



Spaces 4 Change

Final Evaluation

July 2021

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Spaces 4 Change

Executive Summary

Overview

Spaces 4 Change was a five-year programme delivered by UnLtd as part of Our Bright Future. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Our Bright Future was managed by the Wildlife Trusts who managed a consortium of 31 projects. The programme supported young social entrepreneurs, aged 16 to 24, to create, shape, and manage their own space through the transformation of unused or under-utilised spaces for the benefit of the community. Spaces included community gardens, event spaces, and retail spaces. The programme ran from 2016 and made financial awards of up to £5,000 to 83 social entrepreneurs who were also supported by UnLtd Award Managers over the course of the programme. Award Managers provided 1-2-1 support and entrepreneurs could access training and workshops from sector specialists on topics including negotiating space. Wildlife Trusts were an active partner in the programme; they served on award-making panels throughout the 5 years and provided ongoing advice and support to the programme.

This evaluation was undertaken to help understand how the programme performed against its objectives and anticipated outcomes. As part of our commitment to being an organisation that uses learning to improve our work, this evaluation is also an opportunity to reflect on what went well and what did not go as expected.

Key Findings

- **Spaces 4 Change supported a diverse cohort of social entrepreneurs** by focusing outreach on existing networks and previous UnLtd programmes to recruit social entrepreneurs of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, from underserved areas, and without higher education qualifications.
- **Community involvement and buy-in contributed to the success of transforming a space** as this garnered support locally and ensured spaces reflected the needs of a community.
- **Spaces 4 Change built young people's confidence and provided a learning opportunity for them to define the next chapter of their journey**, whether this be the continued growth of their space, moving into other employment, or starting new social enterprises.
- **Social entrepreneurs valued the support received from UnLtd, particularly the consistency of the support provided by the Award Manager**, which provided a necessary touchpoint at key moments during their award.
- **For some young social entrepreneurs, Covid-19 has motivated them to continue to expand their social impact** by presenting a moment of opportunity to reach more people.
- **Social entrepreneurs are hopeful about the future of community spaces** and believe the effects of the pandemic will encourage more people into social enterprise.
- **There was a mismatch between the expectations of the programme and the reality for young people**, meaning the average award size was not enough to be meaningful for many young people wanting to transform spaces.

- **Young people have unique support needs**, and UnLtd's support could be more flexible and tailored, and should utilise communication methods with which young people are more familiar.
- **Success may look different for young people** compared to UnLtd's typical social entrepreneurs, with Spaces 4 Change providing a learning opportunity to guide future life choices.

Key Learning and Conclusions

- **There are challenges and opportunities of transforming spaces** and future awards focused on space need to consider how to mitigate against the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities whilst understanding the effects of local contexts.
- **Inclusion goals should be embedded throughout programme design**, including outreach and support, to effectively and intentionally engage and learn about the needs of social entrepreneurs.
- **An effective funder relationship can be built** through connecting the funder with social entrepreneurs and ensuring consistent communication that works towards the same goal.
- **The management of organisational changes** can have an impact on the delivery of a programme and having defined roles for project management would help mitigate against this in the future.

Six Interesting Things about Spaces 4 Change

- 1) Spaces 4 Change **made 83 awards**, totalling £273,725. This is an average award of £3,297.89.
- 2) **37% of our social entrepreneurs are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds and 36% came from the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country** - we want to celebrate that we have reached a demographically diverse cohort, whilst acknowledging the low representation of disabled social entrepreneurs within the cohort (6% of social entrepreneurs).¹
- 3) **Community involvement** and buy-in contributes to the success of transforming a space and ensures spaces reflect the needs of the local community, enabling social entrepreneurs to achieve impact.
- 4) Spaces 4 Change provided a **learning opportunity** for young people to define the next chapter of their journey whether this be connected to the funded space or not, by building their self-belief and confidence to act for social change and take on new opportunities.
- 5) For some young social entrepreneurs **Covid-19** has motivated them to continue to expand their social impact by providing a moment of opportunity to reach more people within their local community.
- 6) **Success** may look different for young people as they utilise the learning from Spaces 4 Change to define their next steps whether this be within social enterprise or not.

¹ A deprived area is defined as in the top 20% most deprived areas according to the [Index of Multiple Deprivation measure](#)

1. Introduction

The Spaces 4 Change programme supported young people (aged 16 to 24) to start and run social ventures that unlock the potential of unused or under-utilised spaces (land and buildings) for the benefit of the local community. The programme provided opportunities for social entrepreneurs to drive positive social change in their neighbourhoods, and mobilise resources and assets to create a more connected community.

This programme ran from 2016 to 2021, and supported 83 young people during this time. Social entrepreneurs benefitted from a *Do It Award* of up to £5,000 to start their venture, access to expert advisors, support from an UnLtd Award Manager, and opportunities for peer-to-peer networking.²

Over the course of the programme, we expected to achieve the following:

1. Social entrepreneurship helps young people to address their own personal and social challenges regarding the built environment.
2. Young people have the opportunity to participate in positive ways in their communities through finding solutions to environmental problems.
3. Young people will learn and develop new skills and report that they feel equipped for social leadership as a result of the award, including environment-related skills.

This report follows an interim report completed in January 2019 and the Spaces 4 Change film released in October 2020. In this final evaluation report, which covers the duration of the programme, we explore the impact of Spaces 4 Change on young people as well as the effectiveness of UnLtd's support, and reflect on the key learnings to take forward.

This report is structured as follows:

1. **Methodology** – This section outlines the methods used to evaluate the Spaces 4 Change programme
2. **The Programme** – This section provides an overview of the programme's award-making. s award-making.
3. **Key Evaluation Questions** - This section presents case studies of Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs to demonstrate the impact of the programme. It then goes on to explore key evaluation questions to understand the programme's impact on social entrepreneurs reimagining spaces, developing social entrepreneurs and the impact of Covid-19.
4. **Learning Highlights** - This section reflects on how learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme can be embedded into working with social entrepreneurs and deliver programmes within the sector.
5. **Conclusion & Recommendations** – This section summarises the key findings and learnings from the evaluation and presents recommendations for the future.

² Following our organisational redesign, Award Managers are now referred to as Social Entrepreneur Support Managers.

2. Methodology

Data Collection

The final evaluation used the following methods of data collection ([Figure 1](#)):

- **Application data** – we used data collected at the application stage to explore the demographics of social entrepreneurs, the type of space transformed, and the amount of funding received.
- **End of Award Survey data** – UnLtd’s End of Award survey asks social entrepreneurs about their experience of support and shorter-term outcomes such as knowledge, confidence, and skills development. We sent the survey to 66 social entrepreneurs at the end of their support period. The final sample size was **12 respondents**. The statistics included throughout the findings section of the report are taken from the End of Award survey responses and it should be noted that the sample size varies due to change in which questions are compulsory.
- **Interviews** – we interviewed **4 social entrepreneurs** from the Spaces 4 Change programme to investigate our [key evaluation questions](#).
- **Spaces 4 Change video** – we used the Spaces 4 Change [video](#) launched in October 2020 as a data source. The video showcases the spaces of **4 social entrepreneurs** and provided insight into their journeys.
- **Reflective sessions with UnLtd Staff** – we held a reflective session with three UnLtd Award Managers who had worked on the Spaces 4 Change programme. This session explored what worked well and less well about the programme and how things could be done differently.

