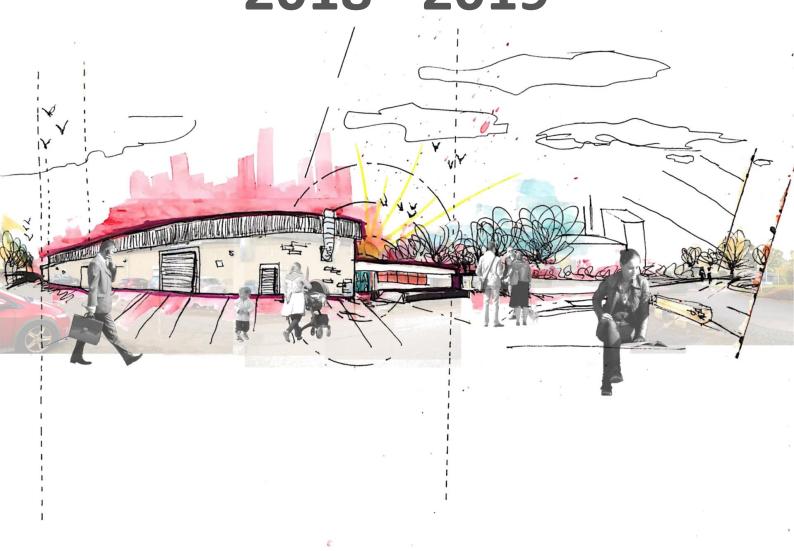


Social Impact Report 2018 - 2019





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Welcome

Chair

The Circle is increasingly being recognised as a keystone of the voluntary sector in Dundee. We do this firstly by offering a welcoming space where community organisations can thrive in a supportive environment of like-minded people, and secondly by helping them to develop the skills they need to grow and better support their own stakeholders. In 2019 Kirsty and her team have worked tirelessly to broaden our range of services and I hope you will enjoy reading about our progress, and the benefits we have brought to our community, in this year's report.

As well as Kirsty and the rest the team, I'm grateful to the funding bodies and local businesses who have supported The Circle, as well as my colleagues on the Board of The Circle who give freely of their time to provide wise counsel and support.

Donald McPherson



The Circle has now been operating for three years and this year we have merged with sister company ACK Third Sector Consultants CIC. This year has seen a tremendous growth in our services and team which has meant we are making an even bigger social impact.

We focus on a "More Than Profit" approach to our work which strives for financial sustainability alongside bringing people and organisations together, to promote collaboration and foster social innovation across Scotland.

Measuring social impact is an important way of making sure we are on track to deliver on our goals. This report is an opportunity to record, recognise and share the range of ways which we are making social impact.

Kirsty Thomson





Introduction

The Circle is a "More Than Profit" organisation focussed on working with social entrepreneurs, community activists, charity leaders, commercial business leaders, trustees and non-executive directors.

The Circle 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 spaces.

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 accessing funding, governance and strategic planning.

The Circle Academy is a 12-week programme focussed on developing skills and knowledge in the following key areas; mindset, business model, finance, legal, governance, people, social impact and sustainability through multiple income streams.

We run a 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 and environment
- Partnership working and social inclusion
- Environment, workplace and community practices
- Fostering talent

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



Summary



We record an average of over 700 sign ins to the building every week including staff and volunteers from tenant organisations



We've worked with over 60 businesses, charities and social enterprises including 43 speakers and facilitators for The Circle Academy



Over 30,000 people have visited The Circle in the past 12 months



The Circle is at full occupancy with 14 tenants in the facility, including 3 new tenants in 2019





11 of the organisations that are tenants of The Circle are charities or social enterprises



3 of our staff team have joined the Board of a charity or social enterprise this year



We have supported 8
students through work
placements and
participation in universitybased challenges



We have hosted 4
community health events
and stalls which were
accessed by staff, tenants,
volunteers and visitors to
The Circle



Timeline

January 2019

The Circle adds consultancy to its range of services

March 2019

The Circle is named one of the UK's top 100 social enterprises by Pioneers Post on the NatWest SE100

