



IMPACT

REPORT



ABOUT US



We are a registered Community Interest Company (a type of non-profit social enterprise), working with individuals (16+) with learning disabilities, autism and mental health barriers. We focus on an individual's strengths and aspirations, then work with them to realise their potential, leading to self-worth and independence. We do this through: creative workshops, group and community work, mentoring, skill development programs, meaningful volunteering roles and social events.





OUR AIMS

WE HAVE FOUR MISSION GOALS



We believe in equality for all. We aim to help individuals with additional needs, and who feel marginalised, to feel more empowered and have increased self-worth.

We help individuals with additional needs develop growth mindsets. We use a mixture of methods that bring about an inner resilience, challenging people's perceptions of themselves and their own capabilities of shaping their world.



We aim to create social change by demonstrating that everyone has strengths and skills to offer their world. We all have a calling and a purpose we can serve that provides self-fulfilment.

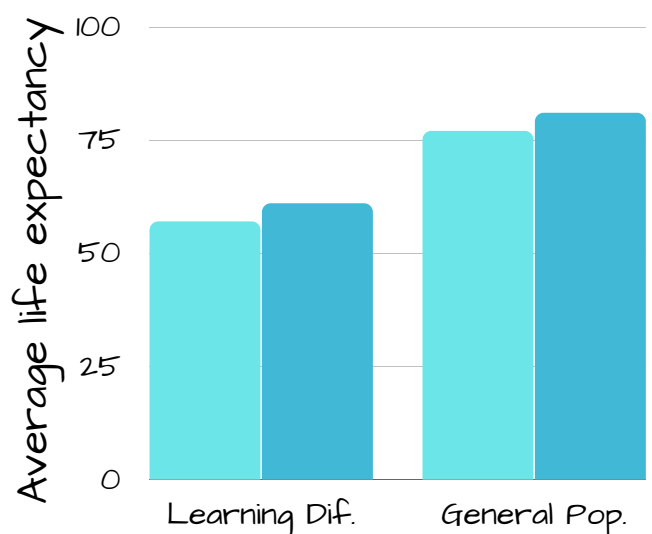
We aim to create environmentally sustainable communities through community partnership, creative waste reduction methods and educating people about their role in the world.



WHY DO WHAT WE DO.

UPPERTUNITY CAME TO BE FROM TWO FOUNDERS WHO FELT THAT THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH SERVICES TO HELP INDIVIDUALS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND MENTAL HEALTH BARRIERS FEEL PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS

The Keys to Life (Scotland's learning disability strategy) reports that the life expectancy of people with a learning disability is 20 years shorter than the general population. Many of these deaths are preventable by encouraging good mental and physical health.

