

# OUR SPACE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE 2024



## Overview

The grant enabled the learning disabilities group who are supported at Our Space Day Opportunities to set up and run a Social Enterprise Group. The aim of the group was to make items to sell and the proceeds to go into the Comfort Fund for the service.

It has enabled the 10 individuals supported to build new skills and develop new interests, allowed opportunities to forge positive relationships with the local community and brought the group together with a common goal. Ultimately it gave the people supported a sense of achievement and positively impacted their self-esteem.

## The Project

The participants had the opportunity to learn new skills, such as -

- How to mix resin and make bookmarks, vases, coasters and keyrings.
- How to felt and design brooches, badges and keyrings. A local craft shop facilitated a free workshop to learn how to felt and from that the group came up with lots of ideas about how to use this medium, including making cards with felted decorations and felting onto bags.
- How to sew using a sewing machine and make doorstops, glasses cases, toys and stuffed animals. A volunteer was recruited who is very skilled with sewing and fabric crafts and each Thursday she ran a workshop. She realised that some of the individuals were reluctant to use the sewing machine as they said it seemed too difficult and spent time encouraging and supporting them to gain confidence. All of the group are now enthusiastic participants and take pride in their items being on the weekly market stall. The majority of the fabrics used by the group have been donated by individuals or local businesses following a local request from the group.
- How to design and make greetings cards.

The Social Enterprise group secured a stall at the local market in Ellesmere and two of the group elected to take the job of manning the stall alternate weeks, with staff support. This afforded them the chance to brush up on their skills around social interaction and handling money (taking money and giving change) They also actively promoted the products on the stall to members of the public and were keen to share how they were made.

The positivity and successes of the two individuals, who run the market stall, were noted by the gentleman who organises the market and the group were recently offered the chance to also man a new fruit and veg stall. This opened up new opportunities for them, with the added bonus that they can take a percentage of the takings which has been put back into the group's earnings.

There is a plan in place for growing herbs, chilli plants and tomatoes, in the spring, and also sell the seedlings on the market stall. In time the group would like to expand on this and potentially also grow small bedding plants.

It has been a pleasure to watch the involvement of the group grow. Initially about 4 group members were involved in planning, designing and making items. However, as time has gone by, they all decided to join the project and all seem to take enjoyment from their part in it.

They are all aware that sales' proceeds go into the Comfort Fund which is utilised for the people we support. The Fund ensures that their experience at Our Space can be enhanced with additional trips out, being taken out for lunch on their Birthdays and Christmas and the purchase of equipment or items they have requested for the service. In time we hope to use the Fund to purchase other items such as, a new sewing machine for the group and a branded cloth for the market stall.

#### Feedback

Quotes from two of the participants who have been involved in the making of the craft items and manning the weekly market stall

RH – I like meeting and talking to new people. I have learnt money skills on the market stall. I like making things to sell and thinking of new ideas.

DC – I like meeting people and telling them about the centre (Our Space) and what crafts we do. I really like having a job at the market.