April 2019

The Circle hosts its first Open Day

May 2019

The Circle marks its accreditation as a Living Wage employer with a visit from Living Wage Scotland and Jamie Hepburn MSP

June 2019

Chris Law MP pays a visit to The Circle

July 2019

The Circle Café launches

August 2019

Aileen Campbell MSP visits The Circle

September 2019

Councillor Fraser MacPherson visits The Circle

September 2019

The Circle hosts social entrepreneurs from around the UK for a Learning Journey

September 2019

The Circle Academy launches, welcoming its first cohort of candidates

October 2019

Completion of ACK merger









The Circle Team Our staff, volunteers and Board



Kirsty ThomsonFounder and CEO



Paul HastieGeneral Manager



Jennifer Gall
Bookings and Training
Administrator



Christina Thomson Facilities Supervisor



Michael Ratcliffe Facilities Assistant



Jenny McCarthy
Trainee Associate
Consultant



Kara Swankie Academy Manager



Ruth FinnanFinancial Controller



Steve McLennan Café Manager



Tyler Chalmers Café Trainee



Case study - Jenny McCarthy

Jenny joined the staff team at The Circle in January 2019 following 4 years working with CEO, Kirsty, in our sister business, ACK Third Sector Consultants CIC (ACK). ACK began proceedings to merge with The Circle this year and so began offering consultancy services under the umbrella of The Circle. When The Circle launched, ACK moved its office into the new premises which meant that Jenny was part of the team involved in shaping the development of The Circle from the beginning through consultation and sharing her views.

In the time that Jenny worked for ACK she learned about the third sector and worked with several charities, social enterprises and community groups. She gained valuable knowledge and expertise related to the third sector, so it was a natural move for her to work in the new consultancy



services, where she has taken on her new role as Trainee Associate Consultant working with organisations across UK and Europe. She is an extremely valued team member and has developed her skills over the past 5 years bringing this knowledge to the rest of The Circle Team and our clients. She not only brings a wealth of experience to the consultancy but has led the digital development of The Circle in terms of our social media and website and has an adaptable approach to a wide variety of tasks.

"I left school at 16 and ACK was the first place I ever had a job. At this point I had no idea what I wanted to do for work and my confidence was pretty low having few qualifications from school and spending several months unable to secure employment. Over my time with ACK I grew massively in confidence and gained not only new knowledge and skills but a passion for something that I could see becoming a career path for me.

Having seen The Circle develop from the very beginning when it was a near-empty facility into the thriving hub it's become has been a privilege. In The Circle I've found a place that I enjoy coming to work at rather than just a job, and a team that are genuinely supportive and share my core values."



Volunteers

We have benefited from enthusiastic volunteers and placements. We are grateful to all that have spent time with us but recognise the value of the volunteers who assist us weekly.

- Alex Thomson
- Andrew Keddie
- Anne Lilburn
- Duncan Forbes
- Eddie Baines
- Hope Duguid
- Levi Dennis

- Margaret Grieve
- Michael Craig
- Pamela Langskill
- Phillipa Handling
- Robin Yau
- Rob King

Case Study - Christopher Hills

Chris joined the volunteer pool at The Circle in August 2017 while he was still studying for his degree in Human Resource Management at Robert Gordon University. Chris was one of the team of volunteers which covers our reception desk. In the period of more than two years that he spent volunteering with us Chris well and truly became part of the team. He saw the building and the team develop from just two members of staff and a few tenants to being fully occupied with a staff team of 10.

Chris came along to support our events and even joined us for team celebrations like our first Social Impact Report launch and Christmas celebrations. He developed and grew in his confidence, becoming a familiar face to tenants, volunteers and regular visitors.



"I arrived at an early stage of The Circle Dundee mainly just to fill time in between University semesters and grew quickly to embrace the various people and tenants within the building. My communication skills both verbally and face to face improved doing several roles and led to myself performing a thesis on employees within social enterprises for my degree and after two years I've now moved on to be a full-time civil servant.

The Circle has been a great influence for my personal development and is truly a place for good."



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 of Directors is currently:



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

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.

The board has approved a document setting out its own terms of reference, the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and other directors, and decisions delegated to the management team.