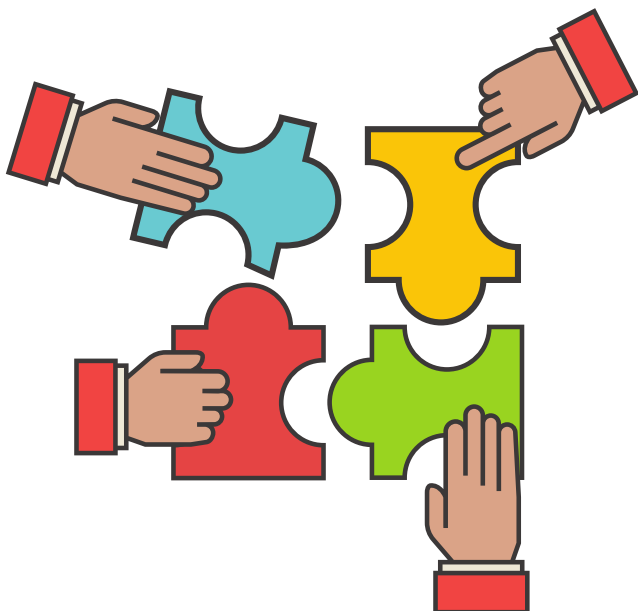
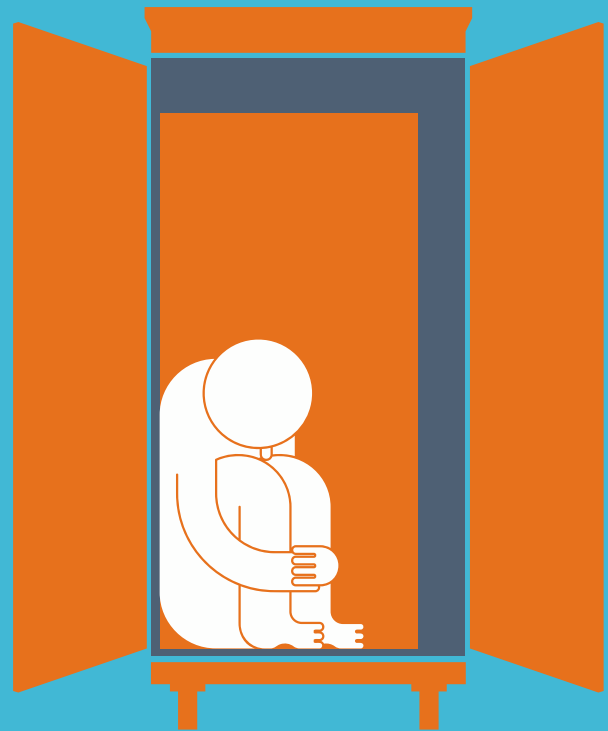


People with learning disabilities, autism and mental health barriers are more likely to be exposed to common causes of poor health such as poverty, poor housing, lack of meaningful employment, social isolation and discrimination.

Many people with learning disabilities have experienced lifelong exclusion resulting from lack of choice and opportunity as well as experiencing significant barriers to access. This is made more difficult when there is a lack of opportunities or where there are barriers to access opportunities. Barriers include physical access, use of language, suitable activities or lack of an inclusive space.

The greatest challenge facing the people we work with is isolation. A study in 2011 (van Steensel, Boëgels & Perrin) found that children and adolescents with autism are at increased risk of anxiety and anxiety disorders, with the most frequent being phobia, OCD, and social anxiety disorder.

Isolation makes these conditions worse. Feeling alone increases the risk of death by 26%, while social isolation and living alone increases mortality risk by 29% and 32% (Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015). Mencap have identified that 1 in 4 people with learning disabilities spend less than one hour outside their home each day, missing out on exercise and casual social interaction.



Mencap also identified that 65% of people with a learning disability want to work, but only 7% have a job. 93% of those interviewed by the Foundation for People with Learning disabilities in 2012 said they felt lonely and isolated.

Mental health and behavioural problems (e.g. depression, anxiety and drug use) are reported to be the primary drivers of disability worldwide. Major depression is thought to be the second leading cause of disability worldwide and a major contributor to the burden of suicide and coronary heart disease (Mental Health, 2012)



On a local level, the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership reported that Dundee has the highest proportion of adults with learning disabilities in Scotland (9.5 per 1000, 2017). Also stated that two thirds of the population with learning disabilities live in the most deprived areas of the city.

WE TACKLE THESE CHALLENGES BY

1. Working in a person-centred manner
2. Providing a range of tools and opportunities for developing good mental and physical wellbeing, as well as resilience
3. Offering support and activities that helps reduce isolation and loneliness
4. Providing opportunities to develop purpose. We have found that having a purpose, or not having one, can have a huge impact on a person's physical and mental health as well as on their family and community

OUR ETHOS

We create a safe and nurturing environment, where individuals feel comfortable to test themselves and explore their talent and capabilities

We are person centred, placing an emphasis on mutual respect and trust. Our members are a part of Uppertunity and not merely a recipient of a service

We advocate progress not perfection, encouraging individuals to learn from mistakes and to always give something a go

Develop and build transferable life skills in our clients, and empower individuals who are underestimated

We believe that working with the strengths of the community and individuals living within it is key to a sustainable future



OUR SERVICES

AT UPPERTUNITY WE OFFER A VARIETY OF SERVICES TO OUR MEMBERS

WEEKLY WARRIORS

Our programme of creative and therapeutic activities that take place each week, including art, sewing, woodwork, active groups, social groups, volunteering opportunities and more.



