

Your guide to our support



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Who are Firstport?

We are Scotland's agency for start-up social entrepreneurs and social enterprise. We support individuals across Scotland to start, develop and grow their ideas into businesses with social impact at their core.

Since 2007 we have supported thousands of individuals and distributed millions of pounds of start-up funding, all with the aim to achieve our vision:

Social entrepreneurs play a key role in society, transforming lives, communities, and the economy.



Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed with support organisations, networks, and intermediaries in mind. If you engage with people interested in starting or growing a social enterprise, this document will help you to support your clients.

We have included an overview of the services and programmes we offer, as well as the key criteria for our funds and helpful hints and tips for those interested in applying for one of our awards.

More than a funder

We've supported social entrepreneurs and their ideas since 2007, and we know that getting a social enterprise off the ground and making it a success requires more than just funding.

Sound, tailored business support and accessing the right connections are just as important. We have a team of expert business advisors who help individuals with the ins and outs of setting up a social enterprise. They also act as critical friends and connectors, adapting to the needs of the clients.

Most of the time, the entrepreneurs we support access both business support and funding, whatever their stage. In fact, those who access support are more likely to submit successful funding applications.

We deliver this free, impartial support, as well as group training, as part of the Just Enterprise programme.

What is the Just Enterprise Programme?

Delivered by a partnership of third sector organisations, Just Enterprise provides fully-funded support to social enterprises and enterprising charities in Scotland. Firstport delivers the Start-Up support, nurturing early-stage enterprises through the first steps of starting up.

Who can access Just Enterprise Start-Up support?

Individuals in Scotland with an interest or desire in starting a social enterprise – an idea, a social issue, and an enterprising solution.

What support is available?

- Business advice on a one-to-one or group basis.
- Workshops covering all the core areas of business start-up: legal structures, business planning, cash flow, and more.
- Webinars on useful topics including social media foundations, governance, and digital ways of working.
- Guidance and referrals to other valuable support.

How to access Just Enterprise Start-Up support

Getting support is easy.

Anyone interested can visit the Just Enterprise website or call 0300 302 3333 to access the registration process.

When an application for support is received, it is assessed and allocated to the appropriate agency best placed to help – a start-up enquiry would be referred to Firstport.

A member of the Firstport team then gets in touch to determine what type of support is most suitable: a phone call, a meeting, or a referral to our workshop/webinar programme.

CASE STUDY

Andrew McGlone: Colour Ways



Inspired by a love of street art and graffiti, Colour Ways Glasgow was founded by Andrew 'Panda' McGlone in May 2020. The social enterprise aims to support and promote graffiti and street art, and to create spaces and opportunities for practitioners to thrive within the Glasgow area. Colour Ways curates murals, hosts walking tours, hosts street art and graffiti workshops with young people, and has an online shop for selling artwork.

Panda registered online for one-to-one support from a start-up specialist, via the Just Enterprise website. He was then called by a member of the enquiries team to have a chat about his idea, assess his support needs, signpost to workshops and relevant resources, and organise an initial meeting with a Just Enterprise business advisor. Over the course of a year, Panda received support from his advisor via email discussion and more comprehensive Zoom calls.

When Panda reached out to Just Enterprise, he had heard of social enterprise but did not know much about this type of business, or how he could make the idea in his mind a reality.

He had no frame of reference for how to get started, how to write a business plan, or which legal structure to choose. The business advisor was able to answer Panda's questions and explain new ideas and concepts in ways he understood.

I used to feel like I had to know everything but having a business advisor, who I can ask any questions I have, is really liberating. Sometimes I would think a problem was really complicated, but then my advisor would explain it to me in a very simple way and it would make me feel so much better. I think this was the thing I appreciated the most.

As well as providing practical advice, Panda's business advisor helped him build his confidence and reassure him throughout the process.

Since receiving support from Just Enterprise, Panda has received funding to develop Colour Ways. He intends to keep working to get Colour Ways to a position where it is sustainable and can support exciting projects and nurture creative talent for years to come.

Find Colour Ways on Instagram @colourwaysglasgow.



Our programmes



The Firstport journey



Eligibility for all Firstport's funding programmes:

- Applicant is 16 or over.
- Applicant is a permanent resident of Scotland.
- The idea is operating primarily for the benefit of people or communities within Scotland.
- The activities of the idea do not involve political campaigning or the advancement of religion.
- The enterprise is an independent organisation and not the project or subsidiary of an existing body.*



Our approach to accessibility

At Firstport we aim to be as accessible as possible for individuals seeking our support and funding. If our online application forms are inaccessible for an applicant, please contact us and we will look to find an alternative way of collecting the necessary information.