Attracting and retaining tenants

We have a diverse range of tenants all invested in supporting the local community, whether they be a charity, social enterprise or small business. The current tenants have filled the building to capacity. They all share our community focus.

















INFORMATIONALITIES











- Action on Hearing Loss
- Apex Scotland
- Barnardo's Works
- Bustard Productions
- Catesbi CIC
- Cornerstone
- Dundee Independent Advocacy Support

- Fields in Trust
- Informationalities
- Partners in Advocacy
- The Richmond Fellowship Scotland
- Slimming World
- Togs
- Uppertunity CIC

In the past 12 months we have welcomed three new tenants to The Circle – Bustard Productions, Catesbi CIC and The Richmond Fellowship Scotland.



Securing investment

We are a social enterprise that is currently generating 90% of its income from trading and have strategically secured investment and funding to start, grow and offer additional opportunities and services. We are grateful to the following organisations for their support during the year.

- Northwood Charitable Trust £20,000 for Financial Controller appointment
- Alliance Trust e-bike fund £2,500
- Resilient Scotland £19,865 for Academy Manager
- National Lottery Community Fund Young Start £49,330 for The Circle Café Manager and Supervisor roles
- Burgess of Dundee £495 for The Circle Café
- Dundee Partnership Community Regeneration Fund £1,984 for The Circle Cafe
- Brightsolid £4,000 for The Circle Academy
- Mathew Trust £4,000 for The Circle Academy
- Robertson Trust £6,000 for The Circle Café
- Scotmid Co-operative £200 for The Circle Café









JESSICA SCOTLAND TRUST











New services

In 2019 we launched 3 new services at The Circle: consultancy services, The Circle Café and The Circle Academy.

Consultancy services

In January 2019 we welcomed Jenny McCarthy to the team as a Trainee Associate Consultant, Jenny had previously worked at ACK which merged with The Circle this year. Kirsty and Jenny now work together to provide advice, support and training through our consultancy services. The Circle works with charities, social enterprises, community groups and individuals interested in implementing a More Than Profit approach to their venture. We can provide support in a number of areas including governance, strategic planning and funding.

Case Study – Caledonia Learning Academy

We were approached by Caledonia Housing Association to deliver a development programme to help inspire and motivate their Home Help staff to become more enterprising and autonomous within their roles. Caledonia were looking at changing the way they ran the Home Help Service to improve it for the benefit of their clients, staff and the organisation as a whole.



The Circle ran several half-day training sessions which covered a range of topics including Growth Mindset, Finance and Sales & Selling. We also supported the Home Help team to create a pitch on the changes they wanted to see be made to their current service. This pitch was then delivered by the Home Help team to a number of senior management staff at Caledonia Housing Association. The pitch led to a very fruitful discussion and the senior management staff are planning to take forward a number of the changes suggested by the Home Help team.

"We'd had consultants in reviewing how it operated which spurred us to consider that we couldn't make a service 'profitable' if we'd only ever modelled it to break even. Being aware of Kirsty's entrepreneurial approach to social enterprise felt like a good fit, and after a few conversations we established that as the staff team were best placed to design and co-produce a new service model, that investing in developing them and giving them skills and tools to help would benefit everyone.

Finding an organisation that had the ability to support and develop our services, and, in doing so support and develop its staff (and can source the right people to deliver this) is probably quite unique – the learning academy wasn't just about a learning and development programme for staff, nor was it about conducting an organisational or service review; it managed to combine both! The feedback from senior colleagues, some new to the organisation, was brilliant, and has given that group of staff, and the service they provide a new focus and a spotlight within the organisation." – Gill Donoghue, Caledonia Housing Association



The Circle Café

The Circle Café project is a training and employability programme for looked after young people and care leavers. The Café provides a range of hot and cold meals and drinks within its facility as well as catering to internal bookings and external organisations.

The Circle Café is run as a partnership between The Circle, Dundee City Council, Leisure & Culture Dundee and Barnardo's Works. We received funding from The National Lottery Community Fund Young Start to support the development of the Café.