UPPMAKES

Our creative skills program where individuals upcycle, while developing life skills. In these groups we aim to teach individuals relevant skills in furniture renewal, clothing refashioning, woodworking and decoration while providing life skills, volunteering skills, team work, time management and creative thinking.



SERENDIPITIES

Our social change space in the form of a café in the City Centre, offering unique food, social events, volunteering, job roles and catering.



ENERGISING THE EVERYDAY

An inclusive training programme run at Serendipities, involving life developing skills and gaining knowledge and practical skills in hospitality



DARING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Our skill and capacity building program. This programme is all about building skills that can be used throughout life and developing the unique talents of the individual, and involves mentoring, reflective learning and volunteering.



GROWING PLACES

Our therapeutic garden volunteering programme where volunteers are in charge of creating a beautiful environment within Uppertunity's premises.

THE UPSIDE

Our pluralistic mentoring service to help resolve personal problems. We also offer My Journey, free to current clients. This is when we have an informal 10 minute catch up every month or so with each member to find out how things are going and how we can help achieve goals.



EVENTS

We host a range of activities every month including bake offs, camping trips, bingo nights and more.

MEASURING SOCIAL IMPACT

AT UPPERTUNITY, WE DON'T JUST DO SOCIAL CHANGE, WE ARE SOCIAL CHANGE. WE
MEASURE OUR SOCIAL IMPACT USING 5 KEY ASPECTS:

GOVERNANCE

How we make sure our organisation is run fairly and ethically



COMMUNITY

How we benefit and enrich our local community.



ENVIRONMENT

How we do our best to protect the environment and promote sustainability



CUSTOMERS

How we help the people who use our service, and how we serve our café customers.



WORKERS

How we treat our paid staff and volunteers and help them achieve their goals.



OUR DIFFERENCE IN A NUTSHELL

We work with individuals with varying additional needs, supporting over 50 clients on a weekly basis, and an additional 10 on monthly basis.

Our clients report an increase in their confidence, independence, social circle and skill level.

Since starting in September 2015, we've received over 10 000 volunteer hours from volunteer members and volunteer facilitators. This equates to over £95 000 if paid the living wage or 5.5 full time staff members.

We run a café in Dundee city centre that provides an inclusive and safe space for vulnerable individuals to learn life and employability skills, as well as providing a safe space to socialise for individuals in the public. Our café also provides employability opportunities and helps to fight the effects of climate change using different methods.

We help fight climate change by absorbing CO₂ through our gardens where we have an orchard, and we grow fruit and veg for our café and lunch groups. We also use items that would otherwise be thrown away such as fabric, old duvets, furniture, clothes, crafts, paint and much more. We also have 'eco warrior' loyalty cards at our café.

We take food that would otherwise be thrown away and turn it into soups and salads, and use it in our member lunch groups. Since September 2019, we have prevented 5500kg of food going to landfill (17 000kg of CO₂).

69% of our staff have barriers to employment including mental health barriers, carer, care background, no qualifications and learning disabilities. We have provided paid job opportunities to some of our volunteers, helping to develop life long skills.

Our clients, volunteers and staff have all reported that they have learnt new skills, developed confidence and a sense of purpose since starting with us.

We have supported 10 individuals with additional needs to achieve the Grow and Learn Award, a horticulture award from the Caley.

Carer/family members have reported that their relationships with their cared for persons have improved since the person started using our services.

Clients have reported that they now attend other services in their community after starting with Uppertunity. Staff have reported that they are more involved in their community since having stable employment.

