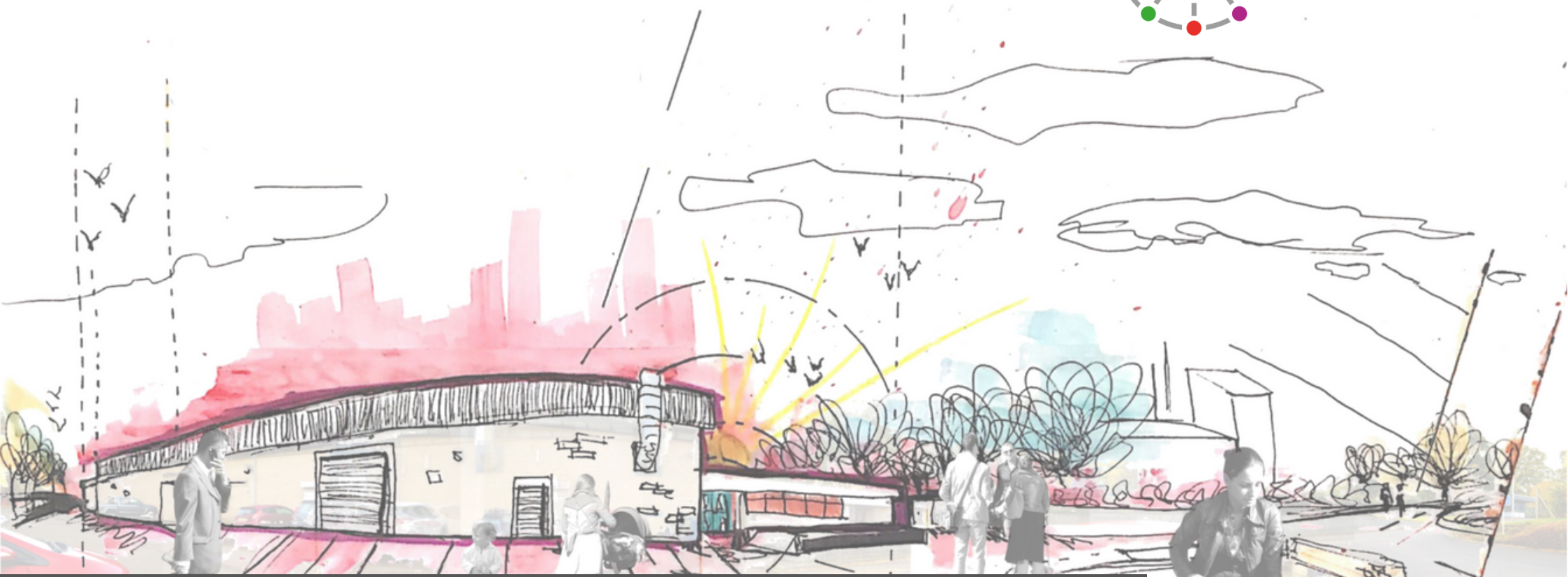




The Circle



# SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

## 2019 - 2020

# WELCOME

## Chair

Covid-19 has cast a long shadow over us all during 2020, but nowhere more so than across the third sector. A perfect storm of increasing demands for their services alongside a sharp decline in fundraising opportunities has threatened the viability of many voluntary organisations, both large and small.

At The Circle, we see our role as being more important than ever, providing our clients with a safe space and helping them to develop the skills they need to survive and, in time, thrive again in this harsh environment. At the same time, I am heartened by the many examples we have seen of communities coming together and responding to local need - The Circle has a key role as a catalyst for these initiatives.

I would like to thank Kirsty and her team for the way they have responded selflessly to the many demands made of them and have helped our clients to adjust to this new environment, while continuing to look for new ways to support the third sector in the future.

Finally, I am grateful to my colleagues on the Board, who give freely of their time and experience and have provided wise counsel in uncertain times.

Donald McPherson,  
Chair



## Founder and CEO

The Circle has been operating for 4 years. This year, like many organisations we have faced huge challenges and uncertainty due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. However, we have continued to respond to the needs of our community to ensure our services and team continue to deliver the necessary support. The physical distancing restrictions put in place to combat Covid-19 have forced our team to adapt quickly and digitise many of our operations.

Our “More Than Profit” approach encourages financial sustainability alongside bringing people and organisations together to promote collaboration and foster social innovation. The pandemic has encouraged us to consider the way we work with regard to both the physical space and the importance of the team’s health and wellbeing. We believe that more than ever that this approach is needed within our third sector communities.