Over the course of 12 months the young people on the programme receive support and training in a hospitality environment while being paid the Living Wage. They will also be given formal qualifications as part of their training which will be transferrable into jobs in the future.

Our vision is to enhance the capabilities of young people by developing their skills in an inclusive and supportive environment which will help provide them with the tools they need to move into long-term employment.

Case study – Tyler Chalmers

Tyler is the first Trainee on The Circle Café's employability and training programme. He began his role in The Circle Café in September 2019. Tyler was introduced to The Circle at a dropin session for care experienced young people with Dundee City Council's Throughcare and Aftercare service. The Café Manager and Supervisor attended this session to raise awareness of The Circle Café and talk about plans for the project. Having studied catering at college, Tyler took an interest in the project and, after speaking extensively with The Café Manager he interviewed for the Trainee position and was successful.

In just a matter of months Tyler has developed not only his knowledge of the café environment, he has grown in confidence. Tyler is now able to take on more responsibility in the café and has even been passing on the knowledge he has gained to the volunteers who he works with in the Café.



The Circle Academy

The Circle Academy launched in September 2019 after almost 2 years of development and planning. The Academy provides a much-needed service for leaders of More Than Profit organisations, who need to become more business orientated whilst still creating a huge impact on society. Grant funding is becoming harder to get and ultimately, grant dependent organisations will suffer if they do not become financially sustainable. Through sessions with expert speakers, the Academy discusses the reality of leading these types of organisations and offers support with huge challenges including diversity of income, legal structures, financial growth, staff development and burnout.

The pilot cohort included candidates from across Scotland at various stages in business. The candidates have many struggles in common, including documenting and demonstrating their social



impact, accessing investment and growth funding, understanding which legal structure is right for their organisation, and recruiting the right team.

The Academy is working with a range of speakers from both the 3rd Sector and Commercial business. This blend of experience and knowledge base is ensuring that the candidates fully understand the bigger picture, with the aim of beginning to bridge the gap between all sectors.



Case Study - John Alexander of Alexander Decorators

John has over 20 years' experience in commercial business and throughout his time as Managing Director has supported over 100 young people through work placements and apprenticeships. John is now looking to open a training academy to support young people who are disengaged in education by training and upskilling them with the support of retired trades people and established training providers. By coming through the Academy, John is gaining essential learning around the appropriate legal structure, how to build partnerships with other organisations, how to build an effective and transparent board and most importantly, how to demonstrate the huge social impact he will be making.

"I've found the new information that I've learned on The Circle Academy to be absolutely invaluable. I'm in the midst of setting up a new More than Profit business which the knowledge I have from my years in the commercial world has been able to inform partly. What I was in need of was a better grasp of the third sector aspects such as the legal structure, governance and showing social impact. The speaker sessions have been very informative and having the support from Kara and the other Circle staff has been incredibly helpful. The knowledge I've gained in my time on the Academy is something I'll carry forward as I move onto the next steps of setting up my new venture."



Our social impact

Contribution to the community and environment

We have created an inclusive, creative, social and enterprising learning hub for the whole community.

- Over 700 recorded building sign ins to the building every week
- Over 30,000 people have visited The Circle
- We have 14 tenant organisations in our facility
- We now have 10 members of staff
- We have launched 3 new services: consultancy services, The Circle Café and The Circle Academy
- Our tenants collaborate on projects together Ian Bustard from Bustard Productions works with Uppertunity to run a weekly drama group for their members
- We hold monthly peer-support and learning meetings for UnLtd Award Winners as an anchor organisation for the Resilient Communities programme
- We have held 28 events, many at low or no cost to participants, on a range of topics such as mental health, governance and design thinking
- Our training rooms have had over 1000 bookings in the last twelve months
- We hosted a mini Big Lunch for the Big Lunch Community Walk group in Dundee
- 59 articles have been published in the local and national press about our news and events
- In September 2019 we ran a second Open Day where we invited tenants, local businesses and members of the community to share their input to help us form our new strategy









Living Wage accreditation

The Circle is based in Scotland, a region where nearly a fifth of all jobs (18%) pay less than the real Living Wage - around 404,000 jobs. The real Living Wage is the only rate calculated according to the costs of living. It provides a voluntary benchmark for employers that wish to ensure their staff earn a wage they can live on, not just the government minimum. Since 2011 the Living Wage movement has delivered a pay rise to over 160,000 people and put over £800m extra into the pockets of low paid workers.

