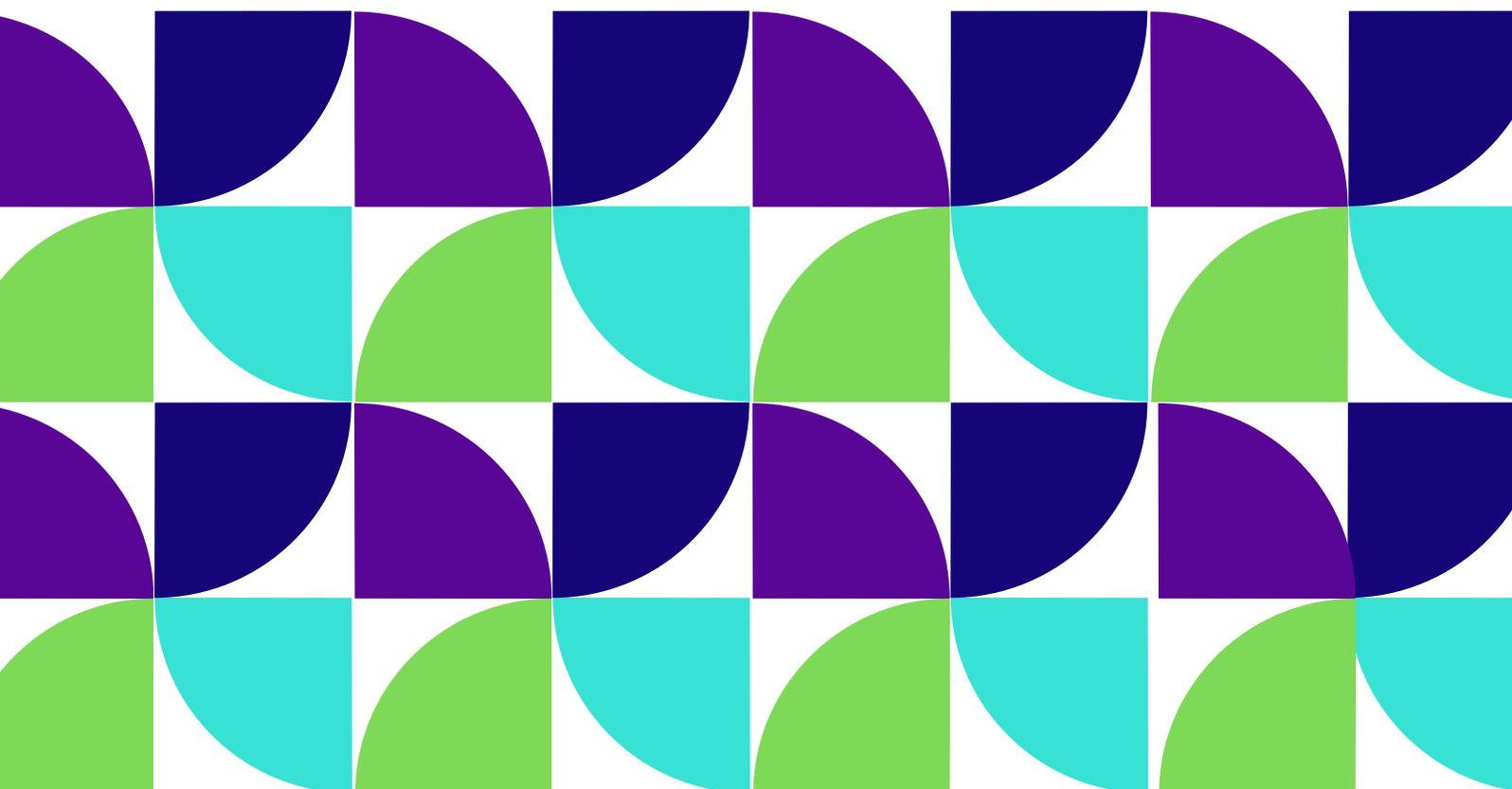




Hackney Social Founder Network

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT



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FORWARD

The Social Founder Network (SFN) is a global organisation set up to connect, support and promote founders in the charity and social enterprise sectors. We provide a mixture of practical and personal resources.