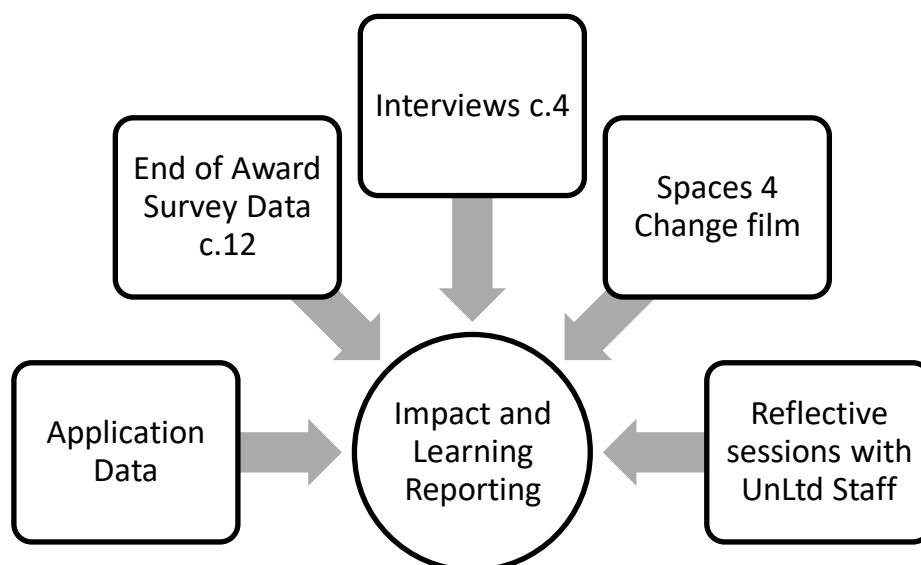


Figure 1: Data Sources

We had intended to utilise more participatory methods of data collection, primarily digital storytelling and body mapping to be explored and interpreted in a group workshop of social entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the following challenges meant we were unable to gather data as intended:

- **a low survey response rate** – the End of Award survey was sent to 66 social entrepreneurs at the end of their support period and the final sample size was 12. Although efforts were made to follow up with individual social entrepreneurs this was unsuccessful in increasing the response rate.
- **engagement with qualitative data collection** – social entrepreneurs who had previously engaged with monitoring were approached to take part in qualitative data collection. However, engagement was lacking and only 4 social entrepreneurs took part in interviews.
- **timing of data collection** – UnLtd paused data collection in early 2020 due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the pressure social entrepreneurs were under and this was resumed for the completion of this final evaluation earlier this year.

Although these challenges meant the focus of this report has shifted, they have been valuable in encouraging reflection about how UnLtd monitors and evaluates programmes when they come to an end. Our plans to learn from these challenges are discussed in [Learning Highlight #9](#).

3. The Programme

In this section, we provide an overview of the Spaces 4 Change programme in finding, funding, and supporting social entrepreneurs.

3.1 Finding social entrepreneurs

The Spaces 4 Change programme, funded by Our Bright Future, supported young people (aged 16 to 24) to start and run social ventures that unlock the potential of unused or under-utilised spaces (land and buildings) for the benefit of the local community. The programme aimed to provide opportunities for social entrepreneurs to drive positive social change in their neighbourhoods, mobilising resources, and assets to create a more connected community.

Starting in January 2016, Award Managers began reaching out to community organisations to develop a pipeline of social entrepreneurs. Building on learning from previous programmes, we knew that working with partners would help us to reach a diverse pipeline of social entrepreneurs. Outreach utilised existing social entrepreneur networks from the Hackney Connect and Tower Hamlets SEEN programmes and related events to connect with social entrepreneurs.

As Spaces 4 Change developed, outreach was diversified to reach an even wider range of social entrepreneurs. This included recruiting ‘find’ partners to provide better reach to social entrepreneurs

Table 1: Equity and Inclusion statistics for our Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs

	Spaces 4 Change Social Entrepreneurs	Spaces 4 Change Applicants ³	UnLtd Average Social Entrepreneurs ⁴
% Female	46%	50%	59%
% BAME	37%	44%	27%
% Disabled	6%	7%	7%
% Outside London ⁵	77%	-	-
% Most deprived areas	36%	-	32%
% No Higher Education ⁶	55%	-	17%

The inclusion focus of the Spaces 4 Change programme was on ensuring we reached social entrepreneurs in a broad range of geographical areas, including deprived areas and rural areas. Over the last 18 months, UnLtd’s thinking about how we embed inclusion has progressed. UnLtd now has a clear target for 2020/21 regarding equity and inclusion: **50% of our awards to go to people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and/or disabled people.**

³ This data refers to all applicants to the Spaces 4 Change programme, including those who were rejected but not those who withdrew their application

⁴ This data refers to all UnLtd social entrepreneurs for the duration of the Spaces 4 Change programme (2016 to 2021)

⁵ London is defined as both the City of London and Greater London, consisting of 33 boroughs in total

⁶ Higher Education is defined as the attainment of, or the equivalent to, an HND/NVQ Level 4 or above

Although these targets were not in place when the Spaces 4 Change programme ran, Table 1 shows the diverse outreach of the programme successfully reached a wide range of social entrepreneurs. The Spaces 4 Change cohort had a higher percentage of social entrepreneurs from BAME background than UnLtd's entire cohort during the period of the programme. The programme, Table 1 highlights, was also successful in reaching social entrepreneurs in the most deprived areas of the United Kingdom and thus supporting them to make positive changes in their community. Spaces 4 Change also reached more social entrepreneurs with no higher education qualifications than UnLtd's total award making. Our data suggests that this is due to the programme focusing on young people, as 33% of all UnLtd social entrepreneurs aged 16 to 24 awarded between 2016 and 2021 had no higher education.

3.2 Funding social entrepreneurs

The Spaces 4 Change programme made 83 awards, totalling £273,725. This is an average award of £3,297.89. The programme made awards to social entrepreneurs working to transform a variety of spaces as evidenced in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of community spaces improved or created by social entrepreneurs⁷

	Total number of community spaces improved:	Total number of new community spaces created:
Park or playground	2	2
Community garden	0	1
Allotment	0	1
Farm	1	0
Churches or religious space	1	0
School spaces	0	1
Nature reserve	1	0
Built environment space	11	13
Community building/room	10	4
Total	26	22

Our awards have supported people like:

- **Isaac** at [Foodhall CIC](#), a community kitchen and dining space in Sheffield, who refitted their premises to increase their usage potential and hours and bring more people together through food. **Foodhall CIC** helped to develop a National Food Service Programme to launch a network of social eating spaces across the UK using surplus and waste food.
- **Joshua**, the Founder of [WeGym](#), who now delivers outdoor personal training sessions in multiple locations across London, including utilising a previously unused rooftop space.
- **Himani**, from [Tech Styles](#), who transformed a previous retail space in Bradford City Centre into a dance and performance venue hosting workshops and events.
- **Emily** and the [Virtually There Studio](#), who took part in Creative Tech Week in 2019 in their newly established space, engaging young creative artists to use creative technology in their practice.

⁷ Only 48 out of 83 spaces are recorded here as the remaining spaces fall outside of these categories and are not included in quarterly reporting

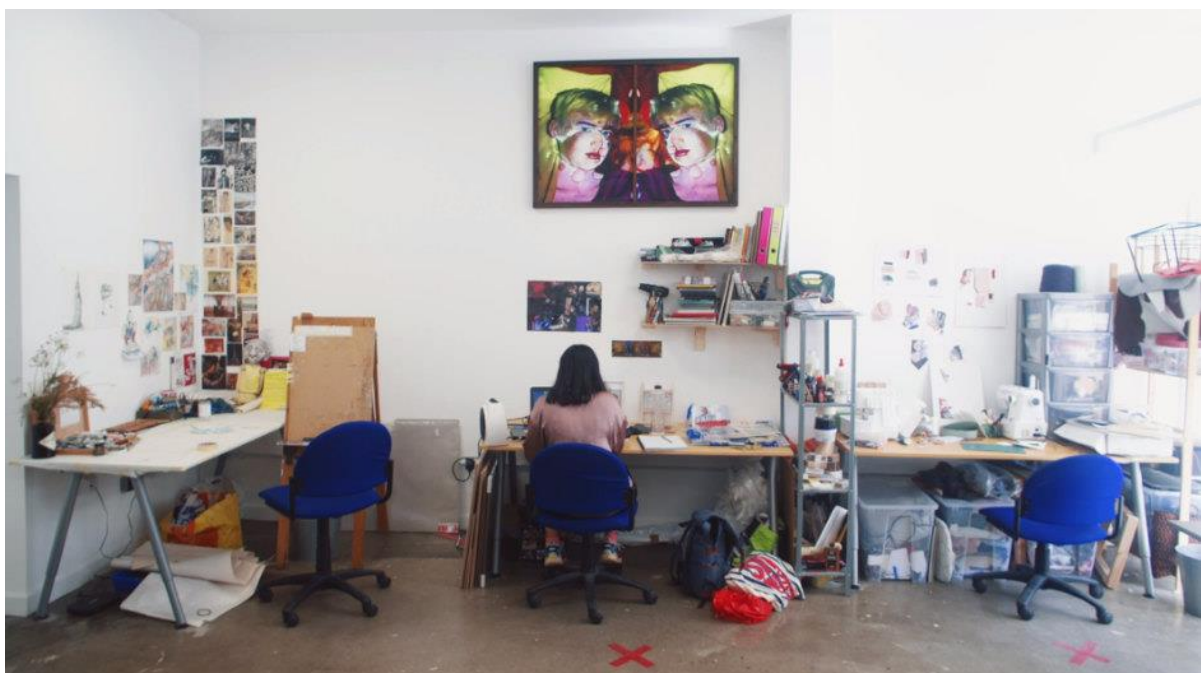
3.3 Supporting social entrepreneurs

The programme made awards of up to £5,000 alongside a range of non-financial support.

