



Case Study: Manchester Social Entrepreneurs Incubator Programme

A well-established Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Manchester, with several years of experience delivering community-focused services, sought to strengthen its strategic direction to remain impactful and sustainable.

While the CIC had a strong foundation, the leadership team recognised the need to clarify their target audience and align their services more effectively with community needs. Their ambition was to create a focused, responsive business plan that could support future growth and improve service delivery.

Despite a history of successful operations, the CIC faced challenges in defining a clear target market and articulating a focused business strategy. This lack of clarity was limiting their ability to grow, and communicate their impact.

The CIC took part in the Manchester Social Entrepreneur's Incubator Programme, which offered group learning sessions and one-on-one mentoring opportunities. The support focused on practical techniques to improve market analysis, develop a targeted business plan and implementation of strategic tools.

E26 Thematic Areas:

Contract Bidding and Marketing – The CIC was supported in identifying and better understanding its target demographic, which informed a stronger marketing strategy and future funding applications.

Demonstrating Social Impact – Though not the central theme, understanding the target market helped the CIC articulate their value more clearly, which supports future impact reporting.

Outcomes:

The CIC achieved a clearer understanding of its target market, shifting from a general audience to a more defined group with specific needs. This refinement led to the development of a focused business plan, practical tools for implementation and improved confidence across the leadership team. Plans were made to embed learning within the organisation, including regular strategy reviews and onboarding new staff and volunteers with the refined business approach.

Insights and Lessons:

Narrowing demographic focus allows for deeper engagement and clearer service alignment.

Having access to strategic templates and planning tools builds lasting internal capacity, especially when combined with mentoring.

Investing time in regular reflection and planning can ensure sustainability and consistency as teams grow.

Questions for other Social Enterprise organisations:

Do you clearly understand who benefits most from your services and how you reach them?

How could mentoring or peer learning help strengthen your business planning?

Reflections:





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CEO: "We've expanded a lot of understanding of what our target market is, and what they actually need rather than just a wide demographic. I feel more confident... having all the slides means we can use it all consistently going forward," the CEO noted. Going forward, the CIC plans to "dedicate time each week to review and implement these learnings, ensuring new staff and volunteers are trained in our plans and help us move forward with them."

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