SFN was set up in 2017 and includes over 700 founders from large and small charities, social enterprises, foundations and community organisations. We call founders from these social impact organisations 'social founders'.

Over the last few years, SFN has held networking events in countries such as Japan, Sri Lanka, Spain, Italy and the UK, whilst engaging a global community of founders through our newsletter, blogs and features, social media, online events and 'Social Founder Stories' podcast. We have built a strong social media presence and created useful resources for social founders on our website. In 2022 we decided to pilot a local branch of SFN in Hackney, East London.

We know there is a wide and growing number of socially-driven entrepreneurial founders in Hackney. They bring passion, skills and local knowledge, and are able to identify gaps and solutions to issues in the Borough as well as more widely. However, they are also often overwhelmed by the responsibilities they are faced with. Our research has evidenced that whether at the beginning of, or well established in their founder journey, social founders

in Hackney are hungry for a mutual support network of Hackney-based, and global, social founders.

Our mission is to help our local Hackney founder community as much as possible, in turn giving social impact organisations in Hackney their best chances for success. We also want to inspire and support people who are interested in becoming a social founder, showing them that setting up a social impact organisation is an achievable and fulfilling thing to do.

In response to our Hackney-based pilot research and needs assessment, we will continue to identify, engage, train, mentor, skill up, help raise funds for, promote, and build networks for existing and budding social founders in the Borough. We are planning a programme of in-person and online events, 1-2-1 and group mentoring, online resources, media, digital and promotional support and connections with funders and sponsors. For this needs assessment report, we have carried out surveys and long-form interviews with twenty founders and other key stakeholders. We have also factored in the insights and feedback from our first Hackney-based in person event for local social founders.

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The research has been crucial in learning what we have been doing right during the four month pilot, and how we can build our services

moving forward, in order to meet the local need, and develop further local branches for the Social Founder Network.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

Having founded two charitable organisations in the past, the Media Trust and Together TV (The Community Channel), and as a founder trustee of the Small Charities Coalition, I know only too well the joys and challenges of being a social founder. I've lived and breathed the difficulties, my many imperfections, my doubts and dilemmas, but I know that I have made a difference, created a legacy, and supported many other organisations, communities and individuals through my work.

Our new support network for founders of charities, social enterprises and community organisations has had a fantastic response in the UK and globally. We focus specifically on the founder challenges - how social founders can become better founders, be better supported, have better impact - be celebrated, and in turn inspire others. We look at how we deal with the 'founder brand', our



Caroline Diehl, Founder of the Social Founder Network, the Media Trust and Together TV (The Community Channel)

boards and teams, how and when we delegate, step aside, let go, and much more. Five years ago, we had our first event in London. I was deeply moved by the amazing response from founders and the event was a springboard for the work we have enjoyed since. It has been wonderful creating networks

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for founders around the world. You can read about our work, and that of our founders, on www.socialfounder.org and listen to our podcast series 'Social Founder Stories'.

My motivation for launching a localised version of SFN in Hackney comes from living in the Borough for the past forty years. Hackney is a very entrepreneurial, creative and solutions-focused borough, with some strong support organisations, including our partner Hackney CVS.

To date there has been little dedicated support in the borough, as elsewhere in the UK, for the actual founders of charities, social enterprises and community organisations – that heady challenging mix of skills and positioning as a social founder. At the Social Founder Network, we want to change this. We have had an amazing response to our pilot, and look forward to growing Hackney Social Founders, and replicating local branches around the UK and wider.

OUR FIRST HACKNEY EVENT

In July, we held our first Hackney Social Founders event. Hosted by Hackney CVS and chaired by Caroline, there were talks from two successful local social founders Peter Merrifield (Support When It Matters) and Abdi Hassan (Coffee Afrik CIC). There were breakout group activities and discussions, and

founders were given the opportunity to network and share their founder challenges, learnings and joys.