In 6 years, we started from running workshops from the boot of our car to moving into our own space with 4 rooms and a 400m² garden area, opened a successful café, make and sell upcycled items, and have a full team of over 10 paid staff members.

GOVERNANCE

We are a registered Community Interest Company (CIC), a type of social enterprise. A social enterprise is a special type of non-profit or more than profit business that reinvests all of its profits into achieving specific social missions.



These can be anything from helping the environment to enriching our community. Our assets and profits are locked. They must be permanently retained within the CIC and used solely for community benefit and aims.

We have a Board of Directors that makes all the final decisions of the organisation. These positions are voluntary and unpaid. This ensures decisions are made fairly.



As part of their roles, all directors are required to volunteer some of their time in our events and activities, ensuring they understand our ethos.

We have an 'articles of association' that states our mission and we complete an annual impact report.

COMMUNITY

The community is at the heart of what we do and we work with the needs of the community. We host regular events, bringing the community together and reducing isolation in vulnerable groups. This helps to increase understanding and remove negative stigma.



We offer annual trips away for our members to experience 'holidays' with friends. Our last trip, we went to an inclusive cottage for 2 nights in Fife, where one of our members in a wheelchair was able to join.



We offer volunteering opportunities for our members that connects them to the community including phone befriending isolated elderly individuals through Dial-Op and making sensory items for local care homes and PAMIS.

We also work in partnership with a range of other organisations where we provide safe, inclusive and meaningful placements for individuals seeking supportive work experience including Project Scotland, Community Job Scotland, Barnardos and Abertay University. We provide mentoring to individuals who face barriers to employment and skill development.



Barnardo's Works
engage ■ train ■ qualify ■ employ



We host events that help develop skills and bring the community and multiple age groups together, such as Burns Night Suppers, craft fairs, bake offs, social/meeting nights, BBQ's etc.



We work with other businesses on Union street, where our café is based, and create community events. We also offer our cafe space to be used for free by local organisations, such as Food Not Bombs. Our cafe is also a collection point for DOPE magazine. People ranging from rough sleepers to asylum seekers can collect the newspaper for free, sell it for the cover price of £3 and keep the proceeds



ENVIRONMENT

We are carbon footprint conscious. We follow a non-violent approach, therefore providing alternative positive ways of thinking. We build confidence in individuals to make a change through a supportive and non-judgmental environment.



We follow a circular economy model, wherein waste is minimised as much as possible and all resources are reused to the best of their ability. Our café and creative spaces/workshops uses all second hand furniture, plates, cups and utensils, donated fabrics and art supplies, repurposed wood and more.

Our café is vegan to combat the pollution and harm associated with the farming industry. We use Fairtrade and responsibly sourced hot drinks, and sustainable ingredients. We also work with Fare Share to provide free sanitary products to fight period poverty, as well as free nappies.



We are reducing food wastage to protect the environment while providing for those who do not have enough. We receive excess food from supermarkets, through FareShare, and then share this with like minded groups such as Food Not Bombs. We also use this food to make soup, where any customer pays what they want, any day of the week. This is to ensure anyone has access to a yummy and nutritious meal. We also offer this on all drinks once a week. We also provide free fruit within our cafe.



We also use this food in our cooking skill groups aimed at individuals with additional needs. This also helps provide an opportunity for our members and volunteers, to be adaptable and resourceful in their own lives.

And any food that is made for the cafe and hasn't been sold before the use by date, we give away through Too Good To Go or to local community groups.



Uppmakes is our upcycling project, where we do up unwanted furniture. This helps to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and provides an opportunity for people to learn new skills in woodwork/upholstery/painting ect.

We have our own gardens where we grow our own produce. This helps reduce plastic waste and travel miles. It provides an opportunity for our members to get in touch with nature and develop skills in plant care, as well as a safe social opportunity. We also encourage wildflowers and native insects to our garden to help biodiversity. We have recently started an orchard, to help to offset the carbon footprint we do have..