Social entrepreneurs throughout the United Kingdom were supported by three Award Managers. Award Managers provided 1-2-1 support and coaching to individuals to help them develop their ideas and overcome any challenges putting them in practice.

In addition to this 1-2-1 support,

- Sector specialists provided training on topics including identifying and measuring social value, growth planning, and negotiating space
- Social entrepreneurs attended specialist workshops with panel partners to allow them to broaden their contacts and meet other members of the cohort
- Events including Explore tours were run where social entrepreneurs visited existing social venues to inspire them by showing them what they could achieve with disused and underutilised spaces



SaltSpace – Glasgow (taken from the Spaces 4 Change film)



Eric Bishyika from the Business Incubator Group (taken from the Spaces 4 Change film)

4. Key Evaluation Questions: Analysis and Discussion

In this section, we bring together the quantitative evidence collected through our End of Award survey with qualitative insights from social entrepreneurs to examine our key evaluation questions:

1. How have social entrepreneurs re-imagined their spaces?
 - a. How have young people considered sustainability within their spaces and communities?
 - b. What have been the success factors and barriers for social entrepreneurs in developing their spaces?
2. What impact did the programme have on developing young people as social leaders?
 - a. How will they take the skills developed into future projects?
 - b. What have we learnt about our support and how this can be improved?
3. How have social entrepreneurs responded to Covid-19?
 - a. What features of social entrepreneurs, or their venture, have enabled positive responses?
 - b. What barriers did Covid-19 present for re-imagining community spaces?

The following case studies of Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs explore the impact of the programme. We will then explore each key evaluation question to draw out implications of the findings discussed in the case studies.

4.1 Case Studies

Luke Tilley – Killingbeck Community Project

Luke received an initial Do It award in 2018 of £3,250 to develop a community allotment in Killingbeck, Leeds.

As a volunteer, Luke was already involved with the allotment association and this existing relationship enabled him to identify a space to be developed. He wanted to explore sustainable income generation for the community garden and allotment and connect with the local community to produce healthy products through an orchard.

Luke has subsequently received a Grow It award of £15,000 in 2020 for a new space-based project. He is now transforming two acres with a collection of community volunteers to grow food for local households. Luke said, *“We’ve transformed a space that was a pretty derelict and underused city farm and almost got it into a viable enterprise.”*

Considering the impact of Covid-19 on the future of spaces, Luke is hopeful that the pandemic will have sparked more people to focus on what is good about their local areas and attract people to community spaces. He also hopes the increased flexibility of previously inflexible working arrangements may lead to community and outdoor spaces becoming a priority for people.

What has been achieved

Luke used the Spaces 4 Change money to transform an under-utilised outdoor space into a more functional space. This was achieved by buying *“catering tables, stainless steel tables, food hygiene certification, and equipment to process the foods, so that I could run activities”*, creating a *“productive but social based infrastructure”* within the space.

To achieve this, long-term thinking and an understanding of the community’s needs were essential. For example, Luke built a compost toilet onsite which enabled allotment holders to stay there longer and bring their children. He also introduced a pizza oven to attract people to the space.

The newly imagined space was embraced by the older residents who already engaged with the allotment. At the same time, the activities on offer also brought young people into the space. As a leader, Luke empowered other facilitators in the community to take on leadership roles with more responsibility in hosting activities for the community.

A key factor in the success of the Killingbeck Community Project was the sustained involvement of local people in the transformation of the space. Luke was committed to understanding what other people wanted from the space and ensuring the interests of the residents to further improve the space alongside his own passion for food production

Luke has since moved on from leading that project but remains involved as a community member. He has created a sustainable space ready to be used by others to achieve their own visions. About the interest of new groups of young people in the space, Luke said, *“I am really excited actually; it might have a new lease of life for people who are focusing on the climate catastrophe and organising around that wanting to do a community allotment and orchard”*.

Although Covid had slowed the progress of the original space, interest is returning in the form of new groups utilising the space. At the same time, Luke’s new space has seen increased interest in the volunteer scheme during the pandemic and were able to continue transforming the space during lockdowns.

How UnLtd helped

Being part of the Spaces 4 Change programme had a great impact on Luke as a social leader. He said,

Spaces 4 Change gave me an opportunity to start leading that myself, because it was through a registered charity before then, and Spaces 4 Change was at a time where I was sort of branching off and trying to lead it as an individual and take more responsibility, so it was a really exciting opportunity.

Having an Award Manager as a sounding board who was effective in terms of communication and providing feedback on ideas was particularly valuable for Luke. In addition, having the encouragement and belief of UnLtd to work on the space and pitch ideas for its future development boosted his confidence as a leader.

Luke accessed a variety of training, including social media and crowdfunding training, during the award, and he has been able to apply that knowledge to his new project. One additional area of training that Luke felt UnLtd could have included was around the practice of reimagining space and the related historical and political context, for example gentrification.

Through the subsequent Grow It award that Luke received, UnLtd supported his next steps into a new space and enabled Luke *“to take the mission of local, sustainable, community*

grown food and make it into a social enterprise as my career has grown, so it has been life changing". Working with UnLtd has played a crucial role in making social enterprise a viable career path for Luke.

Speaking about the impact of the Spaces 4 Change programme, Luke said *"it was an empowering time, and award to get, basically where you are trying to step into entrepreneurship or management, the management of a social project as young person".*

Millie Stanford – Northern Soul Kitchen

Millie received a Spaces 4 Change award of £4,880 in 2018 to transform a retail unit in Berwick-upon-Tweed into a pay-as-you-feel cafe after completing an UnLtd Do It award earlier that year.

The project was a collaboration of ideas between Millie and her co-founder Harriet. Millie wanted to create a community hub and Harriet wanted to open a food waste café, so they brought these two passions together to create Northern Soul Kitchen. Millie's priority when planning Northern Soul Kitchen was to use an empty space within the town because of the importance they hold and nostalgia they bring to the local communities

Looking to the future in light of Covid-19, Millie thinks *"more people want to help their community and see their communities and local areas thriving, I think that has actually been a weird motivator for people to actually want to do these things".* However, she does question the ability of the sector to respond to this increased demand to convert spaces in terms of how much funding will be available.

What has been achieved

Northern Soul Kitchen responded to the problem of empty shops within Berwick-upon-Tweed. Millie said, *"Not only are they empty but they are completely derelict and totally unusable, but a lot of them hold a lot of stories and history for the town"* and Northern Soul Kitchen now occupies what used to be Tweed Televisions. Millie used the Spaces 4 Change funding to transform this empty shop front into a pay-as-you-feel café based around preventing food waste.

Effectively engaging the community with the vision for the space was critical for its success and Millie had to work hard to persuade people to see her vision of creating *"a space where people would share a table with a stranger"*. To achieve this, Millie involved as many local people as possible at the start of the project to create a sense of ownership amongst the community. Local people helped to renovate the space and were consulted to shape the idea.