This report is an opportunity to record, recognise and share the range of ways which we are making social impact

Kirsty Thomson,  
Founder and CEO



# INTRODUCTION

The Circle is a Community Interest Company focussed on working with social entrepreneurs, community activists, charity leaders, commercial business leaders, trustees and non-executive directors.

Our space at Staffa Place is a hub for charities, social enterprises, community groups and socially aware businesses in Dundee. We provide affordable offices, co-working and community space, as well as affordable meeting and event facilities.

In addition to our property services, we offer consultancy and business support to those starting up and developing their organisations. We provide advice, support and training on areas including access to funding, governance and strategic planning.

The Circle Academy is our flagship SQA-accredited programme, developing skills and knowledge in the key areas of mindset, business model, finance, legal, governance, people, social impact and sustainability.

During the year we ran a pilot social enterprise café and training programme for looked after young people and care leavers.

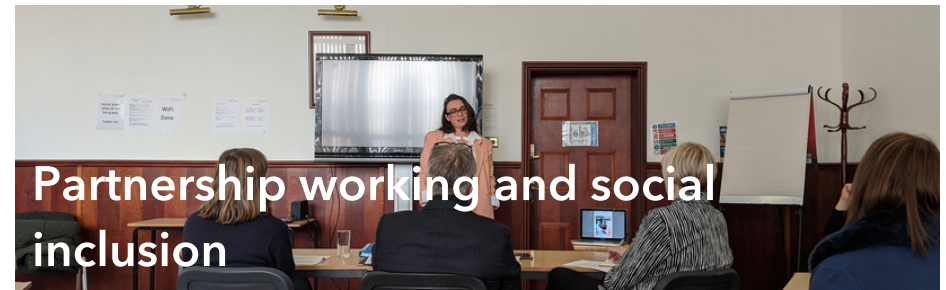
We provide a pathway to the third sector through volunteering, work experience, student placements and internships.

By bringing organisations together, we are promoting collaboration and fostering social innovation across the country.

We measure our social impact against the following priorities:



Contribution to the community



Partnership working and social inclusion



Environment, workplace and community practices

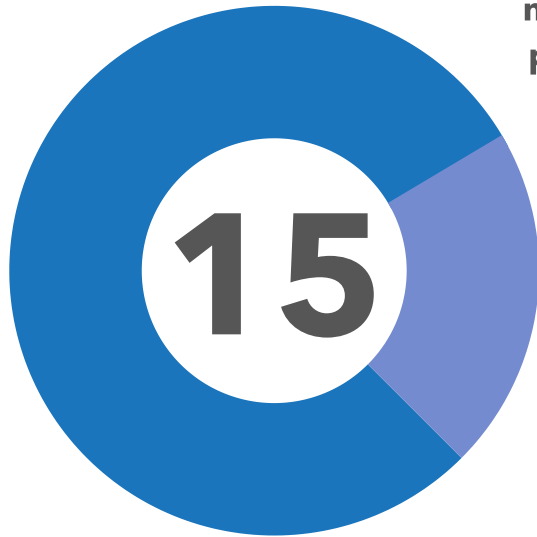


Fostering talent

We discuss each of these in more detail later in this report.