We have word documents available to download to help applicants draft their answers before submitting their application online. A document for each award programme can be found in our Downloads section.



Feedback

We will always provide applicants with feedback. If we feel that an idea has potential, we will encourage the applicant to work with our business support team (Just Enterprise) to address the feedback, with a view to submitting a further application.

^{*}LaunchMe may support trading subsidiaries.



A programme for individuals aged 16–26 looking to make a positive change in the issues that matter to them. Ideas that may evolve into social enterprises and with the potential to generate some income are particularly encouraged.

It offers awards of £500.

Pounds for Purpose funds:

- applicants aged 16–26
- projects that are not already up and running
- applicants working on a project independently or as part of a small team (this cannot be a pre-existing, established organisation)
- projects ready to start, able to spend funds and report back within 6 months.





What funding can be spent on:

any cost associated with delivering an idea. For example, hiring a venue to run an event, printing materials, etc.

What funding cannot be spent on:

× wages or consultancy fees.

If there are other ineligible costs, this will be covered during the assessment process and applicants will have an opportunity to submit a revised budget.



When to apply?

Pounds for Purpose is an open programme, so applicants can apply at any time.



How to apply?

Applicants must complete a short Pounds for Purpose application form. Guidance is available on our website to help applicants with the application process: Pounds for Purpose Guidance for Applicants.



What happens next?

- Applicants will have a phone or zoom assessment with a member of our Awards and Business Support team. This takes no longer than an hour and is an opportunity to discuss the applicant's idea.
- Applicants will receive feedback and the outcome of their application within eight weeks of applying.



If successful:

We ask awardees to sign a contract agreeing to the terms and conditions of the award. We also contact their referees and undertake ID checks.

We send awardees useful documents that will guide them through the award process. The awardee is allocated a Relationship Manager, who will organise a meeting to run through the documents and award.

What makes a successful application - 3 top tips:





Applicant has some experience and ability to address the social issue.

2

The idea has some potential for income generation and financial sustainability.

3

The idea has a defined beneficiary group and measurable social impact.

CASE STUDY

Fergal Mackie: Metacarpal





Metacarpal was founded by two university students, Fergal Mackie and James Swinburne. As product designers, they were inspired when they came across a major problem: huge rates of dissatisfaction with upper-limb prosthetics. This kick started a journey to create a new and innovative design that improves the lives of those with upper limb differences.

When Fergal and James applied for the Pounds for Purpose award, they had just completed their first product test session. They had been prototyping all summer, with mixed success, to develop their design. They were awarded £500 from Firstport, which they paired with a Scottish Enterprise grant, allowing them to cover the cost of an Intellectual Property Audit.

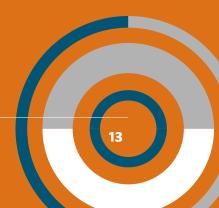
This step was essential in their social enterprise journey, as it boosted Metacarpal's credibility as an innovative design company. It gave them the go ahead to continue developing with the assurance that they were not infringing on other designs.

When asked about his experience engaging with Firstport, Fergal said:

I had some great conversations with the Firstport staff, who really helped to explain many aspects of social enterprise and gave me some fantastic contacts.

Fergal and James have big aspirations for their social enterprise. In the short term they will continue to develop their products with the help of clinical feedback. They aim to grow their team and gain more expertise so that they can achieve their long-term ambition of releasing their product into the world and helping amputees.

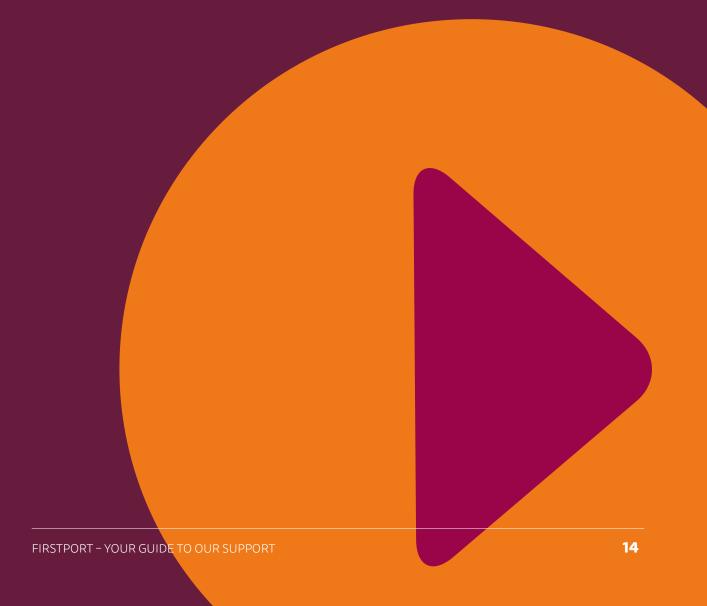
Keep up to date with the design process on the Metacarpal website.



