

## Josie Emberton

Josie Emberton, Head of Live UnLtd, has been with UnLtd since summer 2006 when she started by running the Big Boost programme. It was the first and largest programme for young social entrepreneurs in the world. Her role included: managing a complex partnership with different organisations, managing funder relationships, setting direction and targets for stakeholders and ultimately ensuring the programme delivered a world-class scheme for young people. In 2008 she continued working at UnLtd as the business operations manager with a remit to oversee the externally funded contract across all UnLtd and review the internal business processes. Josie is now the Head of Live UnLtd leading groundbreaking initiatives to support young people as social entrepreneurs across the country. Before joining UnLtd Josie worked in a private company as a project manager for contracts to provide business advice to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME).



## Beyond Public Services, Beyond Active Citizens

Social entrepreneurs sit up and take action, they do things most people don't even think about.

They are more than just active citizens; they are entrepreneurial-minded passionate individuals who change the world around them. They are people driving real-life solutions for society through the form of social ventures. Social entrepreneurs have real-life solutions. Solutions fuelled by personal drive.

Social entrepreneurs are doing things under the radar; a movement of individuals going beyond active citizenship. Not passive recipients of services who vote when they fancy it and not to be viewed as friendly fluffy do-gooders. They are creating significant change for themselves as well as our economy. A social entrepreneur is someone who recognises a social problem and uses enterprising approaches to organise, create and manage a venture to make social change a reality.

Poverty, re-offending rates, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, social exclusion and childhood obesity are just some of the problems our society faces. Social entrepreneurs are tackling these problems head-on.

Social entrepreneurs can be anyone; young or old, educated or illiterate, an accountant or unemployed. There are no denominating factors which single them out. Muhammad Yunus gave entrepreneurs in areas of poverty access to loans with his micro credit. Jamie Oliver is transforming the lives of young people by giving them careers through his restaurants. Emma Spiegler changes lives by developing support for young people affected by someone else's addiction. Laura Burgess runs Ecoescape, changing people's attitudes to environmental sustainability through UK tourism activities. The variety is endless.

Some of the most successful social entrepreneurs in the UK started or at least had the idea for their social venture at a young age. This movement is in the hands of young people; they are not only the future, but also the here and now. Young people see social entrepreneurship as an option for them, whether they call it by this name or not. They have an inherent social conscience, born out of living in uncertain and unstable times where their role in the global economy is ever more exposed and scrutinised.

But young people need the right support if they are to find solutions to the problems affecting society at large. And with their success, other young people will no longer be viewed as either victims or the problem in society, but instead the solution.

Equipping younger generations with the opportunity and skills to set up a social venture not only boosts their employment prospects, but creates economic advantages. We are in a deep global recession and the UK's young people face major challenges ahead, unemployment being one of them.

Looking beyond these economic challenges, our society is coming up against more and more problems not necessarily amenable to a direct government solution. Tackling these so-called life zone issues – drink and drug use, obesity, gang culture, carbon emissions – will need active involvement by all members of society. The public sector and the media can work with young social entrepreneurs to show the significant contribution that can be made.

Social entrepreneurship can provide a transformational intervention, especially for young people, through the education, learning and confidence boost which goes hand-in-hand with running a venture. By running a venture, a young person ends up with life skills which would not normally be picked up through the traditional education structure. The ability to think on their own and be trusted to run their venture is usually a unique and first-chance opportunity for a young person.

Social entrepreneurship can bring the social cohesion much needed in our society. Whether it's teenagers developing programmes to engage their peers in pro-social rather than anti-social activities, people tackling conflict in their communities, or people in deprived areas simply inspiring their neighbours to believe it is possible to make a difference, both bonding and social capital can be created in this way and endorsed through social entrepreneurship.

The direct advantage of backing social entrepreneurs is the social impact. In the purest and most direct way, social impact can be seen through the outcomes of a social entrepreneur's venture. This could be better health or reducing reoffending, which will be more evident as social ventures scale up. The indirect impact comes largely from opportunities to contribute – to give back, to enhance social capital. This could be through a group of volunteers taking action or a change in someone's perception to give something new a try.

Social entrepreneurs will produce some of the most significant innovations in the social and environmental domains. Often the best new ideas or at least authentic ideas emerge from the people who have lived with the problem. This is at the heart of social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurs create economic impact through their ventures in the same way a small or medium enterprise would – through the people they employ and the profit they turn over. Combined with the learning and innovation made possible by social entrepreneurs, this makes them a valuable asset in our economy.

But it's not all a bed of roses for the future of young social entrepreneurs – with the opportunities come the challenges.

In essence, social entrepreneurship is not new and will not be going away. It is growing in momentum; it is much better known and more people are joining the bandwagon. With this comes the risk of overexposure and the expectation that social entrepreneurs should do it all, and fill all the public service gaps. They can certainly contribute greatly to the public sector but they need personalised support and a good environment to flourish. The public sector and the media have a responsibility to find the right ways to support, rather than squish, this organic movement.

Social entrepreneurs are not always heroes or celebrities, nor do they have all the answers. With the right support and recognition, the full potential of social entrepreneurs in our society will be realised.