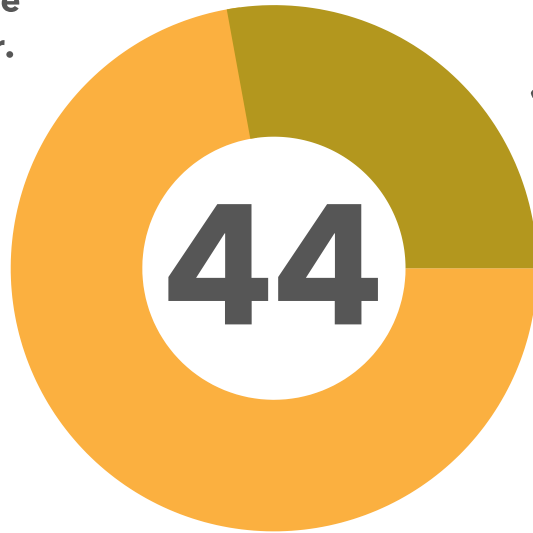


# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT - HIGHLIGHTS



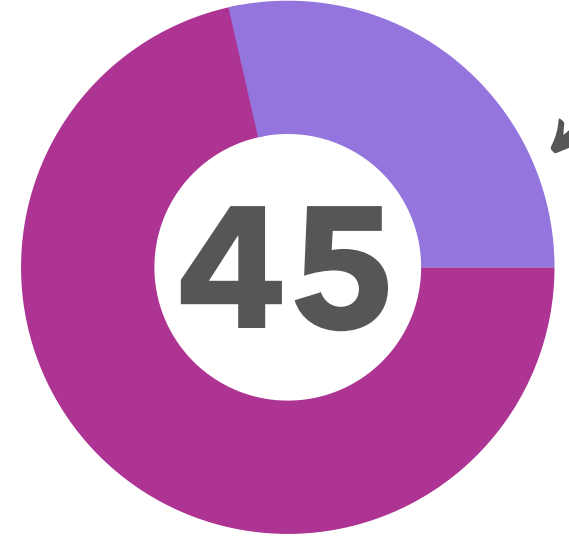
Tenants organisations

Including 4  
new in the  
past year.



Businesses, charities and  
social enterprises worked  
with in past year

Including 17  
expert speakers.



45 social entrepreneurs  
supported by The Circle in  
2020

Including 18  
candidates on The  
Circle Academy.



Secured to support community  
benefit projects



Delivered to children and  
young people



for early-stage entrepreneurs  
and organisation leaders



# OUR VALUES

These values are the guiding principles that The Circle uses to manage its internal affairs as well as its relationship with customers.

## INCLUSION

We create an environment where our customers, our team and our visitors experience working together for the benefit of all.

## FAIRNESS

We commit to doing what we say we will do as we work to redress the imbalance of society.

## TEAMWORK

We aspire to have an inclusive organisation where collective strengths overcome individual weaknesses and show that our pioneering approach is best brought by many people working as a highly effective team.

## PROFESSIONALISM

We should be identified as different within our sector, showing professionalism in all our interactions.

## EMPOWERMENT

We believe in the value of enabling our customers and our team to reach their full potential.

## PIONEERING

We want to do things differently and do more than just exist, avoiding the 'because it has always been done that way' attitude.

# COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on organisations across the country from every sector, The Circle included. Upon the Government announcement in March that all non-essential workplaces must close, we made the difficult decision to temporarily close the doors of our premises and were plunged into a new period of economic uncertainty. This resulted in several of our core services being unable to operate under the new circumstances, leading to the decision to furlough the staff associated with projects that could not work from home in order to protect jobs.

With a reduced staff team and a limit on how we could provide services, we had to adapt our offerings to ensure that the groups who needed our support could still access it. We also created a project to provide children and young people in deprived areas with activity packs. These are some of the things we achieved:

Adapted the delivery of The Circle Academy to be fully online and secured SQA accreditation, allowing candidates to attain **'The Circle Academy Award In Social Entrepreneurship'**

Supported the setup of **a new charity** and a community asset transfer in Dundee

## **Supported The Circle team**

- both those employed and those furloughed - during this very challenging time

Delivered a series of **free webinars** relevant to the third sector to individuals and organisations working across the UK

Provided **free consultancy** to third sector organisations as they adapted to the new environment

Supported our clients, tenants and Academy candidates to secure in excess of **£250,000** in funding so they could continue to operate

Developed The Circle Superstars project where we delivered **300 activity packs** to children and young people in deprived areas of Dundee

Secured funding of over **£100,000** for The Circle to support our operations through the pandemic

# THE CIRCLE TEAM

## OUR STAFF



**Kirsty Thomson**  
Founder and CEO



**Paul Hastie**  
General Manager



**Jennifer Gall**  
Bookings & Training  
Administrator



**Christina Thomson**  
Facilities Supervisor



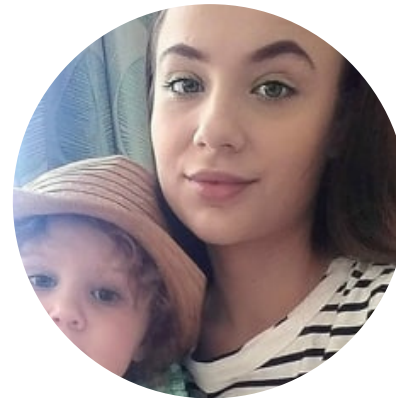
**Michael Ratcliffe**  
Facilities Assistant



**Jenny McCarthy**  
Associate Consultant



**Ruth Finnan**  
Financial Controller



**Elisa Geremias-Lorenzo**  
Events & Catering  
Assistant



**Alice Watts**  
Digital Learning Producer



**Alvina Menzies**  
Academy Manager



## VOLUNTEERS

We have benefited from enthusiastic volunteers and placements. Given the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 crisis, we unfortunately had to temporarily cease volunteering activities in the building. Priority was given first and foremost to reducing the numbers of people in The Circle at any one time. We recognised however that our volunteers relied on their roles for a variety of reasons including their own social inclusion. With this knowledge we have made a conscious effort to maintain contact and are looking forward to welcoming them back as soon as possible.

