



COMPANY OVERVIEW

Sleeping Lions Adventures Ltd

Founded by Russell Miller & Catherine Miller

Member of Staff in Alliance Manchester Business School, Faculty of Humanities

Funding Received: £2,000 Ignition Funding



Sleeping Lions
Adventures

Three words to describe your journey so far... Inspiring, Exciting, Creative!



Tell us a little bit about yourself, the Enterprise and your journey so far. I co-founded Sleeping Lions Adventures with my wife Cath in Manchester in 2016. The company designs and builds immersive environments for children's parties. We produce extraordinary worlds, using fantastical large-scale props, décor and open-ended objects to create playful places for children to experience and shape. We immerse children in incredible stories and offer them the opportunity to play freely - encouraging their curiosity, playfulness, and sociability. We believe in parties without pressure, and provide everything families need to create a memorable celebration without stress, and the additional expense that comes from hiring entertainment. This gives parents control of their own party and lets them simply enjoy watching their children play freely. Alongside producing immersive environments for children, we offer parents the tools to encourage child-directed play at home.

How was your idea conceived? Cath and I have two children under the age of four and have experienced first-hand the erosion in children's freedom and opportunity to play freely. At the same time, I was introduced to the work of School of Environment, Education and Development at The University of Manchester, and research undertaken to explore the importance of play and recreation in the life of every child. This work highlighted the rise in narcissism in young people, a gradual decline in creative thinking among children and a decline in empathy because of the erosion in opportunities for child-directed play. We wanted to do something about this.

I'm a qualified designer and Cath is a practising artist – therefore the idea for Sleeping Lions Adventures came organically to us as it pulls together several elements of our personal and professional interests.

What is your company mission? The vision of Sleeping Lions Adventures is to create playful places for young children that encourage curiosity, playfulness, and sociability.

We'll achieve our aim by:

- becoming the UK's leading provider of immersive, child-directed play experiences
- raising awareness of the importance of play for families

At what point, did you realise that the idea had commercial potential? We realised Sleeping Lions Adventures had real commercial potential after discovering that UK parents spend £2billion a year on kids' parties - £309 per child, per birthday party. We also realised our idea had potential after experiencing our friend's children's birthday parties, where we witnessed children being led from one activity to another by overzealous entertainers who told the children when and how they could play. We knew there had to be another way that provided children the freedom to play, while offering parents a safe and immersive and engaging environment for their children.

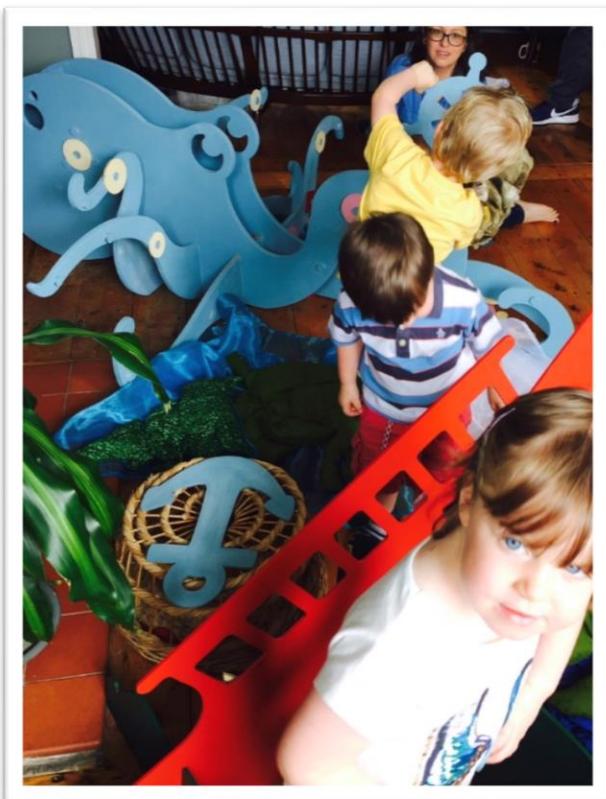
What approaches did you first employ to develop the idea? Initially we had the idea to develop a Social Enterprise Café

that incorporated a space for children's play. Our idea pivoted and we started to focus solely on the play aspect of our concept.

How did you get involved with the Innovation Optimiser? I spoke to Ellie and Laura in the UMIP team about my initial concept for Sleeping Lions Adventures. They were incredibly supportive and really helped me to shape my business idea. I soon recognised that I needed professional support and funding to test my hypotheses and decided to apply for Innovation Optimiser Ignition Funding.

How did this engagement help you? In 2017 I was awarded £2,000 Innovation Optimiser Ignition Funding, which enabled me to fully test my hypotheses for Sleeping Lions Adventures. In addition to buying essential materials for my business, I was able to prototype large-scale props.

Tony, Ellie and Laura introduced me to the Roadmap programme, and Ian from DNApeople, who over the course of four sessions really helped me to shape my thinking and 'pivot' my idea into what I believe is now an extremely viable business opportunity. I had been concerned about how to validate my business idea. Ian was brilliant at helping me think about the problem I was solving, the hypotheses for my venture and the way I needed to test my value proposition.



Were there any standout moments from Innovation Optimiser that helped to propel your idea forward? Learning about the 'killer questions' really helped me to propel my

idea forward and think about how best I can validate my business idea.

What have been your major milestones and achievements so far? Designing, developing and producing our first working prototype was a major milestone for me. It was great to physically experience what Sleeping Lions Adventures will produce in the future.



How has being involved with entrepreneurial activity benefitted you? During the Roadmap programme, I was introduced to colleagues and students from across The University of Manchester. I really enjoyed learning about their business ideas, current study and work they were undertaking. The programme really opened my eyes to the high level of collaboration that's possible across the University.

What future support are you looking for to progress your business? During the Roadmap session, we agreed milestones with Ian. The first two milestones I gave myself was to develop prototypes by June 2017 and test the business hypotheses on my 'famous five' (key influencers) by the end of July 2017. I'm on schedule; I've completed the prototypes and I'm currently in the process of conducting focus group interviews with my key influencers. We'd love to continue the journey with UMIP and will be making a Business Summary Submission to the team later in the summer. I also valued the help offered by Laura, Ellie, Tony and Ian and would benefit from their continued support, in addition to that of their network.

Would you encourage other staff, academics and research students to seek support for their ideas through the Innovation Optimiser? I often comment about the positive impact the Roadmap programme has had on me to colleagues, students and friends. I would absolutely encourage other staff, academics and research students to seek support for their ideas.