

Imaginative services and supports run for, with and by people with a learning disability

Pulp Friction



Pulp Friction was inspired by an experience Jessie Carter and her mum Jill had in 2008 when they came face to face with a pedal-powered smoothie bar at a local festival near their home in Nottinghamshire. Jessie, aged 16 at the time, had wanted a part-time job in a restaurant or café like many of her friends, but her learning disabilities meant it was not so easy. However, the static smoothie bike, which can blend a smoothie in under a minute via pedal-power, seemed to offer a solution to this problem.

A year later they successfully applied to the Youth Opportunity Fund for £1,800 to buy a smoothie bike for themselves - and the [Pulp Friction Smoothie Bar Project](#) was born. A community interest company (of which Jessie is a Director), Pulp Friction now works with young adults aged 16-24 with learning disabilities to develop independence, work readiness and social skills by providing opportunities and individual support to run their six bikes at different community events around the country. Pulp Friction now has three paid workers, including people with a learning disability and a team of disabled and non-disabled volunteers who do everything from chop fruit to sort out health and safety.

Pulp Friction provides an opportunity for the young people involved to use and build upon their skills and assets and provides them with support to do so. The contribution of the young people involved is vital to the success of the project. In Pulp Friction, people with and without learning disabilities work alongside each other and the project enables the opportunity for those involved to develop and build upon local networks.

As well as the bikes Pulp Friction have an ice cream tricycle which they take to weddings and community events they run, a Mixed Ability Choir and a Pop Up Catering business as part of Super Kitchen

“Pulp Friction is a bespoke service, very much about raising awareness, and raising the profile of disabled people in the community,” says Jill Carter. “Every time people buy a smoothie from us they are interacting with someone with learning difficulties, and that is really what Pulp Fiction is all about – people-connecting.”

Bread2share

Is a CIC run by Sarah who employs a woman with a learning disability; they work with the creative potential of bread making to inspire, nourish and develop community by running workshops and group sessions. They are currently working with two local charities and at a council centre for people with a physical and sensory disability. They hope to work with the Dementia Gateways in Dudley.



They are supported by a research from fellow Birmingham University who is working on the topic of dementia and using bread therapy to bring people and communities together.

DanceSyndrome

[DanceSyndrome](#) uses dance as a vehicle for changing the lives of people with learning disabilities. The Manchester-based dance company was inspired by founder and director, Jen Blackwell, an aspiring community dance leader with Down's syndrome. Jenny had always had a passion for dance, but found it hard to find suitable training and performance opportunities. So, she decided to form her own company in 2009.



With a mix of disabled 'dance leaders' and non-disabled trained 'dance artists', it is not only disability-led, but seeks to train and employ dancers with learning disabilities to deliver dance workshops and performances.

In March, DanceSyndrome performed a version of one of the most popular routines at its workshops, the famous Dirty Dancing song 'Time of My Life', for

Comic Relief on the BBC's One Show, with comedian Miranda Hart.

Funky Fitness and Fun

Community micro-provider Carita Smith set up her enterprise called Funky, Fitness and Fun in Oldham in 2008. She wanted to work with people with a disability or health problem to co-produce a different type of service. Carita is also a Shared Lives carer, a personal assistant and has run a drama group on a voluntary basis for adults with a learning disability with a friend for a number of years.



The service currently runs two days each week, for six hours at a local community centre. People become members and once engaged they are invited to share with Carita the type of physical exercise that they would like to engage in over forthcoming weeks. She then commissions it on their behalf and as a result Tai chi, dancing, aerobics, cheerleading and Elvis dancing, have all been included in the weekly sessions.

Michael has attended Carita's service from the outset and pays for it using his personal budget. Michael used to attend a traditional day service run by the Council. He did enjoy this but disliked the inconsistency of staffing and the inability of the service to always adapt what it provided to meet his needs and wishes. In contrast Michael is very positive about the service that Carita provides saying that *"Carita is her own boss and can do it"*

Carita provides opportunities for people with a disability to volunteer within the service and is keen to identify other options for people in the community. She has also developed the "Funky Fitness Fun Team" which consists of four members with a learning disability who deliver fitness sessions to the wider community and in other service settings such as sheltered housing. Members feel valued by having this great opportunity and new links are being forged with the older residents.

Carita is now helping her members to be further included into their local community by linking with existing businesses to identify opportunities for people to volunteer, universal groups like women's groups for members to attend and schools to include members with integrated story telling.

Hollinwood Timebank

Greg is 21 and lives with his family in Oldham, he is helpful, organised, energetic and knows his own mind so when his mum and dad started thinking about Greg's future after school they knew it would have to start with what made sense for Greg. Greg was diagnosed with Autism at age 2, and has other complex needs, so his family have always been connected with what is on offer locally that might meet Greg's needs. Greg is happily settled into the routine of education at the moment, but some extensive searching and many talks and visits to services failed to find anything that Greg would be happy to join in with after he finished his college course.

"Right from when Greg first started school, I have always said that if the right support could be developed for Greg it would be suitable for everyone", says his Mum, Jo. "So I started at looking at models for community organisations that would welcome people with additional needs as equal partners. We didn't want to put all that effort into getting it right for Greg if it further isolated him".

When Jo read about the values of timebanks it seemed to fit right in. Timebanks are a tool to set up exchanges of skills, interests and favours at one hour for one hour between neighbours and friends. It recognises that the biggest asset of any organisation is its people, emphasises that everyone has interests and skills to share, encourages the development of relationships, and values work differently.



“Suddenly I realised that all of Greg’s skills, which would not be valued in a traditional work setting, could still be valuable to our local community with a bit of background community connecting to set up the initial connections”.

So, how does this work in practice? Take one young man who loves walking, opening gates and rattling letterboxes and match him to a community development worker of a local social housing provider who needed help delivering posters to advertise a Jubilee party. The development worker needed some help to promote a party in the park, and didn’t have time to do it, so Greg’s mum offered Greg’s time to help out. Greg and his support worker spent a few hours during his school holiday delivering posters to all the local shops around the park where the party was taking place.

It was a win-win situation – Greg got to go out and do the things he loved, and he became an asset to the local community at the same time. In return he was thanked with some time credits which he used to attend a party later on in the summer.

The Hollinwood Timebank is now registered as a charity and has approximately 60 timebank members- those small steps are making a big difference!

Urban Growth



Social enterprise Urban Growth was set up during 2013 by founder Bruno in the London Borough of Southwark, who is very passionate about the field of environmental education. With the support of a couple of staff members and volunteers, Urban Growth offers Horticulture Level 1 training to all but with a focus on people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health issues. The course aims to teach people employability skills and contribute to the transformation of gardens for individuals, organisations and communal housing. Urban Growth was successful in obtaining funding for the course, so people who live in certain areas of Southwark can train for free. After completing the training, they may go on to start their own enterprise with the support of Urban Growth and Community Catalysts.

Blueprint Training and Enterprise

Blueprint training and enterprise is a registered charity supporting adults with a learning disability with training and social activities in North Worcestershire.



“We are Blueprint Training and Enterprise and this is what we’ve been doing. We are very busy at the moment planning and planting our vegetable and herb gardens. Billy and Michelle have just finished making their cigar box ukuleles and are now learning to play them. Now that the weather is warming up, we will be outside cooking on our open fire and new earth oven that we built. We have just bought ourselves a brand new sewing machine and are busy making everybody a work apron. We have recently been spending one day a week at Ashfield Gardens helping with the animals and garden maintenance, and we hope to spend more time

there in the future. And our most exciting project to date: setting up a microbrewery to produce a variety of craft ales! And there's more in the pipeline..."