

Norwich organisation Action Community Enterprises CIC named a finalist in the UK Social Enterprise Awards, recognising businesses which are transforming society

Action Community Enterprises (ACE) have been shortlisted in the UK Social Enterprise Awards, recognising it as one of the leading social enterprises in the country.

Louise Gardiner, Managing Director of ACE, who are based in Rackheath in Norwich, is a finalist in the Woman In Social Enterprise Award. ACE are a specialist education and support provider who have been delivering quality vocational training, employment support and alternative education since 2011. In recent years it has run a variety of successful employment support programmes for short- and long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and the economically inactive. ACE believe learning and support should be available to everyone in need, especially those that are not traditionally 'classroom shaped' and for whom mainstream learning may not be an option, often due to issues such as mental health problems, families in crises or special educational needs (SEN).

Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social or environmental purpose. There are 100,000 social enterprises in the UK contributing £60bn to the UK economy, each one being set up to tackle some of the biggest challenges we face from homelessness to the climate emergency.

The UK Social Enterprise Awards run by Social Enterprise UK, the national membership body for social enterprises, recognise the nation's most pioneering social enterprises. ACE will be joining other shortlisted organisations at the prestigious awards ceremony held at London's iconic Guildhall on 8 December.

This year the Awards featured two new categories one recognising a Social Enterprise Building Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Justice and the other for the Social Enterprise Team of the Year – a category specifically acknowledging those teams which have demonstrated the strength, passion and resilience so characteristic of the social enterprise sector over an extremely challenging year.

Previous winners have included a company set up to tackle furniture poverty, an IT consultancy employing people with autism and a community energy co-operative – demonstrating just how diverse the social enterprise sector is.

Commenting on being shortlisted, Louise Gardiner of ACE said:

I'm honoured to have been nominated for this award and to have made it to the list of finalists. I'm so proud of what ACE have achieved over the last 11 years and I'm proud to think that my vision has helped thousands change their lives for the better. I believe in positive action; never giving up or quitting, always challenging yourself. Having a learning disability myself, my journey is proof that a positive attitude and belief in yourself can lead to success.

Commenting on the Awards, Chief Executive of Social Enterprise UK Peter Holbrook said:

The UK Social Enterprise Awards are back, bigger and better than ever before. We have had a record number of applications this year, all of which have showcased the strength, dynamism and resilience of the social enterprise community through what's been an incredibly difficult and uncertain period.

Over the course of the pandemic social enterprises have been going above and beyond the call of duty to support their teams, the individuals, and communities they work with, showing the grit, determination and innovation so inherent to this sector. They've been operating directly on the frontline of the crisis, launching new products and pivoting their business models to meet the needs of communities and society as a whole.

The Awards are all about celebrating the achievements of the UK's social enterprise movement, which is showing us that another way of doing business is possible - one which has never been more important as we look to build back better and address the climate emergency."

ENDS

Notes

For more information please contact Lauren Gardiner on 01603 720308

About Action Community Enterprises CIC – Mission Statement

Helping young people and adults build a better life through education and support.

About social enterprises

Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social purpose that reinvest or donate over half their profits to further this social or environmental mission. They are an increasingly important part of the UK economy contributing £60 billion and employing 2 million people. Estimates are there are 100,000 in the UK. Research carried out by Social Enterprise UK, the membership body for the sector, shows they are outperforming traditional businesses when it comes to start-up rates, turnover growth and innovation. They are also ahead of the pack when it comes to workforce diversity and pay. For more information and statistics see Social Enterprise UK's [State of Social enterprise Report 2019](#) and the ['Hidden Revolution'](#) report which showed the true scale and impact of the sector.

About Social Enterprise UK

Social Enterprise UK is the largest network of certified social enterprises in the UK and the leading global authority on social enterprises. Together with our members we are the voice for the sector. We have led public policy for 15 years, helping pass the Social Value Act, and are a strategic partner to government. We exist to increase the profile of the sector through our campaigns and research, and build the markets for our members - working with some of the UK's biggest companies to support them to bring social enterprises into their supply chains. Our members reflect the diversity of the sector ranging from local grass-roots organisations to multi-million-pound businesses. We see social enterprise as the future of business.

www.socialenterprise.org.uk