It was crucial to understand the local context that people were struggling and so the space has multiple layers of impact to

ensure that we were reaching people that needed us as much as people would come and enjoy the food because of the eco-friendly aspect and the social responsibility aspect, it was important for us to always try and make everybody feel welcome.

The main barrier Millie faced whilst transforming her space was the bureaucracy involved in taking on space, for example getting planning permission and accessing business support locally.

Northern Soul Kitchen was due to have its first self-sustaining year in 2020, which would have been a great achievement. However, the Covid-19 pandemic meant Millie had to pivot, so she started delivering food parcels and hot food as well as redistributing surplus food within the community. Millie does consider the pandemic to have had a positive impact, as it brought attention to the space and allowed them to work more closely with the community and

reach the people that needed us, [...], because the playing field was levelled is how I look at it, suddenly people were not as wary to admit they were struggling because everyone was struggling.

How UnLtd helped

The support provided by the Award Manager was invaluable to Millie, especially as this was consistent and stable throughout the award period and she could reach out to them at any time.

Millie also valued the social capital of UnLtd as an organisation, which provided her with a sense of confidence and allowed her to develop the required knowledge in both renovating a space and leading a social enterprise. Millie knew that UnLtd would be able to find her the answer to any question and connect her to appropriate support.

UnLtd supports social ventures throughout the United Kingdom, but support can be concentrated in particular areas, for example London. This concentration of support posed difficulties for Millie as it meant she was unable to easily access in-person training or workshops.

UnLtd helped Millie develop as a social leader through providing a leadership course, with Millie saying to be a social leader you need to be *“resilient, and inventive, imaginative, open—minded. I think I would say I have learnt it all from this entire experience and without Spaces 4 Change this experience wouldn’t have existed.”* The support of UnLtd instilled belief and confidence in Millie as *“It felt like the only organisation and only fund out there at the time that was like ‘yeh go for it, we trust you, do it’ so yeh having your vision backed up by somebody was really nice”*.

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Northern Soul Kitchen

Stuart Fraser – Sourced in Salford CIC

Stuart received an award of £4,400 in 2018 to transform part of a leisure centre into a café and dry bar in Salford, Greater Manchester.

When joining the programme, Sourced in Salford had been running for a year and was offered a space in an abandoned leisure centre that would include a trampoline club and community organisation.

Being connected to existing established organisations when taking over this space was a huge support for Stuart and Sourced in Salford as they *“were never big or strong enough to do it on our own”*. However, being part of this coalition did mean Stuart was limited within the space as they only had a section of it and so was unable to achieve their own ambitions of securing funding alongside large catering contracts.

Stuart feels the long-term impact of Covid-19 on community spaces will not be clear until the restrictions are eased fully but thinks *“we are going to need more than ever social enterprises that bring people together”* and hopes there will be funding available for these.

What has been achieved

After receiving the Spaces 4 Change funding, Stuart continued to run Sourced in Salford for a year. Even though the space did not continue, it was successful in supporting the community at the time. According to Stuart, *“I can say looking back, we didn’t do anything spectacular, but we made a lot of people happy”*. In addition, the events Stuart established within the space, for example Salford’s only dry open mic night, have continued since Sourced in Salford closed, showing the legacy of the space.

The space ultimately was not sustainable due to difficulties in accessing funding. Stuart said his approach to sustaining the venture *“was could I bring enough money in to stop the thing drowning. I ran Sourced for three years and I never got paid, I was living off a part-time job and sponging off my parents”*. Stuart had to return to more gainful employment, highlighting the challenges that social entrepreneurs face in securing early stage support as they build viable, sustainable businesses.

The pandemic has brought Stuart back into the social enterprise sector running a venture tackling food poverty in the local area. Stuart is driven by impact and has transferred his own skills and knowledge into this new organisation, and the lessons learnt through running social enterprises are making this venture a success.

How UnLtd helped

Stuart views the Spaces 4 Change programme as a little bit of extra funding to support the transformation of the space, as opposed to being critical to his venture, as he was already experienced in running a social enterprise.

The initial training, Stuart felt, was pitched at a different level to where he was in his journey, which was being tasked with renovating a space as opposed to having the creative freedom to completely transform a space. There would have been benefits for Stuart in connecting with social entrepreneurs of a similar experience level, as opposed to a similar age, as this may have led to more fruitful collaborations and learning opportunities. A challenge identified of working with young people was that many have not experienced work before and need time to learn about business to successfully create their own social enterprise.

Spaces 4 Change acted as a crucial learning opportunity for Stuart and was impactful in its contribution to his journey long-term, as *“this [current] social enterprise wouldn’t exist without Sourced, and Sourced wouldn’t have carried on as long as it did without Spaces 4 Change”*.

Namwya – Project Jericho

Namwya received a Do It Award of £4,050 in 2018 for her event - Project Jericho based in Birmingham.

For Project Jericho, Namwya had a clear vision for the space she wanted to create, and this was a direct response to a gap identified within their own community. She said, *“I wanted to create a pop-up event series that created a space for Black and Asian LGBTQI+ artists in the West Midlands.”* It was imperative to Namwya that this space was different to others, being open, immersive, and responsive to the needs of the people it was created for. To achieve this, Namwya utilised a newly opened coffee shop within the community, choosing this space as she felt it shared the same values, she wanted her events to embody.

Namwya is now running a new social enterprise called Girl Grind which empowers Black and Asian women and girls, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. She intends to involve space in this new venture at some point and further utilise her learning from Spaces 4 Change.

Considering the impact of Covid-19, Namwya expects there to be more outside and pop-up events but is nervous about the increased competition social enterprises will face from businesses for spaces.

What has been achieved

Namwya used an independent coffee shop to run her events and this space had many achievements. Namwya said *“we ended up putting on seven events and a gallery exhibition that exhibited all the live art and, in the space, we had a visual DJ, so the lights were off, and the projection was all over the walls, film screenings, live art drawing”*. Approximately 50 to 60 people attended events in that space every month.

A key success was the community that was created around the space, with Namwya saying *“I guess people just became the space”* and seeing her vision come to life in this way felt empowering for Namwya as a social leader, as she is now seen as a role model for social enterprise in the local community. In addition, a success of the space was it allowed people to find out about who they were through its inclusive focus.

Furthermore, the space had wider impacts on those it engaged as Namwya says she has seen people who came to the events go on to create their own events or companies within the community.

Namwya acknowledges that undertaking this project as a young person had challenges, including learning how to manage the funding received. Accessing subsequent funding following the Spaces 4 Change programme was also a barrier to the sustainability of the space, but Namwya views this time as a learning experience, which fulfilled its purpose of being what she needed at the time.

The social venture she has moved on to is *“more refined and I do think the sector is ready, but I feel more ready now for the long term”*. She is able to use the knowledge and skills developed during Spaces 4 Change to take Girl Grind forward.

How UnLtd helped

Namwya felt a personal connection with her Award Manager valuing how they acted as a touchpoint throughout the process to check in and take actions forward.

Being able to see the possibilities of transforming space during the Explore tour in London was particularly inspiring and motivating for Namwya, and she valued this opportunity to learn from others undertaking similar projects.

Through working with UnLtd, Namwya learnt to value money and investment and understand that this is not a given when running a social enterprise. This has now been critical in successfully writing funding applications for Girl Grind. Namwya says she is always examining how to take the chance a moment presents and be a better social leader.

The impact of Spaces 4 Change on Namwya was the self-belief and confidence to act it gave her. She said,

You guys were the first people to ever invest in me, I felt responsible, but I felt I was believed in. I really appreciate that initial funding and almost like feeling someone took a chance on me when my ideas weren't fully visioned yet so that was really inspiring.

The Spaces 4 Change film

This section presents the social entrepreneurs included in the Spaces 4 Change film as a case study to examine the achievements of spaces and the impact of the programme. The Spaces 4 Change [film](#) featured four social entrepreneurs:

- Eric Bishyika - Business Incubator Group
- Sam Leach – Spark York
- Mariam Jasmine - Greenfingers
- Aqsa Arif – SaltSpace

These spaces reflect the diversity of the Spaces 4 Change cohort and the types of spaces that have been transformed.

