

Self employment options for people with disabilities



Let's Get Started is a new project led by Brothers of Charity Clare, funded by the Genio Trust. Our aim is to help individuals with a disability to explore and plan a micro business or social enterprise in their local area, with family and community involvement.

We started by learning from other people and programmes in Ireland and around the world. We wanted to know if self employment is a **real option** for individuals with significant disabilities; what **types of small business** people have set up and **what is needed to support entrepreneurs** with disabilities.

We found many good examples in England, America and Canada. In Ireland, business support programmes for people with disabilities are at an early stage but we can learn a lot from people with more experience.

Supported self-employment' is a good model, developed in England and America. People with disabilities are empowered to run their own business, with supports and ongoing assistance. While these individuals receive support and help in setting up and running their enterprise, they own the business and are key decision makers. Support comes from service providers, families and community supports.

Self-employment is not for everybody. However, many people have become successful when given the opportunity, the training and the support.

Our research found that there are **benefits** of self employment, including:

- Increased range of work choices.
- Income generation.
- Community engagement, inclusion and integration.
- Enhanced self-esteem.
- Improved quality of life.
- Growing social networks.

Business examples



Poppin Joe's Gourmet Popcorn

Joe Steffy set up his business in 2005 with the help of his family and business support from START-UP,USA. Joe is a young adult who has down syndrome and autism. He now gives talks to inspire others and uses special voice enabled software. As well as his business providing an income, Joe pops corn at charity fundraisers. He also sends his popcorn over to American troops overseas.

Working for yourself also creates an identity and purpose, builds self respect and confidence and is a route to social inclusion. It also means people can be seen by others as 'able' rather than 'disabled'.

Calvin McCluskie, sculptor

Calvin is represented by the Gallery on the Corner in Edinburgh, Scotland which is an inclusive art gallery. Calvin is a talented artist who has just finished high school. As well as being a very talented sculptor and model maker, Calvin is also autistic. Rather than being a barrier to any of his hopes or ambitions, he has worked hard to overcome any problems that autism could cause him and is now beginning to carve out a career for himself doing what he loves best.



From an early age, Calvin has shown real flare for art in both drawing and also modelling. He is now becoming a serious artist and has already been lucky enough to have had a few commissions – he has had his work used in the making of Grand Theft Auto IV and has also successfully sold some of his work.

Calvin's father, Chris, writes a blog which showcases Calvin's beautiful sculptures. See <http://calvinsmodels.blogspot.co.uk>

Social enterprises have social as well as economic goals. They serve the community or a specific group of people. Social enterprises around the world are often developed to provide employment and enterprise opportunities for people with disabilities.

Pulp Friction Smoothie Project



Jill Carter, founder and supporter of Pulp Friction is the winner of “Britain’s Best Real Role Model for 2012”

Pulp Friction Smoothie Bar Project is a **social enterprise** that provides volunteering opportunities for young adults aged 16-24 to develop work-readiness, social and independence skills by taking smoothie bikes to different community events - schools, youth clubs, play schemes, community festivals etc. All volunteers work at their own pace and to their own strengths in a fun, friendly and supportive environment.

Jessie has a learning disability and when she was 16 she decided she would like to have a part-time job like all her friends. Jessie’s mother, Jill, realised that Jessie might not be able to gain employment like her peers, even though Jessie’s aspiration was to work in the restaurant business, so she knew an alternative was needed. It was whilst visiting a festival 6 months later that they came upon a smoothie bike experience. The customer gets to pedal a bike which has a blender attached to it. Whilst the pedals are turning, the fruit is blended into a smoothie, which is ‘home made’. Both Jill and Jessie loved the concept and thought that was a good business idea for Jessie to work at. They are now working on several other business ideas and run a social programme and choir.

The research shows that self employment and micro businesses can provide real opportunities for individuals and groups to earn an income and be more included in their communities.

What is needed for success?

1. Project Advocates and Champions

Advocates can be people or organisations who see self-employment for individuals with disabilities as a real option and strive to make it happen.

2. Engagement

A high level of engagement by individuals, their support networks and support organisations is needed.

3. Person-Centred Planning

Person-centred planning includes an exploration of the individual's life, dreams, talents, relationships and supports. This is the starting point.

4. Generating Business Ideas Based on Interests

Everybody has things they like doing. Sometimes a hobby is a good starting point for a business idea.

5. Supports

Effective circles of support involving family, support staff, enterprise support, mentors and community support encourage business success.

6. Building on Local Resources, Networks and Enterprise Supports

Business success thrives on local connections and networks. Where supports and mentoring are local and person centred and a business is developed around a community need, demand or resources it will be more successful.

7. Learning from others

A lot of planning, energy, engagement, research and investment has gone into developing successful models of supported self-employment. Many quality business planning resources have also been developed and are available online.

8. Co-operation

A key feature of many programmes is their focus on strengthening inter-agency co-operation and supports for self-employment. This means sharing information and resources and using them more efficiently and effectively.

9. Openness to Risk and Failure

One of the outcomes reported in several programmes was a decision not to start a business. But, the processes of discovery, person-centred planning and exploring business ideas are positive. Starting a business of any scale is a risk and this needs to be acknowledged.

10. Peers as Role Models

People benefit from real examples of what a business or micro-business is, and who can or cannot be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs with disabilities are good role models. Peers can provide inspiration and support.

11. Viewing Self-Employment as an Option

Young people with a disability leaving school have more limited opportunities and choices than others. If self-employment and micro-enterprise were seen as viable options and achievable career goals, support and planning for these could be introduced much earlier in schools and vocational training programmes.

12. Self-Confidence and Inclusion

Research shows the positive impact that being an entrepreneur with a meaningful purpose and valued role has on raising self confidence and making people feel included.

WHAT WE DO

We help individuals with a disability explore and plan a small business in their local area with family and community supports.

THE FOCUS IS ON:

- Individuals' interests, gifts and talents
- Helping people to earn an income
- Working with families, services and community partners
- Providing a network of business supports and mentors to offer advice
- Showcasing ideas for micro business and social enterprise across the county

HOW DO WE SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS?

We help you and the people who support you to:

- Explore what you enjoy doing
- Develop a business idea
- Do your market research
- Make a plan for your business
- Get the advice and training you need
- Set up your business
- Promote your business

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested, or would like to find out more about 'Let's Get Started' get in touch.

CONTACT DETAILS

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