In April 2019 The Circle became an accredited Living Wage employer, committing to pay all of our employees a minimum of £9 per hour. To celebrate this, we hosted a visit from Jamie Hepburn, the Scottish Government Minister for Business, Fair Work & Skills as well as a number of other local businesses who had recently become accredited.

The Circle Manager, Paul Hastie said, "It has always been part of The Circle's ethos to pay our employees fairly and we are proud to say that we have now been officially accredited by The Living Wage Foundation for this effort. This is especially important after the recent announcement that Dundee will become the UK's first Living Wage city"





Partnership working and social inclusion

We partner with local organisations supporting ambitious and far-reaching community development ideas. As a project base, 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 hosted a number of events for Mental Health Awareness Week 2019 with speakers from the Stroke Association and Think It Change It – these events were funded by sponsorship of £700 from Robertson Construction
- Our tenant, Action on Hearing Loss, held an information stall in our reception area for Tinnitus Awareness Week
- We hosted the second Resilient Communities Dundee Learning Journey at The Circle which was organised in partnership with UnLtd
- We collaborated with Creative Dundee on 3 Dundee Soup events in 2019 which so far has
 distributed over £500 in small grants to community groups. Our hosts this year were the
 V&A Museum and DJCAD
- The Circle took part in University of Dundee's Global Health Challenge
- Epilepsy Scotland used our reception area for an epilepsy information stall
- We collaborated with Epilepsy Scotland and our tenants, Togs, Uppertunity and DIAS to organise our second Yuletide Fair





More about Dundee Soup

Dundee Soup is a quarterly event produced in partnership by The Circle and Creative Dundee. For a suggested donation of £5, attendees receive a simple soup supper and hear pitches from local people with ideas to benefit their community. Anyone who has an idea to benefit Dundee's communities can pitch – whether they are an individual, small team or community group. At the end of the night, attendees can choose which project their donation goes to, and all the pitchers walk away with some money.

Projects that have been funded by Soup in 2019 include:

• **Dundee Culture** – a digital platform showcasing Dundee to the world and a hub to all things cultural in Dundee



- A Shared City a project using the arts to bring women from different cultural backgrounds living in Dundee together, and exploring what does it mean to make A place Home as a community of multicultural women
- Turn up the heat a project run by Feeling Strong that gives young people with mental health and wellbeing challenges the opportunity to learn a valuable life skill and self-care tool, cooking



Environment, workplace and community practices

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

- We have provided favourable terms to those facilitating community classes such as yoga,
 Makaton, photography and crafts.
- We disrupt the views that charities and social enterprises should be grant-dependent and we want to encourage enterprising ideas and multiple incomes and fundraising streams to these organisations.
- We are a collection point for Gate Church, Dundee Bairns and the Crimson Project
- We have free sanitary products in our bathrooms which are provided by Fare Share
- We encourage donations from local businesses when they are clearing resources. We have received a full stainless-steel kitchen, office furniture and goods to redistribute to charities



Our partnership with UnLtd

UnLtd (*) Scotland

In 2017 our Founder and CEO, Kirsty, received a Grow It Award from funding body, UnLtd, to go towards her salary during the development of the Circle. Following this, we developed a strategic partnership with UnLtd over the subsequent 3 years, becoming 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. As of now Dundee is 1 of the 11 UK areas where UnLtd is supporting social entrepreneurs through this placebased programme.

Since 2017, £60,000 has been committed – £20,000 each year – to support people in Dundee who are starting up organisations to tackle social issues. Another aspect of being an anchor organisation includes The Circle hosting an annual pitching panel where local social entrepreneurs pitch for a Do It Award of up to £5000 to test their venture.