What has been achieved

The social entrepreneurs featured in the film have had many achievements since being part of the Spaces 4 Change programme.

Spark York, based in the city centre of York, provides socially minded start up entrepreneurs with a space that gives back to the community. The space is driven by the values of green space and protecting the environment and Sam wanted to “*create somewhere that people felt an attachment to, to build cohesion with different communities.*” Since being part of Spaces 4 Change, Spark York has had over a million people visit and secured investment from UnLtd to further their impact. Spark York has faced challenges such as proving to the community that the space would benefit them and would be different to other spaces in the city. During the pandemic, Spark York pivoted to running a Spark Go service to keep their traders trading as well as taking the time to engage local artists to refurbish the space.

The Business Incubator Group in Sheffield helps young entrepreneurs and startups to get their businesses off the ground and was based on the founder Eric’s own lived experience of struggling to find mentorship. The Business Incubator Group uses different spaces to provide sessions to help other young people and has now worked with over 8,000 young people to inspire them to start their own businesses.

SaltSpace in Glasgow offers a creative support network to emerging artists and graduates, providing them with three dedicated spaces. SaltSpace has a community space to host workshops, a gallery space, and studio spaces available. During the pandemic, SaltSpace moved their activities online and offered digital residencies on their social media platforms.

Greenfingers is an outdoor space in Bradford where a piece of wasteland has been transformed into a community garden. Prior to refurbishment, the space was forgotten and now it provides somewhere for young people to spend their time and take part in gardening activities. Involving the local community was crucial as Mariam says she “*knew they wouldn’t want to destroy something they helped create*”.

How UnLtd helped

The Spaces 4 Change programme provided Sam from Spark York with a network of social entrepreneurs who could come together and gave them permission to transform the places they live and work.

The programme also supported the social entrepreneurs to bring their ideas to reality by believing in them and what they wanted to do. Eric from the Business Incubator Group says

it changed his life and Aqsa from SaltSpace says it gave them confidence in themselves to revitalise an area that will have benefits for future generations.

Since being part of the Spaces 4 Change programme, social entrepreneurs have further developed their spaces. For example, the Greenfingers project recently received funding from the council to extend the garden.



Mariam Jasmine from GreenFingers (taken from the Spaces 4 Change film)



SparkYork

The following sections examine each key evaluation question based on the findings highlighted in the above case studies.

4.2 How have social entrepreneurs re-imagined their spaces?

Key statistics:

These statistics are taken from the End of Award survey responses as opposed to the full cohort and it should be noted that the sample size varies due to changes in which questions on the survey were compulsory.

- During the duration of the Award, **5 out of 7 social entrepreneurs** involved local residents in governance or strategic decision-making.

#1 Social entrepreneurs occupied different spaces and had differing visions for transforming these

The case studies included highlight the variety of spaces reimagined as part of the Spaces 4 Change programme, for example empty shop fronts, outdoor spaces, and the repurposing of active spaces.

It is also evident that there are numerous ways for young people to transform unused or underutilised spaces. Some social entrepreneurs recreated a space entirely, for example Northern Soul Kitchen who transformed a derelict television store into a pay as you feel café, whilst others effectively utilised part of a space (e.g., Sourced in Salford) and some revitalised outdoor spaces to make these more inviting for the wider community (e.g., Killingbeck Community Project and Greenfingers). The variability of spaces transformed on the programme also presented barriers. As highlighted in the internal reflective session and discussed in [Learning Highlight #1](#), the funding distributed did not consider the cost, type, and quality of space in different areas that contribute to a spaces success.

The case studies evidence the importance of having a vision for the space's future and the passion of the social entrepreneur in driving this. Knowing why the space needs transforming, how this will be achieved, and who the new space will be for, all contribute to the success of reimagining a space.

The Spaces 4 Change programme built upon learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme run in 2012, which supported entrepreneurs of any age to transform spaces for the benefit of young people.⁸ Evaluation of that programme found that social entrepreneurs often had their own aims for the space, and this was further demonstrated in the latest Spaces 4 Change programme, with the social entrepreneurs' vision being the driving factor in how a space was reimagined.

[Section 5](#) draws upon internal learning about the Spaces 4 Change programme and highlights how acquiring affordable and appropriate space can be a barrier for social entrepreneurs. The social entrepreneurs included in the case studies were usually

⁸ The [Spaces 4 Change](#) programme, funded by Channel 4, supported social entrepreneurs to start and run social ventures that unlock unused or under-utilised spaces for young people

successful in overcoming this barrier, and this was primarily due to their ability to utilise their social capital and existing connections (this is discussed in more detail [here](#)).

#2 Community involvement and buy-in contributes to the success of transforming a space

Achieving and sustaining community involvement and buy-in for the space contributes to its success and to the self-belief of social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs, as highlighted in the case studies, dedicated time to understanding the needs and wants of a place and the community within it, giving local people a sense of ownership over the space. For example, Luke at Killingbeck Community Project followed his own passions around food but also reflected the desires of the residents, which in turn helped develop them into leaders of the space running activities onsite. The findings from the End of Award survey also reflect this as 5 out of 7 social entrepreneurs involved local residents in governance or strategic decision making.

Responding to the needs of a community meant support was established for the new space, and social entrepreneurs were bolstered in making the space successful. This was evident in Namwya's case study, as she provided an inclusive and open space for BAME and LGBTQ+ people in a context where such a space did not exist before, so young people within the community wanted to be part of the space's success.

The findings of this evaluation echo those of the previous Spaces 4 Change programme, which evidenced how social entrepreneurs have a wider social impact by opening up spaces that everyone in the community could access. As a result, the transformation of unused spaces strengthened local relationships, and this was highlighted in the current evaluation, particularly by Millie at Northern Soul Kitchen, whose space has had a unifying effect on her local community. The importance of community involvement was also discussed in the internal reflective session. Award Managers described how having an understanding of a place was an enabler for success and this is explored further in [Learning Highlight #4](#).

#3 Young people encounter enablers and barriers when transforming spaces

As highlighted above, having strong community relationships was crucial for social entrepreneurs when transforming a space, and this, coupled with having a clear vision for the future, enabled success across the Spaces 4 Change cohort.

Our learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme delivered in 2012 had shown that the most successful ventures involved a combination of good local relationships, understanding of young people's needs, adequate and secure space, and being responsive to a gap. The current case studies further support this: taking Spark York as an example, Sam built up connections throughout the local community when creating his space and wanted to create an area unlike any other in the city.

When taking on a space, young people had to navigate this learning curve, especially in terms of leading the physical transformation of a space but also managing funding. The financial responsibility of transforming a space in some cases rendered the space unsustainable, for example both Stuart and Namwya struggled to acquire further funding for their space to ensure it could continue.

The internal reflective session further considered the enablers and barriers encountered when transforming a space and how this was connected to the funding available and delivery of support. This is explored further in [Learning Highlight #4](#).

4.3 What impact did the programme have on developing young people as social leaders?

Key statistics:

- As a result of the award, **4 out of 9 social entrepreneurs** feel more able to create, or have increased, their professional networks
- **All the Social Entrepreneurs (10/10)** stated that they had developed skills and knowledge as a result of the award
- Almost all social entrepreneurs (**9/10**) said they developed leadership skills
- As a result of the Award, **almost all social entrepreneurs (9/10)** agreed that they developed problem solving skills
- A **high proportion of social entrepreneurs (4/5)** stated they feel more able to run a social venture as a result of the support received.
- **Many social entrepreneurs (7/9)** feel more confident to act for social change as a result of the Award.
- As a result of the Award, **4 out of 9 social entrepreneurs** feel valued and understood for the change they are creating.
- The **majority of social entrepreneurs (9/12)** responded that they are very or extremely likely to recommend UnLtd's support to a friend or colleague

#1 The programme helped build young people's confidence

Throughout the qualitative interviews, social entrepreneurs commented that taking part in the Spaces 4 Change programme had helped build confidence in themselves and the potential of their space.

The successful transformation of previously unused and underutilised spaces by young people for the benefit of their community evidences the ability of young people to make positive change. For example, Mariam at Greenfingers has created a space that facilitates intergenerational connections and bonding from a previously unloved and disused area of the local community.