We are grateful to all that have spent time with us but recognise the value of the volunteers who have assisted us weekly:

Alex Thomson	Duncan Forbes
Margaret Grieve	Rob King
Michael Craig	Wajiha Ifran
Pamela Langskill	Bradley Abbott
Eddie Baines	



## CASE STUDY

### MICHAEL CRAIG



Michael has been volunteering with us since June 2019, but he has been a familiar face at The Circle for even longer. He was first introduced to us as a member attending Uppertunity groups, but he began volunteering for us when The Circle Café began running. While the Café has been closed during lockdown, we have increased our cleaning and facility maintenance, so Michael has returned to volunteer as part of our facilities team.

Having Michael back to assist with our facilities maintenance has been beneficial not only to The Circle but to Michael himself. He has contributed to making The Circle a safer place for anyone who needs to access the facility. Being able to come in to spend some time volunteering with us has helped reduce the isolation and boredom that Michael was experiencing during the lockdown period.

We're delighted to say that Michael is now joining the team as a member of staff!

**"We're thrilled to now offer Michael employment at The Circle after his hard work volunteering for over a year. Especially given the challenging circumstances we're all living in. He is already a terrific addition to the team and we can't wait to see him develop further."**

Paul Hastie, General Manager at The Circle

# OUR GOVERNANCE

The Circle is a Community Interest Company, meaning that our focus is on benefiting the community, with any profits reinvested to enable us to expand the services we provide to community organisations, rather than being paid out to shareholders.

Our Board currently includes:



**Kirsty Thomson**  
CEO



**Donald McPherson**  
Chair



**Pete Baillie**



**Natalie Lafferty**



**Ron Smith**



**Ann Gillies**



**Mary Sneddon**

You can read more about their backgrounds, skills and experience on our website.

## OUR GOVERNANCE

Board members are appointed following a formal recruitment process, based on their match to the skills needed on the board to provide effective oversight of The Circle's activities. As part of their induction they receive information on The Circle's structure and governance and have the opportunity to meet the management team.

The board meets regularly during the year and receives financial and operational reports to allow it to measure The Circle's progress against its objectives. The board also receives regular updates from management on new initiatives.

With the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19, the backing of our Board has been more important than ever.

We appreciate the support they have given us through the everchanging conditions of the pandemic and continuing to provide vital input as we look to the future.



The Board of Directors of The Circle would like to thank former Director Rod Mountain for his contribution to the growth of the organisation. Rod served as a Director June 2018 to February 2020. His expertise and support have been incredibly valuable to the rest of the Board and to Kirsty as CEO.

Rod is based at Ninewells with a real interest in developing collaborations between the creative industries and the health / social care sectors. He aspires to focus on the value of Design and "Design thinking" and help grow new economies in Tayside through collaboration between the public, private, voluntary and third sectors.



# TENANTS

The Circle is home to a wide range of different organisations including charities, social enterprises and commercial businesses. While they all work in different ways and operate within different sectors, they all share a community spirit and a drive to have a positive impact.



## Our tenants are:

- Partners in Advocacy
- Barnardo's Works
- Fields in Trust
- RNID
- Slimming World
- The Richmond Fellowship Scotland
- Families Outside
- Dundee Independent Advocacy Service
- Uppertunity CIC
- Funeral Link
- Togs SCIO
- We Love Platters
- Cornerstone
- Underground Cinema Club
- Andy Colville

This year we were delighted to welcome Andy Colville, Families Outside, Funeral Link and We Love Platters as new tenants.

Andy Colville is a chartered psychologist and psycho-therapist who provides a range of services including cognitive behavioural therapy and psychotherapy.

Families Outside is the only national charity in Scotland that works solely to support families of people involved in the criminal justice system.

Funeral Link is a charity which supports bereaved families with informed choice for funerals at the time of a bereavement and work in partnership with others to provide support beyond the funeral.

We Love Platters is a catering company which provides bespoke platter boxes across Dundee.

## CASE STUDY

### UPPERTUNITY CIC

Uppertunity joined us as a tenant in 2017 after pitching at the first ever Dundee Soup event which we hosted. Uppertunity provide a personal development service and inclusive social opportunities for adults with additional needs. They offer weekly social and creative groups, run a programme to develop life skills and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities. Before joining us, their groups were run across a number of community centres, with the materials being transported in the back of their Manager, Danielle's car. Since Uppertunity made The Circle their home base they have been able to increase their offerings and attract new members to their groups.

