

Me and SEIDs – overview of our programmes

I'm the head of programmes at SEIDs. We're a charity and we were set up by Caritas. Our mission is to create decent and dignified work opportunities through self employment and living wage jobs. We're a relatively new addition to the Caritas family having officially opened in January 2019.

I'm going to talk about what we do and then I'm talk about what we've learned about decent work over the past couple of years.

The work I do as head of programmes is specifically focused on working with people who are unemployed or on a low income and who want to start either a business or a social enterprise (which is a business with a social purpose)

What this looks like in practice is a 12 month cohort based learning programme, for 20 participants who fulfil that eligibility criteria of being unemployed or on a low income and who want to start their own business. They move through a programme that is curated by SEIDs – and it'd made up of workshops, 121 mentoring, £500 of funding and access to a desk in the SEIDs coworking space.

The **workshops** are on things like business planning, finance, branding, marketing and social media. But also soft skills like confidence and mental health and are hosted by a new expert facilitator every week. What's also really important is that we've created opportunities for participants on previous cohorts to deliver paid workshops as part of the programme.

In addition to what we created on paper when we set up the programme, almost the strongest and most beneficial part of it is that it has created an opportunity and space for people who are often in similar circumstances to talk, gain peer to peer support and collaborate on their business ideas.

The programme overall was really helpful. Being able to talk to people at the same stage of setting up their own business was invaluable – so many fresh pairs of eyes! The workshops were useful and they got better over time - I found the finance workshop especially beneficial. Being able to speak to the programme manager about my business was great. Before lockdown, I really loved coming to the SEIDs building - actually getting out of the house and having a place to work was fantastic. The £500 of funding helped support the development of my business – and helped pay for my website update, flyers, a course on memoir writing, life coaching sessions and advice from an accountant.

Quote from Anita Kelly, participant on the first SEIDs start up business programme

Other thoughts

Holistic approach

A lot of the people we work with experience multiple disadvantages, it's very rare that the only difficulty they are facing is a lack of work. They also often have, housing issues, mental health issues personal relationship issues, the refugees that we work with often have PTSD.

Sometimes I think there's a tendency was the DWP staff to think that all someone needs is a job and they'll be ok – but actually if that job it's zero ours minimum wage with no benefits, there's a chance this kind of work could exacerbate any existing mental health issues and leave the person in a worse state than when they were unemployed. So it's about looking at everything that's going on in someone's life and thinking about the kind of work that will promote a sustainable livelihood as opposed to just any job because it's a job.

I think key to making this holistic approach work is **partnership work**. I think there is a tendency for third sector organisations to duplicate the work that they do instead of collaborating with others. I think it's about thinking what is your organisation best placed to do – if you're not a grass roots organisation don't try to be one. Instead find out what your local grassroots organisation is doing and ask them how you can add value to what they're already offering. And that way you work more intensively with people across multiple issues rather than just 10 organisations running the same CV session.

Advocacy strategy around decent work

We're in the very early stages of developing an advocacy strategy for SEIDs, one of the things we've been thinking about is the idea of a decent work accreditation that would use a number of metrics to assess work – and part of this would involve doing research with low paid workers around what is most important to them –so for example hourly rate, maternity pay, sick leave, holiday allowance, in work progression. This thinking comes out of the idea that we know there are organisations, that do really well focusing on one thing, but sometimes focusing on just one metric means other things get sacrificed – so for example when [Sainsbury's upped their basic rate of pay](#) for all 130,00 staff from £8 per hour to £9.20 per hour in 2018 (which still isn't living wage of course) they slashed paid breaks and premium pay for unsocial working hours.

I think linked to this is the idea of **Underemployment**, especially as regards to some of the refugees we've worked with..

Just to finish – I want to talk about funding for our work and also looking to the future.

Funding

How do we get funding to do this work?

Not just relying on grants from trusts and foundations or local authority funding but

Leveraging the support that we can get from corporates, universities and local and central government – 10% of all 100k bids to Brent council have to factor in social value. This is true of other LA as well as central government.

What are we thinking about in the future? Young people and innovative programming

Young people: offered university or apprenticeship or a job – but what about starting their own business?

Thinking about how we can be innovative – preparing people for jobs that will exist in ten years.

Tech – coding for refugee women – what jobs will exist in 20 years