UnLtd's research 'Confidence Curve – how young people create positive social change'⁹ described the seven steps young people move through from applying for an award to truly leading a venture and the subsequent impact on their confidence. This research showed that offering young people the opportunity to test their ideas, 'Stage 1: risking it' and learn about their role in social impact coupled with tailored support throughout, builds the confidence of young people and eventually they begin to recognise their achievements and the value of their work to the local community, 'Stage 7: inspiring others'. This is reflected in the Spaces 4 Change case studies which demonstrate how social entrepreneurs confidence developed throughout their time on the programme, from taking the risk of acquiring space through to inspiring their local communities. The need for additional support to build confidence was also discussed by Award Managers in the internal reflective session. Working with young

⁹ [The Confidence Curve - How young people create positive social change](#) – this research brought together learning about young people creating social change

people, they felt, meant support had to be adapted to focus on creating trust, and this is explored further in [Learning Highlight #2](#).

In addition, the confidence built during the Spaces 4 Change programme has allowed them to take new opportunities to either grow their space or move on from it to something new with increased self-belief. This is evidenced in the End of Award survey finding that 7 out of 9 social entrepreneurs feel more confident to act for social change as a result of the award.

#2 Spaces 4 Change provided a learning opportunity for young people to define the next chapter of their journey

It is evident from the case studies that the spaces funded by the programme do not have to be sustainable in terms of its continuity to contribute positively to the life and journey of young social entrepreneurs. The social entrepreneurs in the case studies have taken a number of paths since their Spaces 4 Change award, for example Aqsa continues to grow SaltSpace, whereas Namwya has moved on to running a new social enterprise. However, it is also evident that even when social entrepreneurs have moved on from their space, they have still created lasting change, for example the open mic night Stuart started at Sourced by Salford has continued and even sustained itself through lockdown. One consistent factor is that the learning from Spaces 4 Change is taken forward by social entrepreneurs and connects them to social impact as a driver for their future choices. The long-term impact of Spaces 4 Change on social entrepreneurs is discussed in [Learning Highlight #3](#), with Award Managers highlighting how UnLtd has continued to invest and support social entrepreneurs with their next steps.

In previous evaluations undertaken by UnLtd, for example Lead the Change, sustainable ventures were considered to be those still running upon completion of the programme.¹⁰ However, the Spaces 4 Change programme provides a different perspective on sustainability by focusing on the long-term learning acquired by the individual social entrepreneurs to take forward into their future endeavours. This supports the findings of the Live to Change the World research conducted by UnLtd which found that an early experience of social entrepreneurship can generate a longer-term interest in social action and entrepreneurship, but also that life stage can play a significant role in whether projects continue in the longer term as some social entrepreneurs move into further education or employment.¹¹

For many, Spaces 4 Change was transformative for the social entrepreneurs by allowing them to learn more about their own abilities as a social leader for the first time. This is reflected in the End of Award survey findings which show all the social entrepreneurs who responded felt they had developed skills and knowledge as a result of the award, including leadership skills. In addition, 7 out of 9 social entrepreneurs feel more confident to act for social change as a result of the award. The learning highlights from the Resilient Communities programme, a place-based programme focused on building ecosystems of social entrepreneurs, highlighted that the willingness of UnLtd to 'take a punt' gives the social entrepreneurs greater confidence.¹² This is reflected in the Spaces 4 Change case

¹⁰ The [Lead the Change](#) programme, funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation in 2014, developed locally based, scalable and sustainable ecosystems of support for social entrepreneurs to help them to start up and thrive.

¹¹ The [Live to Change the World](#) research brought together UnLtd's work with 11- to 21-year-olds to understand the experiences of young social entrepreneurs

¹² The learning highlights of the [Resilient Communities](#) programme provides insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with Resilient Communities areas

studies, with social entrepreneurs repeatedly highlighting how UnLtd were the first to show belief in them and their ideas.

#3 Social entrepreneurs valued the support received from UnLtd, particularly the consistency of the Award Manager

The support provided on the Spaces 4 Change programme was valued highly by social entrepreneurs, and the importance of the Award Manager was highlighted repeatedly. This is evidenced in by the End of Award survey which found the majority (9/12) social entrepreneurs are very or extremely likely to recommend UnLtd's support to a friend or colleague.

Social entrepreneurs felt they benefitted from having an Award Manager as a consistent and stable touchpoint throughout their award. The one-to-one support offered meant social entrepreneurs were reassured that their questions would be answered, and their problems addressed.

This value that social entrepreneurs place on the support from UnLtd Award Managers is consistent with our findings from previous evaluations. For instance, those on the Transform Ageing programme considered their managers to have strong business and sector knowledge, and effective networks.¹³ Similarly, in the Resilient Communities evaluation, social entrepreneurs highlighted the value of the individual support they received, as well as the training, mentoring, and networking opportunities available.¹⁴

The findings from the previous Spaces 4 Change programme highlighted that the freedom afforded to young people by their Award Managers gave them ownership and control, and this was reflected by the social entrepreneurs interviewed as part of this evaluation.

4.4 How have social entrepreneurs responded to Covid-19?

#1 Social entrepreneurs responded to the pandemic in various ways by proceeding, pivoting, piloting, or pausing

During the first lockdown in April 2020, UnLtd conducted research into how social entrepreneurs were responding to the pandemic. When we collated examples of those who had responded effectively to the challenges of Covid-19, we found that there were 4 broad types of response – **Proceed, Pivot, Pilot, and Pause**.¹⁵

Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs were offered support and in some cases funding through the Social Entrepreneur Support Fund and Inclusive Recovery Fund to help them through the pandemic. Three social entrepreneurs were supported by these emergency funds, receiving approximately £126,500 in grants. Some social entrepreneurs were able to pivot and provide online spaces for people to meet whilst others had to put their ideas on hold indefinitely, highlighting the drawback of having a social venture reliant on space.

¹³ The [Transform Ageing](#) programme launched in 2016 and aimed to improve people's experience of ageing

¹⁴ The learning highlights of the [Resilient Communities](#) programme provides insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with Resilient Communities areas

¹⁵ [The 4Ps – a framework for thinking about social entrepreneur responses to Covid-19](#)

Our Covid-19 research highlighted that an openness to pivoting or piloting where necessary allowed social entrepreneurs to respond well to the impact of the pandemic. For example, The Prop-up Project (originally Connect 2 Drama) were able to pivot their activity during lockdown. They were able to provide telephone and online support to young people before being able to re-open their Morecambe space in a socially distanced manner.

The type of space occupied by social entrepreneurs was a determining factor in how deeply the effects of the pandemic were felt. For example, Luke was able to continue his work with the support of volunteers due to the space being outside, whereas Millie was forced to pivot considerably as she was tied to a bricks and mortar establishment. In addition, occupying a bricks and mortar establishment meant that the Northern Soul Kitchen still had to cover their rent and overheads whilst operating a new aspect of their business that was not financially lucrative. In some cases, additional funding was available; for instance, Millie was able to access funding through the Social Entrepreneur Support Fund to assist with these costs.

#2 For some young social entrepreneurs, Covid-19 has motivated them to continue and widen their social impact

The social entrepreneurs included in the case studies chose to view Covid-19 as a moment of opportunity, as opposed to a barrier for their spaces or current ventures. There are examples of social entrepreneurs expanding their current projects. For instance, Namwya has secured multiple funding streams during the pandemic, and Stuart Fraser has returned to a career in social enterprise to help support his local community recover from the pandemic.

The pandemic also offered spaces and the ventures within them the chance to widen their social impact by increasing awareness of the change they are making. Millie at Northern Soul Kitchen focused on connecting to harder to reach areas of their community and impact those struggling most through providing food parcels.

#3 Social entrepreneurs are hopeful about the future of community spaces

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase in isolation, negatively impacted people's wellbeing, and caused potentially long-lasting damage to several industries. However, when considering the impact of the pandemic on the future of community spaces, the social entrepreneurs interviewed are hopeful about the opportunities that could be created as a result.