Uppertunity have well and truly become a part of The Circle community. Their gardening club has breathed new life into our outdoor spaces, their arts and crafts groups have added colour to our walls with their work and their cooking group has even catered events for us. In 2019 they opened a vegan café in Dundee city centre, called Serendipities, which is a community space and offers further volunteering and work experience to their members.



**"We love being a tenant of The Circle. We moved in in 2017, our first official base, and haven't looked back. We couldn't imagine being based anywhere else. Being tenants of The Circle has opened up so many doors of opportunity for us and has brought with it a world of support. We are proud to be part of The Circle's journey and look forward to seeing it grow even further."**

Danielle Gaffney Du Plooy,  
Founder and Manager of Uppertunity CIC



# FUNDING

As a social enterprise we strive to generate the majority of our income through trading activities such as office rental and room hire. In the past 12 months we have secured over £200,000 in funding. Much of this was secured to sustain our activities through the pandemic and to allow us to introduce new projects and services to support our community through this time.

We are grateful to the following organisations for their support this year.

**£233,014**  
of grant funding  
secured in the past 12  
months



**The Mathew Trust**

**Leng Charitable Trust**

**R J Larg Charitable Trust**



## DEVELOPING OUR SERVICES

As an organisation, one of our core values is to be pioneering, never doing anything purely because 'it has always been done that way'. With that in mind we are always working to continually develop our services and how we work. This year has been more challenging than ever which has made us look at how we can continue providing our community with vital support and quality services whilst adapting to pandemic restrictions.

Some of the changes we have made include providing free consultancy sessions over video call, introducing rigorous cleaning and social distancing measures within our facility, and having most of the staff team working from home. Two of our services which have gone through a lot of change in the past 12 months are The Circle Academy and The Circle Café.

### THE CIRCLE ACADEMY



### THE CIRCLE CAFÉ



## THE CIRCLE ACADEMY



### ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

- 8 candidates successfully completed cohort 2
- 10 candidates currently on cohort 3
- £30,000 through Dundee City Council small business support fund

2020 has been a year of tremendous development of The Circle Academy. We were delighted to secure SVQ accreditation through the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Successful candidates on the programme can now attain 'The Circle Academy Award in Social Entrepreneurship', a level 7 SVQ equivalent to an Advanced Higher.

When a full lockdown was announced in March, we were in the midst of delivering the second cohort. Up until this point, the speaker sessions and candidate workshops were conducted almost entirely in person. We worked quickly, moving speaker sessions and one-to-one support to online delivery via video call. Thanks to the continuing support of our speakers, we still managed to cover all of the essential lessons of the programme and were able to accelerate our plans to deliver future cohorts of the Academy online.

We were able to obtain feedback from our candidates throughout the programme and upon completion through a focus group. Some of the candidates also participated in a service design session with us which was facilitated by Mike Press of Open Change where we looked at what we would need to consider when carrying the online version of the programme forward. All of this formed the basis when we began developing our own online platform which launched in September 2020 ahead of welcoming our third cohort of candidates.

"The Circle Academy was one of the most pivotal and important 12 weeks of my life: fact!"

Nervous to begin with, I was soon scooped up into a world of possibilities, that I knew existed, it's just I had forgotten."

**Kathryn Rattray, cohort 2**



## CASE STUDY

### KATHRYN RATTRAY

Kathryn Rattray is a freelance photographer based in Dundee. Kathryn has worked with The Circle for a number of years including photographing some of our events and running classes at our facility. She works predominantly in the arts; her passion lies in fashion and documentary photography.

Kathryn's work has been exhibited through a number of projects in Dundee and beyond. In 2018 Kathryn exhibited her work in Zurich and Miami, choosing to present her ideas on fast fashion, emancipation and deception.

Kathryn was a candidate on the second cohort of The Circle Academy. She joined the programme to learn more about entrepreneurial mindset and how she could create more social impact. Since completing the Academy Kathryn has opened up a gallery in Dundee city centre and has showcased

work from local artists and designers in a number of exhibitions. Through the gallery she is now supporting established and emerging artists by providing a safe and affordable gallery and pop up shop.