We received encouraging feedback about the event:

- Would you recommend our events to other social founders, or those interested in becoming a social founder?' (zero = 'definitely not', ten = 'yes, absolutely'): 9.0.
- 'How likely would you be to attend our events in the future?' (zero = 'definitely not', ten = 'yes, definitely'): 9.2.
- Asked how satisfied attendees were with the event (zero = 'not satisfied at all', ten = 'extremely



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'satisfied') the average response score was 9.1 out of ten.

Requests for further topics and support from event participants included:

- payment of founders in the charity sector.
- opportunities to collaborate, such as commissioning each other, sharing space and resources and co-creating.
- acquiring spaces.
- managing relations with the press.
- measuring impact.
- advocating the role of social enterprise in the economy.
- Issues of diversity in the charity and social enterprise sectors.

Looking at how we can run our next events better, we were told that the full group discussion could have been longer. The discussion was seen as an important way of founders getting to understand and share each other's challenges and solutions.

“ We were born to do it but we don't always know how. ”

- Shukri Adan, Founder, Connecting All Communities

Some suggested changing the time of day. Our event was in the morning, which can be a particularly busy time for founders. However others prefer sticking to the mornings, as avoids childcare clashes.

“ I loved the event. It's needed for welfare. It's needed for advice. It's needed for shared resources. It's definitely needed. ”

- Rachel Woolf, Founder, Street Storage

“ [My favourite thing about the event] was the energy in the room, which came from a synergy of experiences, qualities and values. ”

- Nina Lyndon, Co-Founder, Hackney Showroom

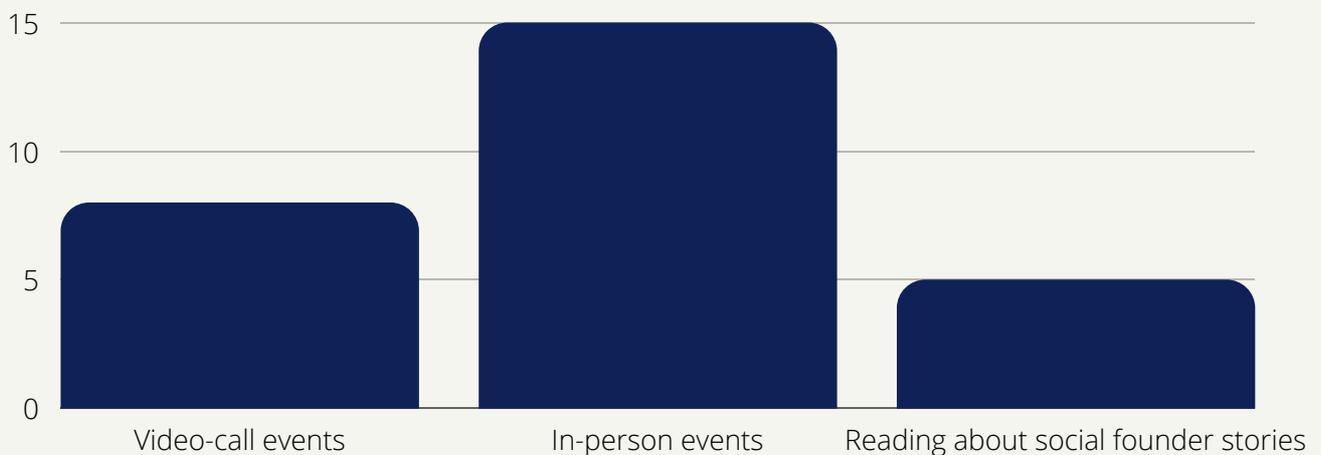
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It was really nice to hear from people going through a similar experience to myself. It's helpful knowing I'm not the only one finding it difficult.”