Start It

A funding and support programme for individuals with a business idea that addresses a social, environmental, and/or community issue.

It offers grants of up to £5000 to get an idea off the ground.



Start It funds ideas that:

 are in the early stages of development and have not started trading on a regular basis yet



- aim to provide direct social benefit to individuals, communities and/or the environment
- do not form part of the applicant's current employment
- applicants have identified a property and can confirm an agreement in principle for, if premises is required to start trading.

Start It does not fund ideas:

- x that are established trading businesses, and therefore not a start-up
- * that provide indirect social impact (i.e., to other organisations)
- × that will be reliant on donations, fundraising and grants for income.



What funding can be spent on:

- ✓ legal fees, rent for premises or office space, venue hire, utilities (including phones)
- website costs, including domain registration and website design. Branding, logo design, marketing materials and stationery
- ✓ insurance and accountancy fees
- ✓ equipment (but this should not be the sole funding requirement), laptops (up to £600), software
- ✓ top-up training/accreditation e.g. food hygiene.



What funding cannot be spent on:

- wages, training/qualifications to deliver core services, business consultants/coaching, meeting/subsistence costs
- × permanent redevelopment of property, livestock
- × retrospective costs anything spent ahead of the award date.



When to apply?

Start It is an open programme, so applicants can apply at any time.



How to apply?

Applicants must complete a short Start It application form. Guidance is available on our website to help applicants with the application process: Start It Guidance for Applicants.



What happens next?

- Applicants will have a phone or zoom assessment with a member of our Awards and Business Support team. This takes no longer than an hour and is an opportunity to discuss the applicant's idea.
- Applicants will receive feedback and the outcome of their application within 12–14 weeks of applying.



If successful:

- We ask awardees to sign a contract agreeing to the terms and conditions of the award. We also contact their referees and undertake ID checks.
- We send awardees useful documents that will guide them through the award process.
- The awardee is allocated a Relationship Manager, who
 will invite them to attend a Start It session alongside
 other successful awardees. The session runs through
 the documents and award process and acts as an
 opportunity for awardees to connect with each other.
 If an awardee cannot make the session, an alternative
 one-to-one session may be arranged.



What makes a successful application - 3 top tips:



Applicant can demonstrate clear experience, drive and qualifications.

2

The idea has some potential for income generation and financial sustainability, with a clearly defined market.

3

The idea has a defined beneficiary group and measurable social impact.

CASE STUDY

Kasia Wypiorczyk: Axé Boom Boom



Inspired by over 15 years of training Capoeira and playing Djembe drums, Kasia and Grzés founded their social enterprise Axé Boom Boom to use their hobbies as forces for good. Axé Boom Boom aims to tackle childhood inactivity by running Capoeira and Djembe drumming programmes in schools and the local community.

Kasia and Grzés hope to inspire and empower children to be more active by exploring their body awareness, creativity and the energy within them. They believe that the best way to promote a healthy lifestyle is by encouraging children to engage with activity in a fun and interactive way. Their holistic approach teaches the connectedness of mind, body and spirit.

With previous experience as a sole trader, Kasia was determined to start her social enterprise on her own and found it difficult to ask for help. However, receiving support from a Just Enterprise business advisor led her to apply for Start It funding. Kasia was awarded £5000 of grant funding to make her idea a reality. This covered the start-up costs including buying sports equipment, instruments, insurance, legal fees, marketing and venue hire.

Kasia has big plans for the future of Axé Boom Boom that will enable the social enterprise to grow, including delivering new services to help families and children tackle inactivity, and develop merchandise to generate more profit.

We asked Kasia what her tip for other social entrepreneurs is:

Ask for help!
It is available and
can really support your work.
People want to support
good causes.