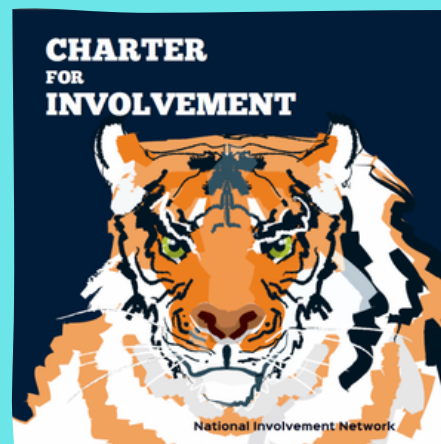


CUSTOMERS



Within all our services, we promote health and well-being, responsibility, creativity, fun and self belief. Our clients benefit from increased confidence, creativity, motivation, skills and a sense of achievement as well as feel more engaged with their community and society.

We have signed up for the Charter for Involvement. The Charter for Involvement is written by the National Involvement Network (NIN). It sets out in their own words how supported people want to be involved, in the support that they get, in the organisations that provide their services, in the wider community.



We regularly ask our client's feedback/opinions. We do this informally, such as during groups and through catch ups, as well as formally through questionnaires. For example, when planning the activities for a therapeutic group for the following week, we will ask our clients what activities they would like. Another example is when having a catch up with one of our clients, we found out that they wanted to sell some of their crafts. From this, we then set up a space in our café to sell it. We have developed this project further through further discussions from our clients, and are now developing a creative skills programme.

We supported five individuals to achieve formal REHIS Food and Hygiene certificates. These individuals are being supported by us to develop their employability skills further. Two individuals have gone on to employment. Ten individuals took part in a formal garden qualification (Grow and Learn), supported by us. Many of these individuals have never achieved a formal qualification. This boosted their confidence while developing transferable skills.



The type of skill and strength focused groups we offer (online and in person) are: Yoga, Cooking and Food Hygiene, Self-Awareness and Goal Setting, Working and Volunteering; and Stress Management. Various tools and techniques are used in these topics including mind-maps, 'how I see myself', short term and long-term goals, and 'if I could be anything'.

During lockdown, we found that being isolated and without a routine was having a negative impact on their mental and physical health, with carers and families also suffering as a result. Within weeks of us restarting some groups and volunteering, the wellbeing of the individuals attending increased greatly. We will help boost participants' confidence, increase their skill set and help them realise their full potential.



WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

This is just a snippet of what our clients say about us...

"I am learning new skills. I am very proud of what I make and achieve"

"I love the fun & laughter at the groups. I enjoy interacting with everyone"

"I've become more capable and I love helping with everything"

"I love meeting my friends. I have a better social life"

"I love spending time with different people and learning new things"

"I like that I make stuff and can give it to other people"

"I like all the different classes to choose from. I like all the different activities"

"I get a lot of support at Uppertunity"

"Uppertunity has changed my life. It has given me so many opportunities"

"It is a happy place to be learning new things"

"I keep coming back because I get to try new things"

"Uppertunity is a good experience, meeting new people and learning new things"

"I would feel sad and confused if Uppertunity didn't exist"

"I get to be myself and am accepted for who I am"

"I enjoy coming here. It's a friendly place and very fun"

"I enjoy completing projects and finishing stuff I've started"

"I love Uppertunity as I get to be creative"

"Without Uppertunity, we wouldn't learn something new"

"I get used to meeting other people. I've learnt to be proud of myself"

"I enjoy working with others and learning artsy stuff"

WORKERS

All staff, whether paid or unpaid, are part of opportunity and its development. At opportunity, we do not believe in hierarchies. We are person centered, placing an emphasis on mutual respect and trust.



We provide placements and employment opportunities to individuals who are ready for work but are facing barriers, such as low or no qualifications, mental health barriers etc. Over 60% of our staff have employment barriers, and many are individuals who started off as volunteers.

We are a registered living wage employer. We also partner with local universities, Abertay and Dundee Universities, and have provided 8 placements since September 2018.