Although the lasting impact of repeated lockdowns on community spaces is currently unknown, and some may not survive, the Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs highlighted that the social cohesion amongst communities garnered during the pandemic could encourage more people to create spaces for connection. However, if there is an increased demand amongst social entrepreneurs to transform community spaces, the sector needs to be able to respond to this and ensure appropriate and sufficient funding is available.



Tech Styles, Bradford



UnLtd Explore Tour, 2017

5. Learning Highlights

This section reflects on the how learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme can be embedded into the delivery of future UnLtd support.

#1 Mismatch between expectations and reality

The average award size distributed on the Spaces 4 Change programme was between £1,500 and £3,000, and upon reflection Award Managers felt this was not enough for the ambitious projects young people had ideas for. Even with successful outreach enabling us to reach young people, the amount of money available was not, Award Managers considered, always meaningful or useful for many to achieve their vision for a space, and this could stifle the development or progress of projects.

This mismatch between the funding available and the aspirations of young people connects to other barriers present in transforming spaces, for example the variability in spaces across the country. The internal reflective session with Award Managers highlighted that a £3,000 award in London would not acquire the same type or quality of space compared to areas in the North of England.

In addition, the criteria outlined in the original bid brought challenges later in the programme. The intention was to support 100 social entrepreneurs and in total the Spaces 4 Change programme supported 83. However, Award Managers reflected that this was too many to support in the way young people needed. Support may have been more impactful if we had taken the approach of supporting fewer social entrepreneurs but focused more heavily on understanding and investing in their personal journey.

The internal reflective session also highlighted that the criteria set, of supporting young people and the project having to involve space, impacted on our ability to deliver the expected outcomes. These two criteria brought about their own and intersecting challenges, discussed in Learning Highlights #2 and #4.

#2 Complexity of working with young people

We can learn from the Spaces 4 Change programme about how to best work with young people and what their unique support needs may be.

Outreach to young people effectively utilised existing social entrepreneur networks from other programmes, given the extensive youth reach of UnLtd around 2016. However, trying to re-engage social entrepreneurs from earlier cohorts was challenging, and many entrepreneurs had shifted out of the Spaces 4 Change age criteria. Furthermore, utilising existing networks and programmes meant that the first year's awards were based around certain geographies, primarily London & Southeast and Yorkshire & Humber. As discussed in the interim report, we increased our online outreach and adapted our social media content utilising Facebook advertising more frequently, but this began part way through the programme and did not reach as many people as intended.

A challenge of working with young people was engaging with them in a way that was meaningful for them and reflected their preferences for communication. Young people have unique support needs and may have less business skills than more experienced social entrepreneurs, for example, being able to use Excel. On the Spaces 4 Change programme,

delivery of support needed to have an increased focus on creating trust and addressing the confidence gap many young people face.

These findings demonstrate the need to consider how we become accessible to young people and ensure the support they need is not just technical but provides wraparound support to help them on their journey to becoming effective social entrepreneurs.

When working with young people in the future, UnLtd should learn from the Spaces 4 Change programme and explore different ways to communicate with and engage young people. Covid-19 may have provided this opportunity already by moving workshops and training online, which could help overcome limited attendance with in-person events. The Spaces 4 Change programme did initially recruit an expert panel to identify challenges in transforming space, and upon reflection this could have been refreshed with Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs for subsequent cohorts. This would have ensured the programme was utilising the lived experiences of being a young social entrepreneur to shape the support provided.

#3 Differential understanding of success

A key learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme is that success may look different for young people compared to other UnLtd social entrepreneurs. Being part of the Spaces 4 Change programme was an opportunity at a time that was right for the social entrepreneur and their organisation. As reflected in the case studies, not all the social entrepreneurs remained connected to their space, and some moved on to other social enterprises, employment, or education opportunities. However, it is important that the success of the Spaces 4 Change programme is not based solely on the sustainability and continuation of the spaces funded, but rather on the learning opportunity offered to young people to try something new, have a positive impact on their community, and consider other opportunities to create social impact.

In addition, UnLtd has been able to further invest, whether financially or through additional support, in many of the social entrepreneurs on the programme, actively connecting them to other employment or funding opportunities for the next chapters of their journeys.

As the case studies highlighted, social entrepreneurs on the programme have taken a variety of paths since transforming their space, and the skills they have developed, knowledge they have built, and the enthusiasm garnered for undertaking socially impactful work should all be considered as indicators of success for the programme.

#4 Intricacies around transforming spaces

The interim report highlighted that we initially thought young people would be able to find disused spaces and there would be common barriers to transforming them. It became evident that in certain areas of the country there is greater competition for space and prices are higher. Reflecting on the programme helps us to understand these and other challenges and opportunities of transforming space which can be used to inform similar programmes that may be delivered in the future.

As discussed in Learning Highlight #1, the average award made was not always enough to enable social entrepreneurs to secure spaces in the areas they wanted. For social entrepreneurs living in London, space in prime areas is expensive and young people faced competition from established businesses as well as experiencing a credibility gap from landlords and local authorities due to their age and/or experience. This challenge of

accessing and negotiating the use of space was highlighted in the final evaluation of the 2012 Spaces 4 Change programme and has evidently persisted. Any future programmes focused on transforming spaces must consider the diversity of spaces available and ensure award making is flexible and extensive enough to reflect this.

In addition, the programme intended to have clusters of awards linked to UnLtd's resilient communities across the country with the aim of building an ecosystem of social enterprises within that place. Unfortunately, this was not achieved as connecting individuals to spaces, even 'meanwhile spaces', through partners was still challenging.

Learning from the Spaces 4 Change programme highlights factors that enabled social entrepreneurs to effectively access and transform spaces. The social capital of the social entrepreneur working to transform a space was a key factor that contributed to the success of their project. Having or building connections and networks that could support the social entrepreneur in the transformation of their space was crucial as this made accessing the resources required easier. In addition, working with another organisation who had a building or a space ready to be used was an enabling factor for social entrepreneurs as it added value to their idea and provided a springboard from which to begin their project, as evident in the Killingbeck Community Project.

The importance of community buy-in, discussed in the case studies, was also emphasised in the internal reflective session as a factor that contributed to the success of particular spaces. When social entrepreneurs effectively understood the identity of a place and the issues experienced by the community, they could successfully engage the wider community with their vision for the space as can be seen from the Northern Soul Kitchen case study.

This understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced when transforming spaces, as experienced across the Spaces 4 Change programme, should be taken forward into the design of future space-based work to attempt to mitigate against the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities early on.

#5 Embedding inclusion

As highlighted in the interim report and the inclusion statistics [above](#), Spaces 4 Change supported a diverse cohort of social entrepreneurs. Award making was originally focussed in a few regions and urban centres, but UnLtd worked to address this through diversifying outreach by reaching out to new organisations, increasing online outreach, and adapting social media messaging.

Several factors contributed positively to the diversity of social entrepreneurs supported through the Spaces 4 Change programme. The recruitment of find partners was undertaken to support on elements of inclusion, for example recruiting Beetfreaks and 1 Love Community, to engage other young people with the programme. Utilising existing networks and building upon previous UnLtd programmes, for example Hackney Connect, and related events contributed positively to representation within the cohort, as Spaces 4 Change social entrepreneurs saw themselves represented through previous social entrepreneurs supported by UnLtd.

The shift to hosting the celebration event online because of Covid-19 meant this was more accessible for our social entrepreneurs.

The design of the Spaces 4 Change programme could have been more inclusive if it had been led by young people, for example through a steering group, to provide more engaging outreach and communication. This learning is already being embedded in the design of new

UnLtd programmes, where we are intentionally engaging and learning from social entrepreneurs throughout the design and testing phases of programmes.

#6 Drawing on the film & events

The approach to external communications and events for the Spaces 4 Change programme worked well.

The Spaces 4 Change film, released in October 2020, was launched digitally during the celebration event due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meaning the event moved online. However, the shift of this event from real life to online meant that more social entrepreneurs could access it and therefore engage with the film launch. The film was also reflective of UnLtd's wider values, as it was led by young people, and allowed them to create the narrative around their space as well as showcasing a geographically diverse group of social entrepreneurs.

