

Call to strengthen policy and supports for ‘Social Enterprise’ sector **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/100375>)**

Conference shines a light on businesses who prioritise social impact

A call has been made to strengthen policy and supports for the Social Enterprise sector in Ireland – at an international conference in Dublin today.

Speaking at the event Sensational Kids CEO Karen Leigh identified measures which Government could take to help grow the sector.

“Social Enterprises are often supported via a range of third-party project specific funding streams, however there can be an ongoing shortage in funding for core management to run and grow the organisation. The government has a role to play here and could do more to encourage established social enterprises to develop and grow.

“Multi-annual core funding is required for planning and certainty. Greater security for social enterprises would also support the recruitment of skilled people when trying to compete with longer term employment contracts which other sectors can offer.”

Sensational Kids is an award-winning social enterprise has been supported by Oakfield Trust. It provides therapeutic supports for children with additional needs, ensuring that these children have access to vital supports when and where they need them.

The conference is being hosted by Oakfield Trust, a Clondalkin based social enterprise which raises funds to in turn support businesses whose core objective is to achieve a social, societal, or environmental impact.

Oakfield Chairperson Aileen O’Toole said the Clondalkin based organisation has this year launched a new ‘open’ Social Enterprise fund of €25,000 which will run twice a year for at least three years, totalling €150,000.

“The new fund is just part of our overall strategy to increase the profile and development of Social Enterprise in Clondalkin and beyond. Our aim is to develop a pipeline of Social Enterprise by being a source of critical financial support, particularly at the outset of new Social Enterprises and during their initial start-up phase. We also want to nurture the space locally by way of information and support services, and by engaging the community with related events and networking opportunities.

“The fund includes three categories including: Scale Up funding, Get Started funding and an Explore Award and the next round will open in Autumn this year,” she said.

Also speaking at the conference was CEO and Founder of Grace Chocolates, Joyce Murray, which is a Scottish Social Enterprise.

Ms Murray told delegates how the chocolates are handmade by women who have touched the criminal justice system and are choosing to make positive changes in their lives.

“Through making and selling our delicious chocolates the women receive training and work experience. As well as building transferable skills our positive learning environment equips them with the skills they need to build resilience, self-esteem and confidence which supports them as they journey to fulfil their potential.”

The conference was moderated by the Managing Director of the international Hayes Culleton Group, Susan Hayes Culleton, known as ‘The Positive Economist’.

Oakfield Trust is registered charity and has been successfully supporting community organisations and social enterprises for 26 years.

Further Information

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See www.oakfieldtrust.ie (<http://www.oakfieldtrust.ie>)

Region

Nationwide

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