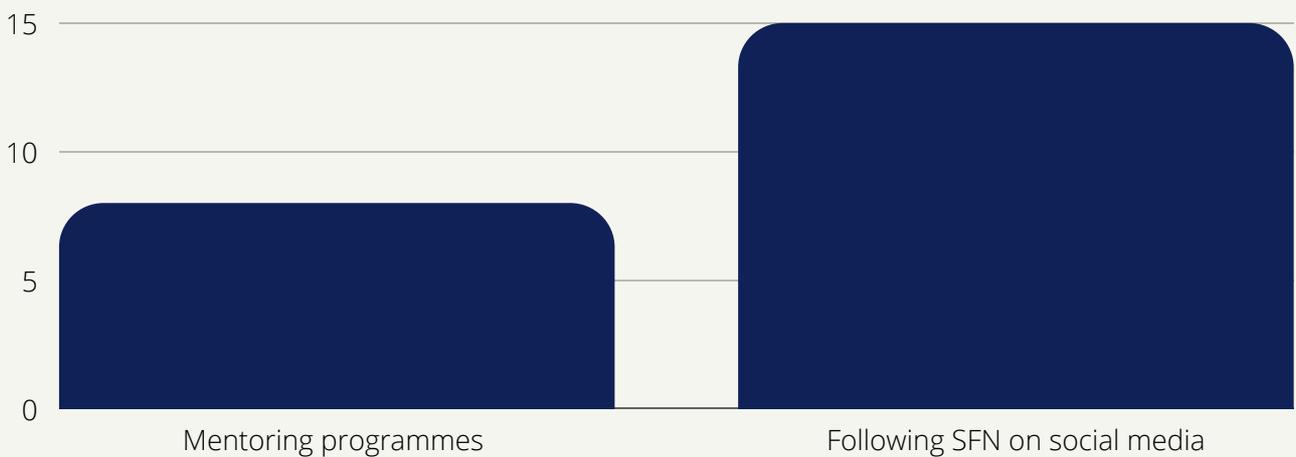
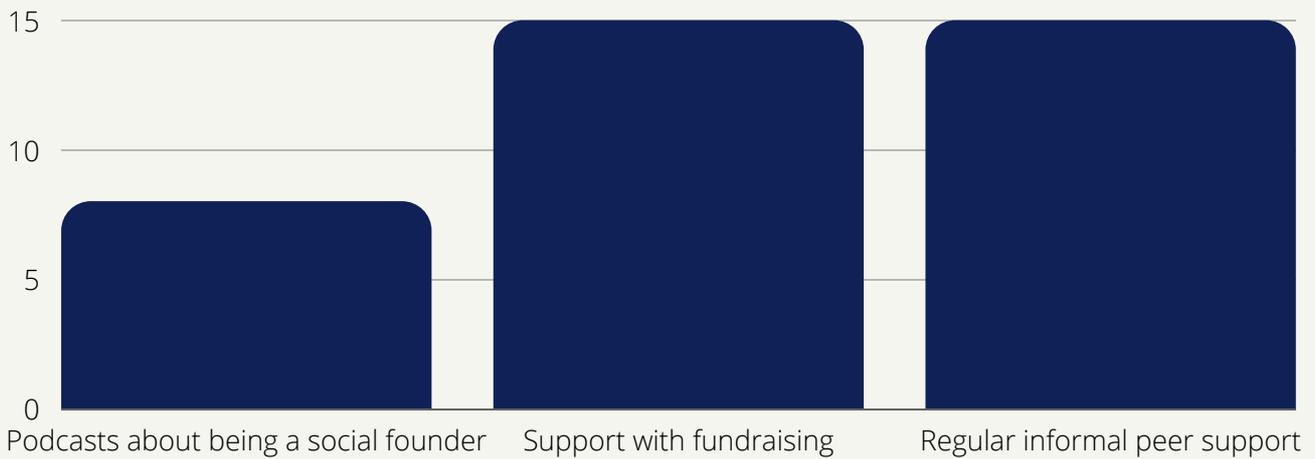
- Rhyania Blackett-Codring,
Founder, Beta Minds



TAILORING OUR SERVICES

We asked Hackney founders what services they would like to be involved in as part of the SFN Network:





We also had descriptive responses from social founders about how the network could be useful for them – here are a few:

- "Honesty, trust, working together, sharing ideas and information, working together and supporting each other." – Michelle Dornelly, Founder, Children with Voices.
- "Sharing experience and insights and finding opportunities to collaborate." – Nina Lyndon, Founder, Hackney Showroom.
- "To inspire each other." – Nadia Saad, Founder, Empathy Animals.