The clear agenda and post-event communications used in the celebration event should be embedded across other UnLtd programmes. Additionally, the use of digital media to highlight the impact of a programme is powerful but in future should be promoted into wider networks to extend the reach.

#7 Building strong partnerships

UnLtd and Our Bright Future established a positive relationship built upon regular and effective communication. A particularly successful aspect of this relationship was the involvement of Our Bright Future on award making panels, as this brought together the funder and the social entrepreneur in a constructive way. The consortium of partners also came together through network meetings held by the Wildlife Trusts, for an annual seminar and UnLtd worked alongside the individual Wildlife Trusts, National Youth Agency, and Centre for Sustainable Energy. Increased collaboration amongst these partners throughout the entirety of the programme would only have strengthened the relationships.

The flexibility of Our Bright Future was also valued by UnLtd. They were supportive of UnLtd extending delivery timelines, and repurposing funds to develop resources and legacy materials for our social entrepreneurs. In response to Covid-19, Our Bright Future supported our distribution of top ups and Grow Its¹⁶ for social entrepreneurs and understood our desire to focus on the quality of award as opposed to the number of awards.

To build better funder relationships in the future, the learning from Spaces 4 Change to take forward is to have a dedicated timeline to help achieve agreed outputs and increased involvement across the timeline as programmes develop.

Future funder relationships built by UnLtd should consider the benefit of engaging funders with award making as this provides a collectively agreed focus and allows the funder and UnLtd to journey through the programme together.

#8 Managing organisational changes

During the 5-year period of Spaces 4 Change, there have been organisational changes at UnLtd which meant we had to introduce changes to our delivery of the programme, for

¹⁶ Grow It Awards aim to support a small number of social entrepreneurs with the potential to scale their social action idea with up to £15,000

example bringing in additional staff support to reach entrepreneurs UK wide. The strategic direction and staffing of the organisation changed considerably from the conception of the programme to its launch, and during the time it was delivered. UnLtd's previous work under 'Live UnLtd' came to an end and focus shifted away from specifically supporting young people. In addition, there were staffing changes in project manage, delivery, research, and communications that impacted on the support available for the programme.

These changes and the operational pressures they brought made it difficult to iterate to meet the needs of the social entrepreneurs. The challenges faced during the Spaces 4 Change programme provide a learning opportunity for UnLtd moving forward with the delivery of new programmes. The design of new UnLtd programmes demonstrates how support can be better designed by involving social entrepreneurs throughout the process and clearly defining roles internally to manage workload and the strategic direction of the programme.

#9 Improving data collection

As noted in the methodology there were challenges encountered with data collection for this final evaluation. These challenges were:

- A low survey response rate
- Engagement with qualitative data collection
- Timing of data collection
- Evaluation being built into the UnLtd experience

To address the low survey response rate and improve engagement with qualitative data collection, we should conduct data collection exercises on an ongoing basis and follow up on an ongoing basis.

In future programmes we should clarify timelines for data collection early in a programme to avoid making retrospective requests of social entrepreneurs. We should inform social entrepreneurs when they start their support period that UnLtd undertakes evaluation and monitoring activity throughout a programme and be clear on how they will benefit from engaging with this research.

#10 Emphasising internal learning

UnLtd has recently articulated its strategic direction to focus more clearly on impact, inclusion, and continuous learning through our new strategy, Ambition 2025.

As part of Ambition 2025, UnLtd has shifted its focus to finding and supporting the most impactful social entrepreneurs across the UK, putting them at the heart of our work. We are also growing our alumni community to provide market leading support and peer to peer networks beyond the lifetime of their UnLtd grant. We are intent on representing and supporting different social entrepreneurs on their different journeys through specific, relational support that truly understands what individual social entrepreneurs need.

We have also launched the pilot of our 'Selling Social' programme in partnership with eBay for Change. The full programme, due to launch in September, will help entrepreneurs become ecommerce ready and increase purpose driven online purchasing. Looking ahead, we are working closely with a number of partners, including National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England and Comic Relief, to explore potential future partnerships.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has presented findings from the evaluation of the Spaces 4 Change programme, with a view to learning about the impact of the programme, the journeys of social entrepreneurs, and how they have been supported by UnLtd. Various lessons have emerged regarding the delivery of support, as well as broader learning that may be useful in future.

Key findings:

- Spaces 4 Change supported a diverse cohort of social entrepreneurs distributing 83 awards of up to £5,000 to social entrepreneurs aged between 16 and 24.
- Social entrepreneurs benefitted from working closely with their local communities to reimagine their space, and undertaking this project helped build their confidence and self-belief.
- Social entrepreneurs valued the support received from UnLtd, particularly the consistency of the Award Manager, which provided a necessary touchpoint at key moments during the award.
- For some young social entrepreneurs, Covid-19 has motivated them to continue and expand their social impact by presenting a moment of opportunity to reach more people. They are also hopeful that Covid-19 will encourage more people into social enterprises that utilise community spaces.
- There was sometimes a mismatch between the expectations of the programme and the reality for young people, meaning the average award size was not enough to be meaningful for many young people wanting to transform space.
- Young people have unique support needs, so our offer has to be flexible, tailored, and mindful of relevant communication methods for young people.
- Success may look different for young people compared to UnLtd's other social entrepreneurs, but the learning they take forward from the programme is valuable.
- There are challenges and opportunities of transforming spaces. Future awards need to consider how to mitigate against the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities whilst understanding the effects of local contexts.
- Diversifying outreach and creating inclusive external communications, such as the Spaces 4 Change film, strengthen inclusion on the programme.
- An effective funder relationship can be built through connecting the funder and social entrepreneurs and ensuring consistent communication that works towards the same goal.
- The management of organisational changes can have an impact on the delivery of a programme, and UnLtd's move towards more defined project management roles should ensure there is capacity for programme delivery.

Recommendations for future programmes:

- To provide effective and impactful support to social entrepreneurs, the size of award available should be carefully considered to ensure the expectations set by programme criteria match the reality of social entrepreneurs' experience.
- Social entrepreneur led programme design is essential to meet the needs of social entrepreneurs and to learn from the achievements and challenges of running a social enterprise. We should engage social entrepreneurs in programme design, which would also help contribute to our inclusion goals by further diversifying outreach.

- When working with young people, support must be flexible and focus on the wraparound support required in addition to business skills.
- Success of a programme or an individual should not be based solely upon the sustainability and continuation of a project but should acknowledge the importance of continuous learning and development.
- We should build better funder relationships through dedicated timelines to achieve outputs and sustained connection and communication between funder, funded organisation, and social entrepreneurs.
- By investing in clear programme design where internal roles are defined, we will be well-placed to manage workload and the strategic direction of a programme to prevent organisational changes impacting on programme delivery.

Appendix – Our approach to monitoring and evaluation

UnLtd finds, funds, and supports social entrepreneurs - enterprising people with solutions that change our society for the better. UnLtd conducts high quality research, monitoring, and evaluation across programme delivery, this allows learning to be fed back to delivery teams and funders to shape the programmes and actively improve support to social entrepreneurs.

Our approach to evaluation is underpinned by the following principles:

- Simple – what we produce is accessible to a wide audience, including non-specialist audiences, those that we support, and the sector
- Light touch – our evaluation activity should not be a burden for social entrepreneurs
- Proportionate – we only ask what we report on, and we recognise that our approach needs to be tailored for different programmes
- Practical – it is integrated into delivery

As part of our standard monitoring and evaluation procedure we collect data on:

- the scale and reach of our Award-making activity and partnership work,
- the quality of this work from the perspective of social entrepreneurs,
- the effectiveness of our support in helping people to set up and grow social ventures, and to develop as social entrepreneurs
- the social impact generated by social entrepreneurs that we, or our partners, support

We collect data using:

- application forms and an End of Award survey
- interviews with social entrepreneurs and expert panel members
- reflective sessions with delivery staff

As well as understanding how our work creates impact, our evaluation activity also focuses on learning. This enables us to build on what is working and change what isn't for future programmes.