



COMPANY OVERVIEW

Levenshulme Market CIC

Founded by Helen Power, Neil Buttery and Brenda Smith

Staff member in Alliance Manchester Business School,

Faculty of Humanities

Funding Received: £500 Try It Award

£12,500 Scale It Award

helen@levymarket.com

www.levymarket.com | [@levymarket](https://twitter.com/levymarket)

Three words to describe your journey so far... Inspiring, Enriching, Exhausting!



Tell us a little bit about yourself, the Social Enterprise and your journey so far. I'm Helen Power and I live in Levenshulme, an area which I'm very passionate about. Levenshulme Market is a community run Social Enterprise that operates every weekend between March and December in Levenshulme, South Manchester. We started the business in 2012 when the Levenshulme community were asked to take up the mantle from Manchester City Council and run the market. The Council previously sited a market in the area in response to the Portas Report – that recommended markets for “failing” high streets. Sadly, the Council-led market was under resourced and members of the community had been supporting it for some time. While it seemed a natural next step that the community would start running the Market, the development of a business model required some hard conversations between us about how a market could be

Designed to add value to the high street. We decided to establish a Social Enterprise – a Market that considered the health of the high street it serves as part of its bottom line.

The Community Interest Company was established in 2013, with a £500 UMIP Try It Award which enabled us to undertake community and stakeholder engagement and led to us securing funding from Manchester City Council to cover capital and start-up costs. Initially we predicted £400 a year profit but we were thrilled when we beat all our targets in the first year – indicating a clear demand for quality street markets and experiential shopping, not just in Levenshulme, but also across the city.

Across 2013/14 we grew rapidly, funded by UMIP and UnLtd (Scale It Award), and shifted from a monthly market to a weekly model. The business now employs five members of staff and delivers over 50 markets a year in Levenshulme and other locations. We charge a below market rate fee to stall holders which constitutes our income. Profits generated are invested into the community and business, to ensure that Levenshulme Market remains a force for good for many years to come.

In 2015/16 we launched a £15,000 funding scheme in which we awarded eight local residents with small grants to develop their own high street improvement enterprises. We also collaborated with the New Economics Foundation on a Community Economic Development fund project to write a high-street health report.

How was your idea conceived? Our remit is to deliver a market that tangibly improves its surrounding environment. The Levenshulme Market team are loud proponents of the idea that bad high streets don't happen to economically

healthy communities. Putting a market in a high street with multiple problems is not going to solve problems overnight. In the last five years, we've developed many projects to address the real challenges in our community.

What is your company mission? We want our Market to make Levenshulme a better place to live, work, visit and run a business.

At what point, did you realise that the idea had the potential for a Social Enterprise? I understood business models and as a staff member in AMBS, I'd been lucky enough to attend sessions exploring the value of socially responsible business but I'd never heard of Social Enterprise! In developing a business that had countless community stakeholders it felt important to me and my fellow founders that we have a mechanism for ensuring our social accountability, something that the community could always hold us to account on – the CIC model fitted that brief perfectly.

What approaches did you first employ to develop the idea? At inception, we worked with Manchester City Council's regeneration team and business advisers Blue Orchid to develop the business model and then deliver it. If I were to pinpoint the things that inspired me, I would say an inability to watch something done badly that I know could be done well and a passion for the place where I live.



Why did you want to set up a Social Enterprise? I felt then and I feel now that Levenshulme, areas like it, and the people who live there deserve a great deal more than they get and I feel strongly that we should fight for more.

How did you get involved with the Innovation Optimiser? I approached UMIP before the Innovation Optimiser had been developed, but I suppose the support they offered formed the basis of the Innovation Optimiser today. UMIP had launched a Social Enterprise Funding call in which you could apply for small pots of funding to develop a Social Enterprise. I successfully applied for the Try It Award which then led on to me securing the Scale It funding.

How did this engagement help you? The Try It funding helped me test the feasibility of the idea and bring in support and further funding from Manchester City Council. More importantly the Scale It funding helped me build the

business case alongside support I received from Blue Orchid and Manchester City Council's regeneration team.

What would you say was the greatest hurdle you overcame during the process? Finding a balance between my day job and running a community business has been tough. I'm lucky to have a great employer in The University of Manchester which appreciates improving neighbouring communities, but I need to learn some time management and prioritisation skills!



What have been your major milestones and achievements so far? Taking the market to a weekly operation and seeing that succeed has been great – it was a risk, but a calculated one. The process of developing the business case and watching it play out (more or less!) was a big endorsement of the skills I'd picked up over previous years. Now the market's approaching its fifth birthday I'm looking forward to celebrating maturity. We're building reserves, robust processes and a strong team. From where we started that's a great achievement.

How has being involved with entrepreneurial activity benefitted you? My work on the Market has hugely enriched my skillset and given me a whole new side to my portfolio.

What future support are you looking for to progress your business? As we look forward to our fifth anniversary in 2018 we have various transformative projects in our sights, notably a Big Lottery-funded project to carry out a project which will allow us to formalise our social impact assessments, provide a framework for regular reporting of Social Return on Investment and adjust activity accordingly. In the future, we will deliver some large projects which will require funding. We hope that the work we'll undertake with our Big Lottery funding will put us in a strong position to evidence our impact which will work alongside our demonstrated financial stability to enable us to secure funding – support in developing this case when the time comes would be very helpful.

Would you encourage other staff, academics and research students to seek support for their ideas through the Innovation Optimiser? Yes!