“ It would be useful to meet up and share knowledge and ideas with like-minded people. ”

– Maxine Boyce, Founder, Hackney Young People’s University

There were mixed reviews when Hackney founders spoke about reading social founder stories (not specifically the features on the SFN website). Participants said that they could be "motivational", "Inspiring" and "relatable." However, when Hackney founders were asked what they thought of them (with zero being not

beneficial at all and ten, extremely beneficial), the average score was only 6.33.

Founders told us what areas of being a social founder they struggle with. The key theme was funding (mentioned by 69 per cent of participants), with many founders saying they don't have the skills or time to write bids. Other challenges included:

- Responsibility vs delegation.
- Isolation.
- Burn out and not feeling like there are enough hours in the day.
- Engaging with media.

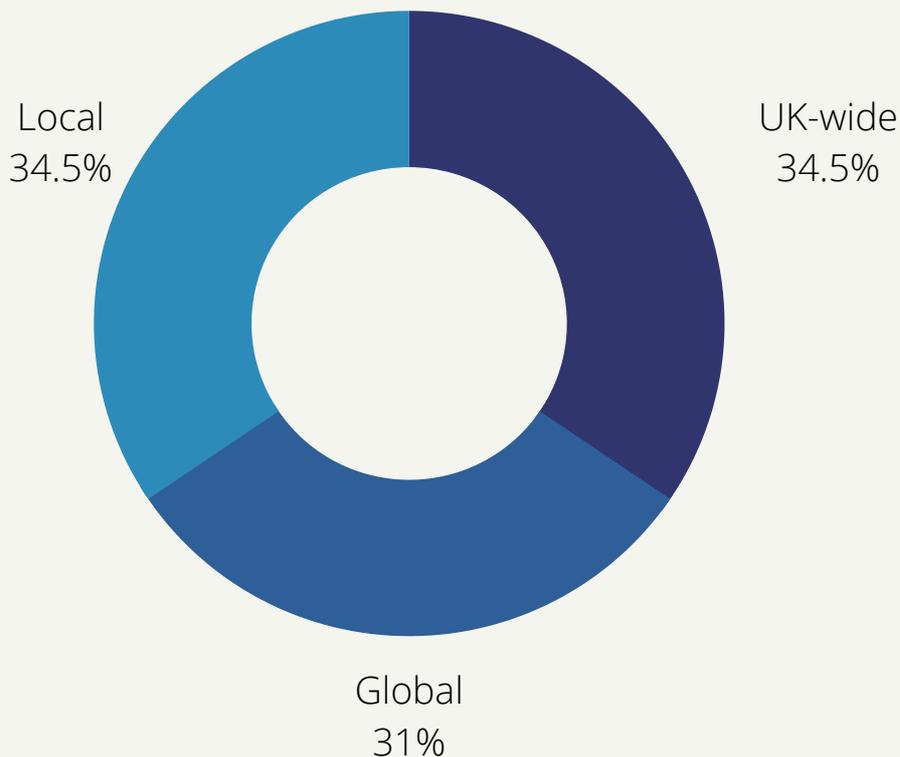
- Creating and/or evolving the organisation's legal and governance structure.
- Managing expectations of the team.
- Dealing with legal issues.
- Time management.

“ For sharing experience and information; general solidarity. ”

- Simon Donovan, Founder, Manor House Development Trust



We were interested in knowing what type of network(s) Hackney founders wanted to be involved in: local, UK-wide and/or global. There seems to be almost equal support for all three types:



One service we have been considering pursuing more formally is mentoring programmes between less and more experienced social founders. A recurring theme from our research was that mentoring could be extremely helpful but matching between mentor and mentee would have to be done very carefully:

- "In principle, they are a good thing, but there are caveats with that. The mentor needs to really get under the skin of what you do uniquely. Otherwise the mentoring becomes quite generic and then it can take more in terms of time than what it gives

- back." – Peter Merrifield, Founder, Support When It Matters
- "Mentoring from someone who knows about moving from a start up to scale organisation is something that would be really valuable for me." – Rachel Woolf, Founder, Street Storage
- "I know some people who have had mentors who swear by it. For me though, it's a bit of a sore thumb because when I did it, it didn't work out. I think that's because our lived experiences were completely different." – Rhania Blackett-Codring, Founder, Beta Minds.