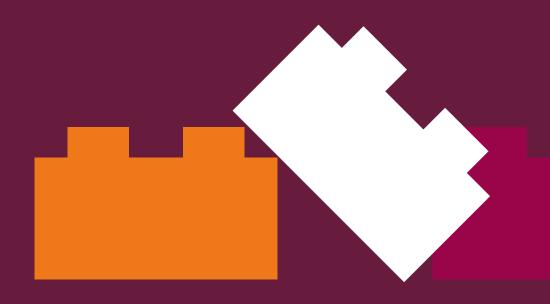
Follow the journey on the Axé Boom Boom website and Facebook.



Build It

A funding and support programme for individuals who have tried and tested an idea and want to turn it into their full-time job, or who need wage funding for additional permanent roles.

It offers grants of up to £25,000.



Build It funds enterprises that:

 aim to provide direct social benefit to individuals, communities, and/or the environment



- are up and running, and where the applicant can provide evidence of income generation and social impact to date
- are set up with an asset-locked legal structure.

Build It does not fund enterprises that:

- × have been trading for longer than approx 2 years
- × cannot provide evidence of their income generation and social impact track record
- × provide indirect social impact (i.e., to other organisations)
- × have been incorporated as a private limited company by shares or as a sole trader
- apply using documents that are not in the correct format or do not use the templates provided.



What funding can be spent on:

- ✓ wages up to £20k for one permanent wage or up to £25k split between two or more
- ✓ additional essential costs if applying for one £20k wage, there is a further £5k available and awarded on a discretionary basis.

What funding cannot be spent on:

- × capital costs of over £5k
- × sessional staff



When to apply?

• Build It has four quarterly deadlines. The next deadline can be found on the Build It funding page.



How to apply?

Applicants must complete a short <u>Built It application</u> <u>form</u>. Applicants must also submit the following support documents:

- Pitch Document (2 pages)
- Business Plan (12 pages max.)
- two-year cashflow projection. Applicants must use the template provided in the Downloads section at the bottom of the Build It funding page.

Guidance is available on our website to help applicants with each section of the application process: Build It Guidance for Applicants.



What happens next?

- Applications are assessed and shortlisted by members of the Awards and Business Support team.
- Unsuccessful applicants are notified 3-5 weeks after application deadline.
- Shortlisted applicants are invited to two preparatory sessions: Practise Your Pitch and Cashflow Challenge.
- Shortlisted applicants may then resubmit an amended cashflow.
- Shortlisted applicants are invited to pitch on a designated date. This will take no longer than 30 minutes in total: 10-minute pitch, 20-minute Q&A.
- After the pitch, all shortlisted applicants are notified within 2-3 days.



If successful:

- We ask awardees to sign a contract agreeing to the terms and conditions of the award. We also contact their referees and undertake ID checks.
- We send awardees useful documents that will guide them through the award process.
- The awardee is allocated a Relationship Manager, who
 will invite them to attend a Build It session alongside
 other successful awardees. The session runs through
 the documents and award process and acts as an
 opportunity for awardees to connect with each other.
 If an awardee cannot make the session, an alternative
 one-to-one session may be arranged.

What makes a successful application - 3 top tips:





The enterprise can demonstrate a strong track record of income generation and social impact.



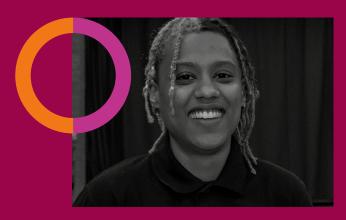
There is strong potential for future financial sustainability.



The applicant has followed all available guidance.

CASE STUDY

Yohana Jones: Jones & Us



Founder, Yohana 'Yoko' Jones' inspiration for Jones & Us was born out her experience with education and sport. Yoko started her social enterprise to provide a more accessible path for individuals to explore physical activity. Jones & Us helps people develop new skills, improves their physical and mental health, and reduces feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Working with community organisations, schools and groups across Renfrewshire and Central Scotland, Jones & Us makes sporting activities like handball, football, and fitness circuits fun for all ages and abilities. Yoko uses a mobile sports model to deliver her service wherever it is required at an affordable cost.

When Yoko decided to start a social enterprise, a friend encouraged her to contact Firstport, who provided motivation and encouragement.

She was referred to Just Enterprise and received support, particularly with the written and organisational side of starting a business, which Yoko found to be the greatest challenge. She was awarded with Start It funding which covered start up costs, including sports equipment and storage, insurance, website and branding, training and uniform.