Majority of our staff started off attending as volunteers from employability skill development placements. We provide regular mentoring to our staff, where we support with personal and career development.

WHAT OUR STAFF SAY

How has working with Uppertunity impacted you?

"I feel I have a purpose"

"I feel part of a team"

"Uppertunity has boosted my confidence"

"Uppertunity has made a big impact on how I communicate towards other both inside and outside of work"

"I am engaging more with my community (i.e. local holidays, museums etc)"

"I'm thinking bigger and planning my future. Before, it wasn't something I thought about"

"I've come out of my comfort zone and am trying new things"

"Uppertunity has given me a start"

What have you learned from working here?

"I have learnt so many new creative skills such as woodwork, upcycling, sewing etc"

"I have learnt how to approach things with confidence"

"That I can help people and make them feel good about themselves"

"That I am able to support others to be the best they can be"

"I have learnt that I have a lot to offer"

"I have learnt that a job can be fun and enjoyable"

Where do you see the most benefit from our work?

"That our members know we are a safe space and they are a priority"

"The positive vibes we are feeding back to customers and volunteers, and that we are a safe and inclusive space"

"The life skills we are teaching that can be used throughout life"

"That members know and feel that they are important"

OUR TIMELINE

2015



Uppertunity was set up on the 15th of September 2015 as a Community Interest Company by our two founders, Danielle and Darryl



In October 2015, the first therapeutic art group, Scribbles, was set up! This was based in Douglas Community Centre

We held our very first social event, Oor Burns Lunch, in January of 2016



2016



We started our second art group, Doodles, at the Ardler Community Centre. We spent the first year making connections and finding out what was needed in the community

Danielle ran the groups for the first year and a half (unpaid) within Dundee based community centre, travelling with all the materials in her car



We started our Totally Stitched group at Menzieshill Community Centre in March 2017

We started Growing Places, our garden project, having been given a garden plot at Tayview Community Gardens in March



2017



We moved into our permanent premises at the Circle in July 2017

In August we launched our Daring for Development Program



Then in December of 2017 we held our first arts and crafts fair!



In February 2018 we held our first Two's Company event.



2018



We held our first Bake Off in June.

We received funding to employ our second paid staff member



We held our first camping trip to Fife with some of our members in September

We held more events including craft fairs, Oor Burns, games nights and more



2019



In July we opened our cafe, Serendipities where we employed 3 new staff members

We launched our Energising the Everyday training program



We received funding to hire another 3 paid project workers

We held our first inclusive trip away for 2 nights in a cottage, where members in wheelchairs could join as well



2020



Union Street became pedestrianised, allowing us to have outdoor seating and host street events

We launched Uppmakes, our recycling and refurbishing project to teach our members new skills and help tackle waste



We received funding to launch online activities, supporting members unable to come to groups.

We received funding from Community Job Scotland and the Kickstart Government scheme to employ 6 additional members



2021

In 2021 we are continuing to develop our support,
and have a lot planned to make sure we are
achieving our aims.



2021 and
beyond...

If you would like to be involved with Uppertunity as a
client, volunteer, funder or director, please get in
touch. We are only able to achieve what we do with
the collective support of others.

OUR FUNDERS

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SPONSORS FOR YOUR HELP IN ACHIEVING
ALL WE HAVE!

The
Henry Smith
Charity

founded in 1628

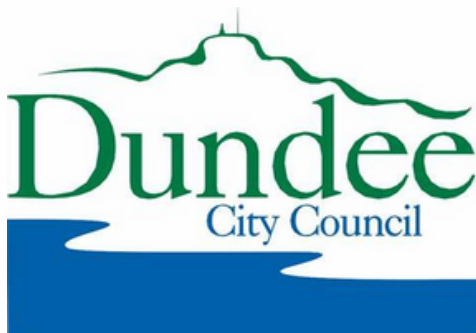


Foundation
Scotland

Arnold Clark
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