**"After a turbulent few years' grieving the loss of a dear friend, I had lost my way. I had really forgotten who I was, The Circle Academy snapped me right out of this and quickly put me right back on track. I started to remember who I am and the skills and talents that I have been blessed with.**

**The Academy taught me many valuable lessons, the best lesson for me was to value yourself every day. I felt like I was given a new lease of life. 4 years ago, I opened my studio space, Studio 11, and during 2019 I closed it due to stress and an overwhelming sadness. Fast forward to 2020 and I've re-opened the studio as Kathryn Rattray Gallery. I am now taking the bold step to write my business plan for the gallery and for the first time since it opened 4 years ago. I can put my hand on my heart and know it will be a success. I'm not scared anymore, and I owe this change in my business mind to The Circle Academy. THANK YOU."**

Kathryn Rattray, cohort 2 of The Circle Academy

## CASE STUDY

### JILLIAN ELIZABETH

Jillian Elizabeth previously ran a successful bridal hair and makeup artistry business for over 10 years. Although she loved the art she was so disheartened by the amount of waste in the hair and beauty industry. It was time for a change. Jillian has always been passionate about reducing waste and recycling and wanted to start a new business with these values. She struggled to find a place to shop in Dundee that sold plastic free and eco alternatives so decided to open one herself. In July 2019, The Little Green Larder was born. The Little Green Larder sells loose whole foods, dried foods, snack, sweets, fresh fruit and veg, bread and cleaning products all packaging free. Simply bring your own container to fill up. It also sells eco-friendly alternatives for day to day items helping the people of Dundee and its surrounding areas reduce waste and live a more sustainable life.

Jillian joined cohort 2 of The Circle Academy with the goal of improving the administrative side of her business. Through the programme Jillian was able to gain a better understanding of the admin tasks and cash flow planning required for the future of The Little Green Larder. She was also able to develop how she communicates the messaging for the business.



**“The Circle academy really helped me build my confidence and realise that the shop was a more than profit business. It helped me put into words the message of the shop and how to get that across to our customers.**

**I really enjoyed the academy and found all of the speakers so inspiring. The best part for me was hearing from others who were running successful more than profit businesses and learning from them.”**

Jillian Elizabeth,  
owner of The Little Green Larder



## THE CIRCLE CAFÉ

In 2019 we launched The Circle Café, a project aimed at providing training and employability skills for looked-after young people and care leavers. This project was established in collaboration with Dundee City Council, Barnardo's Works and Leisure & Culture Dundee. By offering training, work experience and support in an inclusive community environment our aim has been to support one of the groups furthest from the job market to improve their employability.

The Circle Café has been run as a community café, servicing our tenants, visitors and members of the local community. We have employed 5 looked-after young people and care leavers through the project since it launched.

The Circle Café team provided a range of hot and cold food and drink as well as providing refreshments for those hiring our meeting spaces and catering for internal and external events. Through our local connections we provided catering to a number of organisations and for a number of The Circle's own events including Dundee Soup and our Yuletide Fair.

In January 2020 the Café team worked with Turriff House Residential Home to provide a Burns Supper event for their residents and members of local groups aimed at reducing isolation. This event was a particular highlight for The Circle Café; it gave our trainees more vital experience with hospitality work and was a great opportunity to interact with elderly people from the local community.

The unprecedented global pandemic that has changed every workplace dramatically, and The Circle is no exception. Forced to temporarily close the doors on 23rd March, and without the footfall in the building since then, The Circle made the difficult decision to end the project. We have learned many valuable lessons throughout the duration of this project. They will direct us in how we continue to work with disadvantaged groups and will help inform future projects. Some achievements of The Circle Café project:



**looked after young  
people and care leavers  
employed and supported  
through this project**



**young people  
supported through volunteer  
or work placements**



**catering  
contracts delivered**



**funding secured for  
this project throughout  
its duration**

# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

We provide an inclusive, creative, social and enterprising learning hub for the whole community. While our ability to operate and provide services from our facility has been reduced during the pandemic, we have adapted how we work to continue supporting our community.



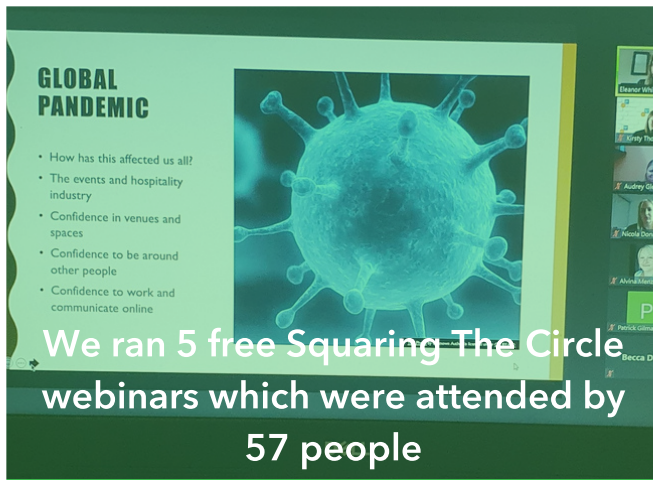
A total of 15 organisations call The Circle home, including 4 new tenants in 2020