Three years after applying for Start It, with a year and a half of trading experience, Yoko was awarded Build It. She received £20,000 of funding which allowed her to leave her job and apply herself to Jones & Us full-time as the head coach, whilst paying herself a salary. This step forward generated an increase in clients, allowing Jones & Us to grow as a business and create a greater social impact in the community.

Yoko has big ambitions for Jones & Us:

I'm looking to have my own little spot, looking to have more coaches coming – looking to get more volunteers, more equipment and we're looking to get a small van to get our equipment back and forth. The journey is going!

Check out the Jones & Us website and follow on Instagram @jonesandus.



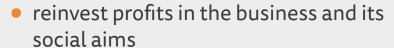
Boost It

A fund for social enterprises that require a higher injection of capital to get the business off the ground, or further financial support to strengthen and sustain trading.

It offers repayable grants between £30K-50K.



Boost It funds enterprises that:





- are incorporated independent organisations, with an asset-locked legal structure
- have been trading for three years or less
- can demonstrate a track record of, or potential for, income generation and social impact.

Boost It does not fund enterprises that:

- × are unincorporated start-ups, because the repayable grant is made to the business, not the individual
- × provide indirect social impact (i.e., to other organisations)
- * have incorporated as a private limited company by shares or operate as a sole trader
- * apply using documents that are not in the correct format or do not use the templates provided.



When to apply?

Boost It is a rolling open programme.



How to apply?

Applicants must complete a short Expression of Interest. If suitable, they will be invited to a meeting with a member of the Awards team to discuss the proposal. The applicant will then submit a formal application with the following support documents using templates provided on our website:

- three-year cashflow projection
- if trading; audited accounts for the previous year and management accounts for the period between last audited accounts and present.



What happens next?

- The application will be received by the Awards team and decision reached within 10 working days.
- If unsuccessful, we notify applicants with feedback and advice on resubmission if applicable.
- If successful, we invite applicants to a Prepare Your Pitch session, before pitching to our Boost It panel.
 This takes around 30 minutes in total: 10-minute pitch, 20-minute Q&A.



If successful:

- We ask awardees to sign a contract agreeing to the terms and conditions of the award. We also contact their referees and undertake ID checks.
- The awardee is allocated a Relationship Manager, who will invite them to a one-to-one meeting to go through the details of the repayable grant, and any further support that may be required.



What makes a successful application - 3 top tips:



The enterprise can demonstrate a strong track record or the potential to generate income and social impact.

2

The enterprise can provide evidence that they will be able to repay the grant within 2–5 years.

3

The applicant has followed all available guidance and used the right templates.

CASE STUDY

Trudi Donahue Wild & Kind



Founder of Wild & Kind, Trudi Donahue's social enterprise journey began when she started running free craft workshops to have casual, fun, social interactions with other women, to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. These workshops gained popularity, highlighting the huge need for safe social spaces for people with marginalised gender identities in Glasgow. Inspired to start Wild & Kind, Trudi used her knowledge of the merchandise industry to start ethical garment printing, generating profits to fund workshops, meet-ups and community events.

Trudi began with Start It, which made generating income revenue a reality for Wild & Kind. A year later Trudi was awarded Build It, which allowed her to employ a full-time staff member. In Wild & Kind's third year of trading, Trudi was planning to take on a bigger space and was looking for money to grow the enterprise.

She applied for Boost It to invest in equipment to improve printing processes, to hire a digital marketing lead and update their website to extend their services.

Wild & Kind was awarded £20,000 of Boost It funding as a repayable grant. This means that after a year of receiving the funding, if Wild & Kind is making a surplus, they will begin to repay a small proportion of their profits over the following three years.

We asked Trudi how she felt about applying for a repayable grant:

It wasn't a barrier, it wasn't a concern of mine at all. Especially because of the way it's set up. You get a year, and then our repayments will be based on our quarterly profits rather than our turnover, until we get to the point where things are a little bit more stable. There's just been so much flexibility there that has made it so much easier.

Wild & Kind is an ambitious social enterprise that hopes to be one of the UK's best known ethical and environmentally friendly printers.

Find Wild & Kind on Instagram @we.are.wildandkind or check out their website.





An accelerator programme for ambitious, social and community enterprises seeking to scale up their commercial and social impact. It offers intensive business and investment readiness support, as well as seed funding.

LaunchMe supports a cohort of up to eight social enterprises each year.

How does the programme work?









