



Case Study: SEE (Oldham) CIC

SEE (Oldham) CIC is a small, purposefully designed small independent special school for secondary aged pupils with SEMH needs. The organisation's mission is to provide a broad and relevant curriculum that equips learners with the resilience, life skills, and knowledge needed to make informed choices about their post-16 education and future employment.

At the heart of SEE (Oldham)'s ethos is a commitment to placing learners at the centre of everything they do. Through tailored support, focused classroom engagement, and dedicated pastoral care, the organisation ensures that each learner receives the guidance and encouragement they need to thrive—particularly those who may not find success in mainstream education environments. With a learner-first approach, the organisation aims to expand its reach and continue offering transformative educational experiences to young people across Oldham.

Upon requesting support through the E26 programme SEE (Oldham)'s ambition was to further its community impact by strengthening its business model, improving financial sustainability, and accessing social investment.

E26 Thematic Areas:

Through the E26 programme, SEE (Oldham) CIC accessed a combination of group and one-to-one support, tailored to help strengthen the organisation's financial and structural resilience.

Initially, Michelle, SEE (Oldham)'s Development Manager, participated in the Social Accelerator Programme with Mantle, an 8-week programme designed to support social entrepreneurs to:

- Develop financially sustainable business models
- Diversify income streams
- Improve strategic planning

Following the accelerator, E26 funding supported additional 1:1 consultancy with Mantle, enabling deeper exploration into:

- Reviewing and strengthening the organisation's legal structure
- Improving financial planning and forecasting
- Jodie from Mantle supported SEE with their Key Fund application for £150k (Mantle external consultancy was paid for as a result of their successful Reach Fund application), and this work then made their application to Big Issue Invest for refinancing a lot easier.

This package of support was responsive, recognising Michelle's capacity and circumstances, and ensuring that the interventions were practical and timely.

Financial and Legal – Support focused on reviewing SEE (Oldham)'s legal structure, preparing investment documentation (business plan and financial forecast), and identifying suitable legal pathways for growth.

Demonstrating Social Impact – SEE (Oldham) received support in articulating their social value and mission within investment documentation and strategic planning processes, which was vital for building funder and investor confidence.

Digital Transformation – SEE (Oldham) also began developing future collaboration with Inclusive Bytes, a local digital social enterprise, to improve their website and digital presence as a result of networking connections made during the programme.

Outcomes:





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The support enabled Michelle to clarify SEE (Oldham)'s strategic direction and improve its financial resilience. The business plan and cashflow forecast work developed with Mantle's support were instrumental in applying for a refinancing loan from Big Issue Invest and a Key Fund application (outcome pending). The conversations around legal structure and trading has improved the group's confidence in making informed decisions around future planning and streamlining. The online finance training complemented this work and enhanced understanding of essential financial management practices, supporting long-term sustainability.

The support has also led Michelle to develop her networks with other local founders, and the relationships developed have sustained following the completion of programmes and training. This offers an opportunity for founders to collaborate and draw upon expertise i.e. SEE Oldham plan to work with Inclusive Bytes (another Oldham-based social enterprise) to develop their website and digital platform.

This case highlights the value of tailored, responsive support; the collaborative approach between Michelle and the support providers ensured that the interventions were both timely and impactful. SEE have recently had it confirmed and received £150k from the Key Fund and the refinancing loan with Big Issue Invest has been agreed.

Insights and Lessons:

This case highlights the importance of tailored, hands-on support for social enterprises and their founders. SEE (Oldham)'s experience demonstrates that business planning and financial literacy are critical foundations for growth and investment readiness. The support Michelle received was not only practical but also responsive / adaptive to her personal and organisational circumstances, showing the value of a person-centred approach. The case study offers valuable learning for other social enterprises by illustrating the benefits of gaining a clearer understanding of legal structures, strengthening financial planning, and preparing effectively for social investment. By exploring these areas proactively, organisations can enhance their strategic decision-making and build greater resilience. SEE (Oldham)'s journey shows how thoughtful reflection and targeted support can empower social enterprises to grow with confidence and clarity.

Questions for other Social Enterprise organisations:

Do we fully understand our legal structure, and is it the best fit for our future growth and sustainability?

Are we using peer opportunities like accelerators and peer networks to build knowledge and support?

Reflections:

"I just wanted to say thank you so much. There was very little editing I had to do to the business plan (it was brilliant) and the cashflow has also helped our application for a refinancing loan from Big Issue Invest – so your input was doubly beneficial to us. 😊 I and Leo feel this worked really well as a partnership, particularly given my unique health circumstances and how busy Leo has been. To date this experience has been a lot smoother than what we previously experienced when applying for investment – so a massive thank you (if you want to use this as an endorsement, don't hesitate – I know how valuable they can be)"

Link: <https://seeoldham.co.uk/>

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