We have provided over 50 hours of free consultancy time to individuals and organisations throughout the pandemic



100 children and young people benefitted from receiving activity packs through The Circle Superstars project

We supported 3 Academy candidates, 5 of our tenants and 5 external organisations to access £10,000 through Dundee City Council's Coronavirus Business Support Fund



We ran 5 free Squaring The Circle webinars which were attended by 57 people

We implemented new measures including more rigorous cleaning and social distancing to make our facility safer for tenants needing to access their offices and to allow essential training to take place in our meeting spaces

## CASE STUDY

### THE CIRCLE SUPERSTARS

During delivery of cohort 2 of The Circle Academy, our candidates said that they wanted to give something back to the local community and young people in particular. We recognised that a group that was being hit particularly hard by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown was children and young people living in the more deprived areas of the city. During the lockdown they had to adapt to their schooling being moved online and to having a reduced amount of time spent on their education. This meant that there were many with very little to do within the home and a significant restriction on how often they could leave the house or see friends and family. This lack of activity, compounded by the stress of the lockdown itself, was bound to have an adverse

effect on many children and young people's wellbeing. This has been particularly difficult for those whose families experience poverty as they could not be provided with as many in-home activities to spend their time on.

To combat this, we created The Circle Superstars project. The aim of this was to make and distribute activity packs to children and young people in the communities surrounding The Circle's premises. We secured funding through the Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund to run this project. Over the course of 3 months we worked with our Academy candidates to plan, assemble and distribute 300 activity packs to 100 children and young people through Kirkton Community Larder, The Attic, St Luke's Café Church and St Mary's Community Larder.



credit: Kathryn Rattray Photography



credit: Kathryn Rattray Photography

**"We were lucky to be given some of The Circle Superstars packs, and each time the children loved them. The arts and crafts and stuff was amazing, and they loved creating the T-shirts in the last lot. Thank you to The Circle and Academy cohort for thinking of this and including us in the scheme. During Covid it has been easy to think kids have been ok when actually, we have asked them to stay in and not mix, almost imprisoning for a period during the scare, and yes whilst they have luxuries like consoles and such most just want to play with mates and be children, so these packs really helped mentally and socially. Thank you."**

Eddie Baines, Founder of Kirkton and St Mary's Community Larders



## PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

We partner with local organisations supporting ambitious and far-reaching community development ideas. We attract inward investment to deliver exciting projects with partners. We also share our experiences with other social enterprises to encourage best practice in the sector.



We worked with 4 expert speakers to deliver our free **Squaring The Circle** webinar series

We collaborated with candidates from cohort 2 of The Circle Academy to develop **The Circle Superstars** project. We also worked closely with local food projects to distribute the 300 activity packs for this project

Through our partnership with funding body, UnLtd, we delivered a **funding pitch event** for local social entrepreneurs in January 2020. Another pitch event will take place in December 2020

### Our partnership with UnLtd

In 2017 we developed a strategic partnership with national funding body. As part of this partnership we became an anchor organisation for their Resilient Communities programme.

As an anchor organisation The Circle has hosted a number of events and provided a venue for monthly peer-support meetings for Dundee-based recipients of UnLtd Do It Awards. The Resilient Communities programme aims to build more resilient and enterprising communities by supporting social entrepreneurs to have an impact and improve the lives of those in their area. These events included pitch events where local social entrepreneurs could make a proposal to potentially receive a Do It Award of up to £5,000 towards start up costs for their ventures. Through this partnership around £60,000 has been distributed to support people in Dundee who are starting up organisations to tackle social issues.



## ENVIRONMENT, WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY PRACTICES

We offer centralised facilities for sharing resources and can provide peer-to-peer mentoring and support.



### More about the 4-day week

In 2020 we introduced a 4-day working week for our full-time staff members. This has meant reducing our staff team's working hours to 32 hours over 4 days without reducing their pay. This gives our staff a 'rest day' every week which allows them to take more time for themselves and, importantly, help improve their wellbeing. The decision to implement this came following the period of 'full-scale lockdown' across the country. During this time we were more aware than ever of looking after staff wellbeing and this included being more flexible about their working hours. Despite the challenges we came up against during this time, our team were still able to achieve amazing things. This further proved to us that a traditional 9 to 5, Monday to Friday work schedule is not needed for our organisation to thrive. Following consultations with the staff we began trialling this in October and it has yielded terrific results for staff productivity and boosted the team's morale.