FindMe The application phase

ChooseMe
The selection
phase

ConnectMe

Intensive business support and investment phase

LaunchMe

Growth phase for one year following investment.

OCTOBER-JANUARY

JANUARY-MARCH

APRIL-NOVEMBER



Business support

An essential part of the programme is the intensive support. We help the cohort to strengthen key areas of their social enterprises, improving documentation, processes and procedures expected by investors, and prepare them to take on social investment to scale-up.



Funding:

- ✓ £10,000 seed funding as a repayable grant. This can be spent on employing more staff, finding new premises, purchasing more equipment, legal advice, marketing, sales and more.
- ✓ Spend needs to take place during the ConnectMe phase. We support participants to develop a detailed plan and budget for using the seed funding. We expect the spend to relate directly to the preparation for scaling up.



What funding cannot be spent on:

× paying off debt.



LaunchMe is for:

- early stage or established social enterprises with ambitions to grow – they want to expand services, reach new markets, and generate more social impact in the next 9–12 months
- community organisations developing an asset or a product with the potential to generate significant income and social impact in the local area
- those in need of investment and support to reach the ambitions of the enterprise
- social enterprises or community organisations that are new to social investment
- social enterprises able to demonstrate evidence of sales and social impact by the time the cohort is selected.



When to apply?

LaunchMe has one deadline per year. Dates can be found on the LaunchMe page.



How to apply?

Applicants must complete a short <u>LaunchMe application</u> form.

Guidance is available on our website to help applicants with the application process: LaunchMe Guidance for Applicants.



What happens next?

- We assess all applications and longlist the most suitable applicants.
- Longlisted applicants are invited to attend a LaunchPad event, providing valuable details on what is expected for the next stage of the application process.
- We support applicants to prepare a business plan and 3-year financial forecast, which is submitted in mid-February.
- After submission of the business plans and financial forecasts, a shortlisting panel convenes to select a group of businesses to progress and pitch to an expert selection panel. Up to eight social enterprises are selected onto the programme.



What makes a successful application - 3 top tips:



Applicants can demonstrate strong leadership, with a team and/or a range of stakeholders around them showing aspiration and intentions to scale-up, as well as an acceptable appetite for taking on risk through social investment.



Clarity on the difference between the commercial part of the business and the social impact elements.



Always read through the guidance notes!

Sylvia Douglas MsMissMrs



MsMissMrs is a Glasgow-based initiative which seeks to empower vulnerable women through delivering workshops on self-care and improving confidence and self-esteem. It provides a learning programme designed specifically to build self-belief in women and girls who have experiences abuse, violence, neglect or deprivation. Director, Sylvia Douglas, designs, manufactures and sells women's Empowerment Pants to allow her to offer fully funded places on the MsMissMrs programme to everyone who needs one.

Over several years, Sylvia was awarded Start It, followed by Build It. She then joined Firstport's LaunchMe accelerator programme. At the point of application, MsMissMrs was running workshops, selling products and making a social impact, but Sylvia felt that the potential for growth was not being met. She applied to the programme because she was interested in private investment and making the business mainstream by getting other people involved. The fact that investment could be matched with a grant was appealing to Sylvia, as it would give MsMissMrs the time to grow without worrying about large debt repayment.

Through the LaunchMe programme, MsMissMrs secured £25,000 from three private investors and took an investment loan of £25,000 with Social Investment Scotland, plus matched funding from the Big Lottery Fund. This enabled Sylvia to employ 2 full-time staff and a sessional worker, take on permenant premises, and to publish the company's girls' self-awareness workbooks with a view to training and licensing other organisations to deliver the programme.

We asked Sylvia what one piece of advice she would give to people thinking of applying for LaunchMe.

Apply! You just never know. You change, you grow, you develop once you are on the programme. It gives you an opportunity to look at the products and services you are offering and the possibilities of scaling up and rolling it out. Don't be afraid of money, of taking on financial debt because it's the only way to grow your business and to maximize your social impact.

A few years on, MsMissMrs has a sister project, called Femfoods, with a new purpose-built kitchen. MsMissMrs continues to grow, develop and have an amazing social impact. In the space of six years, MsMissMrs has funded over 500 free places for women and girls on their programmes.

Find out more at the MsMissMrs website.







We hope this guidance has provided you with useful information about our programmes and helps you support individuals to be successful in their applications. Please get in touch if we can provide any further help.

Email us on info@firstport.org.uk, or call our office on 0131 564 0331.







