions, and managing project finances. This also includes one-to-one support from an employability and enterprise mentor, where a young person is paired up with professionals in their respective field of interest.

The not-for-profit organisation was launched to run itself like a business and to become self-sustaining and to date, it has generated more than 40 percent of its income through commercial activity by providing its services to schools, colleges and local companies.

2020 saw The Platform Project transform from having a single staff member to over ten, and from a single project activity to eight with more coming on stream.

Sadie continues, “here at The Platform Project we are growing at an extraordinary rate – we have quadrupled each year since launching three years ago and we have secured more funding in the 1st quarter of our fourth year than we did during the whole of our previous financial year. This means we are rapidly adding services to our youth development programmes to help meet the growing number of NEETS (young people Not in Employment, Education & Training).”



The last quarter of 2020 saw the Platform Project secure £100,000 of new funding. The latest cash injection was a £35,000 grant from the BBC Children In Need fund, funding that will pay for more sessions to run the projects, as well as adding extra layers of support to help the interns take their next steps.

Sadie comments, “we’ve also secured £25,000 from the John Lewis Partnership. This will pay for a professional, brokering relationships with local employers and self-employed freelancers to offer short work shadowing and experience placements, helping the interns build up their CV.”



The organisation has expanded its board of directors to help guide the growth, which now includes Jon Joyce, the local director of Metro Bank, Andy Langley, the operations director from Swindon-based IT firm Ntegra, and local born philanthropic entrepreneur James Phipps as chairman.

“The results we’ve had this year alone have been astounding,” said James. “We’ve had young people who dropped out of education early go back to college because they have found a career that actually interests them after working on one of our projects. We’ve also had young people who have been unable to secure traditional work because of physical and learning needs who have gone on to be self-employed and start earning a freelance income.”

James explains, “when traditional job opportunities aren’t as available as they used to be, you need to think creatively about your options, and this youth enterprise organisation offers the flexibility to design programmes around young people’s skills and interests.”

James looks towards the future, “we have a fantastic team from the board and staff to volunteers, now more than ever we need businesses and mentors to come forward to help us to give these young people the best chance of success in the crucial years of their lives.”

The Platform Project is opening up new places for young people aged 16-21 now, in 2021, to participate in its youth led businesses development schemes to help young people transition to work or self-employment. If you know a young person who might benefit from support and development to help them transition into their future careers please email on info@PlatformProject.co.uk.

James Phipps and **Sadie Sharp** were both founding members of the SSEN Steering Group.

Jon Joyce is a current member of the SSEN Steering Group.

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Presented by the [Swindon Social Enterprise Network](#)



The SSEN is a virtual, community-based, voluntary network of like-minded individuals and organisations who are here to:

- **Support** existing Social Enterprises 's to grow and flourish and those contemplating starting one
- **Assist** charities who wish to create a new trading revenue stream
- **Encourage** existing, profitable businesses to deliver social/environmental impact for market advantage