Since working with UnLtd on the Resilient Communities programme we have supported social enterprises addressing issues like:

- clothing for elderly people with a low income
- funeral poverty
- support for people living in social housing
- social isolation
- cancer patient support
- fuel poverty
- parenting support

- health and wellbeing inclusion opportunities
- foot health
- behavioural issues in children with autism
- o outdoor play for children
- therapy ponies
- veteran support
- children living in poverty



Through our partnership with UnLtd in 2019 we hosted monthly peer-mentoring sessions for Dundee recipients of the Do It Award. This year we included learning sessions during these meetings, covering topics that the group wanted to gain more knowledge on such as governance and cashflow.

We also hosted a Learning Journey where social entrepreneurs from across the UK's 10 other Resilient Communities areas were invited to Dundee to learn about social enterprise in the city. During their trip to Dundee the social entrepreneurs visited The Circle, enjoying a tour of the facilities and heard from our CEO, Kirsty, and other Dundee recipients of the Do It Award. We also tied in this visit with the year's pitching panel for the next round of Do It Award grants.

Fostering talent

We provide a space for 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 worked with the Scottish Government on the Firestarter Festival and are collaborating again in 2020
- We support 13 volunteers and placements who cover reception, maintain the facilities and support The Circle Café
- We launched The Circle Academy training programme which is providing training and support to people interested in a More Than Profit approach
- We also launched The Circle Café, a training and employability programme for looked after young people and care leavers which will support and upskill a group which often faces barriers to employment





Awards and recognition

Our successes have been recognised both locally and nationally.

We were named on the **NatWest SE100 Index** in 2019 – this is created by Pioneers Post in partnership with NatWest to recognise the 'top 100' social enterprises operating in the UK.

Kirsty was named a fellow of the **Royal Society of Arts**. The FRSA is an award granted to people who are seen to have made outstanding achievements to social progress and development, this includes people such as Stephen Hawking, Marie Curie and Dame Judi Dench.

Kirsty was a finalist for **Director of the Year** in Tayside for the **Institute of Directors' Director of The Year Awards**. The Regional Director of The Year Award recognises directors from diverse businesses across 8 regions of Scotland.

Kirsty was accepted onto the **Scale-Up Scotland** programme, a leadership programme that is delivered through an 18-month cohort-based programme. This is aimed at ambitious entrepreneurs and businesses with the potential and desire to substantially grow their businesses.

The Circle was one of five organisations shortlisted for Dundee and Angus Chamber of Commerce's inaugural **Chamber Business Champion Awards**. The award was for Chamber members who demonstrated that they are champions of Dundee and Angus.











What our social impact means to our tenants and customers

Tenants (and by extension, their beneficiaries) have experienced the impact on their organisations of being based at 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 Kirsty and Jenny for third sector advice and guidance











Case study - Catesbi CIC

Catesbi CIC is a social enterprise which delivers Early Behaviour Intervention to children age 2 - 10 years old with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour due to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), diagnoses and/or poverty.



Catesbi CIC offers:

- Individualised Early Behaviour Intervention, Assessment and Guidance
- Training in Early Positive Behaviour Supports to nurseries and primary schools

Catesbi CIC is run by behavioural therapist, Suzie Repova MSEd.

Catesbi became a tenant of The Circle in March of 2019. Suzie had been accessing our consultancy services and was looking for a space where she could provide support services to the families and carry out the administrative tasks involved in running Catesbi. Since becoming a tenant at The Circle, Suzie has benefited from our various services, booking our meeting spaces at a reduced rate, continuing to access our consultancy services and even joining the first cohort of The Circle Academy.



"The Circle is a wonderful place to be in terms of offered services including individual consultancy and meeting spaces as well as in terms of the lovely people and atmosphere. Everyone is kind, professional with focussed on support and growth.

Being a tenant at The Circle has allowed me to access further support for Catesbi – as a tenant I can book rooms at a discounted rate and access an allocation of one-to-one consultancy for free. I've also joined The Circle Academy which has allowed me to look at how to improve the running of Catesbi in a new way."



Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors of The Circle would like to thank former Directors, Alasdair McGill and Louise Valentine for their contribution to the steering of the organisation. Their expertise and support have been valuable to the rest of the Board and to Kirsty as CEO.

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



www.thecircledundee.org.uk



@thecircledundee