We offer our tenants recycling facilities for paper, cardboard, plastic, tin, confidential waste and batteries

We operate as a collection point for Gate Church, Dundee Bairns and the Crimson Project

We provide free sanitary products in our bathroom facilities through FareShare

We continued to offer support to our tenants throughout lockdown and beyond including sharing government guidelines and resources, support to access funding and continuing to offer monthly tenant meetings over video call

In 2020 we implemented a 4-day week for our full-time staff. This means they work less hours without a reduction in pay and gives them more rest time for their wellbeing

**"In just a short space of time this new initiative has made a big difference in the team. We have an extra day to focus on our wellbeing and we're achieving more because we're more motivated and energised."**

Jenny McCarthy,  
Associate Consultant



## FOSTERING TALENT

We provide opportunities and collaborations for local community workers, charities, SMEs, social enterprises, social entrepreneurs and members of the community to develop. Our key learning themes are digital skills, enterprise, well-being and community.

We have a staff team of 10 including 3 new staff members - Alvina, Alice and Elisa. Elisa's role has been funded through SCVO's Community Job Scotland scheme which works with voluntary sector employers to create job opportunities for unemployed people aged 16 to 29.

Alice's role has been funded through The Rank Foundation's Time2Shine Leadership Programme which was set up to improve the range of business capability skills and to address the wide-spread challenge of under-employment experienced by many people.

### More about Squaring The Circle

Over June and July 2020, we provided the free Squaring The Circle series of webinars. We decided to offer this because we wanted to use our knowledge and that of other local industry experts to ensure that the organisations that provide vital services to our communities would be better equipped to survive and thrive through the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.

We support 8 volunteers who cover our reception, maintain the facilities and carry out administrative tasks

We run 2 cohorts of The Circle Academy per year. So far 15 candidates have successfully completed the programme and a further 10 are taking part in the current cohort

Through our partnership with UnLtd 3 local social entrepreneurs were awarded funding for start-up costs

Through our Squaring The Circle webinar series we provided individuals with information on topics relevant to the sector with a particular focus on adapting to the pandemic

We encourage our staff to participate in courses for their continued professional development. This year 2 staff completed a Train the Trainer SVQ, our Digital Learning Producer takes part in Action Learning sessions through her Rank Foundation internship, our General Manager is taking part in UnLtd's Thrive Accelerator programme and our CEO has been accepted onto Oxford University's Impact Investment programme

#### The sessions we offered were:

- Squaring The Circle on Funding with Kirsty Thomson
- Squaring The Circle on Community Fundraising and Volunteer Management with Sarah Johnston
- Squaring The Circle on Marketing with Linda Isles
- Squaring The Circle on Event Management with Eleanor Whitby
- Squaring The Circle on Self-care and Wellbeing with Alvina Menzies
- Squaring The Circle on Trustees with Kirsty Thomson

57 individuals benefitted from joining these webinars including sole traders, prospective founders and organisation leaders and employees.



# WHAT OUR SOCIAL IMPACT MEANS TO OUR TENANTS AND CUSTOMERS

Our tenants, clients and by extension, their beneficiaries have experienced the impact on their organisations of accessing services from The Circle:

- New Board members
- More volunteers
- More clients
- New projects and collaborations with other tenants
- New funding opportunities as a result of having a registered office
- Better visibility in the community of their services
- Reduction in isolation experiences by small teams or teams of one
- One-to-one sessions with our consultancy team for guidance and support

## CASE STUDY

### LINDA STERRY

Linda Sterry is the Service Manager for local charity Funeral Link. Funeral Link was set up in 2018 to address funeral and provide those affected by it. They provide confidential support, help the bereaved save money on anything related to funerals and work to promote dialogue in preparation for funeral planning, death, dying and bereavement. Since setting up they have supported over 130 people and have helped save around £30,000 in total for their beneficiaries. Linda joined cohort 2 of The Circle Academy with the aim of updating the organisation's business plan and developing new potential income streams to become more financially sustainable.

During her time on the programme Linda identified new potential income sources for Funeral Link, developed a new business plan and identified new ways of promoting the organisations services.

Funeral Link has now joined our community as a tenant and is building new connections with other organisations who call The Circle home.



**"I gained so much from the speaker sessions, the experiences shared, and the connections made with my cohort group at the Circle Academy and the 1-1 support has been invaluable. These connections led to us moving our office base to The Circle in October, enabling us to get back into the office and helping us with space options to safely meet those who may need our support."**

Linda Sterry, Service Manager at Funeral Link

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our sponsors and funders as well as the tenants and local community.



# The Circle

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