POST-PANDEMIC CONTEXT

Over the course of the Pandemic, we were inspired by the way community organisations, new and existing, supported communities across the UK, including in Hackney. These organisations responded and adapted speedily and a well-functioning local system proved their worth when it was most important.

There were many new organisations that were set up reacting to Covid-related pressures. Since launching in Hackney, founders such as Joyclen

Buffong (RISE: 365) and Ali Kakande (Carib Eats) and Abdi Hassan (Coffee Afrik CIC), who have set up such organisations, have joined our network. These founders have been remarkably successful in identifying and meeting particular needs in the community. Nevertheless, struggling to meet such high demand, and to learn new and changing skills 'on the job', they need support to create a sustainable organisation in the 'post-pandemic' era. We have much feedback that they are often alone in their endeavours, and

relish being part of an informal support network for Hackney-based founders.

The Pandemic response has shown us the full importance of

having a local group for social founders. It is pivotal that the spirit, drive, values, energy and local knowledge of these amazing people is supported and enabled to flourish.

CONCLUSIONS

Clear need and support for the Social Founders Network.

- There is strong support from social founders in Hackney to be a part of a network of social founders.
- Social founders want a service that can improve their personal and organisational wellbeing, give them advice, connect and inspire them.
- Mobilisation from community organisations was integral to the Covid-19 response. It is essential the social founders who have found a purpose and a solution through this time are given the support they need as founders.
- Social founders encounter challenges in areas such as governance, funding, business models, scaling, communications, recruitment and isolation that can be further supported.

An emphasis on networking.

- The service social founders were most interested in were in-person events and regular informal peer support, so this should be a priority moving forward. Video-call events were less popular, however.
- The first Hackney meet up was received extremely well.
- Recognising the importance of group discussions, we want to make them longer, ensuring everyone gets the chance to speak.
- It would be beneficial to have events at different times of the day, so that more social founders can attend.
- We welcome the endorsement and support provided by Hackney CVS (HCVS), Volunteer Centre Hackney (VCH) and Hackney Cooperative Developments (HCD), and the recognition that we can add value to their members and existing services.

Mentoring programmes to be done with care.

- There was significant interest in founders being involved in mentoring programmes.
- With founders having little time, mentees must be impeccably tailor-matched with their mentors. Particular attention should be put on the type of organisation the mentee has set up, the stage they are at and their personal background.

Help with funding.

- Funding was a challenge that founders repeatedly raised and there was strong support for services in this area being offered.
- Founders were concerned that they didn't have the skills or time to write successful bids.
- Funding application assistance could be provided by the Social Founder Network in a number of ways, including events and mentoring programmes, and introduction to funders.

ENDORSEMENTS



The Social Founder Network is an innovative initiative, that will help to reduce those inequalities by supporting budding founders, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, develop ideas into social impact businesses, putting those with lived experience in the lead allowing them to both prosper, but crucially drive social change. Hackney CVS looks forward to supporting Social Founder Network evolve and seeing the impact this will have for our community.

- Tony Wong, CEO, Hackney CVS (HCVS)



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SFN is a really exciting and needed project for Hackney. Working as a social founder or leader, although extremely rewarding, can be isolating and it will be so beneficial to have the opportunity to share ideas and experience with peers. They are also providing a vital 'next step' for residents and volunteers who lead grassroots community projects, who we support on our programmes, to take their ideas to the next level, and to help these become sustainable and thriving. We are looking forward to working together and building a strong and productive relationship with the network.

”

- Lauren Tobias, CEO, Volunteer Centre Hackney (VCH)

“

The network is critical; it creates a space for holding conversations, networking and offering in-depth support and partnership.

”

- Abdi Hassan, Co-founder, Coffee Afrik CIC

“

I'm proud of what I've achieved with Carib Eats but there are areas where I know I need support. It's so helpful to have a community of founders I can talk to.

”

- Ali Kakande, Founder, Carib Eats



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