

Community Catalysts Enterprising Communities York Stories

Namaste York!

The Enterprising Communities Project in York aims to reduce loneliness and isolation through the support and promotion of community enterprises.



I have been hearing the dreams and aspirations of those looking at establishing new ventures. People like Rimpa, a classically trained Indian musician who plans to start a brand-new venture called Namaste York.

My aim is to help people to be happy, and to make them smile; to bring people together via art, dance, and music. I would like to share the rich heritage of Indian culture and its remarkable ability to rejuvenate the mind and soul.

Rimpa, new enterprise leader

I introduced Rimpa to Julie Graham, The City of York Council's Active Communities Officer, who saw enormous potential in Rimpa's idea. With Julie's help, we have arranged for Rimpa to pilot her activity at the community room used by the tenants of Glen Lodge Independent Living Community (ILC), with a view to introducing this (and other activities) to the other ILCs throughout York.

Working with Mark has allowed me to take a more holistic approach to addressing the isolation that can affect our older tenants, strengthening our ability to deliver a range of different events and experiences that encourage people to step outside of their front doors and meet their neighbours.

Julie, Active Communities Officer

We are also working together to plan a small event in the near future. The event will highlight the work of local community enterprises and help to inspire more people and organisations to collaborate in the quest to alleviate loneliness and isolation in York.

Community Catalysts, the City of York Council, and all partners, are committed to this work and will continue to co-create opportunities for people like Rimpa to develop their ideas, connect with others locally, inspire genuinely beneficial change and increase the general well-being of the people of York.

Carers as partners...working together to change lives in York

Emily is an energetic and passionate parent and carer who works hard to ensure that her son Chris, who has a learning disability, lives a full and meaningful life. We first met at a Community Catalysts workshop in York, where we briefly discussed the possibility of channelling Emily's energy into some kind of creative endeavour. Shortly after, we arranged to meet again, this time with Chris and two of his personal assistants.

Chris currently has a team of eight personal assistants who, along with his mum, offer him plenty of care and support. However Chris was clear that something was missing in his life and the people around him could see how important this was to him.

I have Personal Assistants (PAs) and friends and go out quite a lot, but I would now like to meet a girlfriend, to spend time with and have fun, but at the moment I can't do this as there is nowhere to meet them.

Chris

As the lead of the Community Catalysts Enterprising Communities Project, my role is to identify the gaps in supports and services and then help local people establish new ventures to fill these gaps. Emily was keen to help Chris establish a dating agency for people with learning disabilities in York and this seemed an excellent fit with the project.

I linked Chris, Emily the team with an established organisation in West Yorkshire, who were running the kind of dating agency Chris and his Mum had in mind. Emily also made connections with another similar organisation and several emails were exchanged. As a result of this early fact finding some drawbacks to the dating agency plan were identified and after a quick rethink everyone decided to slightly change tack.

Chris's new plan is to set up an enterprise with a focus on friendship and social connection, particularly for people who feel lonely or isolated. Chris and Emily hope this new venture will offer people an opportunity to

meet new people, recognising the potential for friendships to develop into something more serious over time.

It feels particularly appropriate to share Chris and Emily's story as part of Carers Week in the hope it might inspire other carers to establish their own community enterprise and/or inspire the person they support to do the same.

It's important to have friends, and even a special someone in our lives, and this is no different for people with learning disabilities. We hope to see our new venture become a force of good within our local community by providing people with learning disabilities improved opportunities for meaningful social engagement - helping people to lift themselves out of loneliness, enhancing their quality of life and achieving greater personal independence

Emily

It's still early days for Chris and Emily's enterprise, but they are already in the process of enlisting the help of several other people, venues and organisations in York – making connections and making things happen – and I very much look forward to continuing to help them to help themselves and others to create the lives they want.

Mark Finch

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Abbreviations

ILC Independent Living Community
PA – Personal Assistant