

Star Social Firm Case Study: PLUSS



Pluss is one of the UK's first exceptional organisations to be officially awarded Star Social Firm status. Pluss provides employment, development and equipment services for people with disabilities in South-West England. The company offers disabled people a range of training and recruitment services and direct employment in their own manufacturing and mobility equipment business.

Already identified as one of the best Social Firms by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, Pluss has supported over 2,000 people in work and training over the last year and has an annual turnover of £20 million. 500 people currently work at Pluss, 260 of whom are officially considered as severely disadvantaged in the job market. The company's vision is to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled and empowered to reach their goals.



Pluss was set up as a Social Firm to maximise employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Operating within the Social Firm model has significant commercial advantages as well as meeting the company's ethical aspirations. Marketing Manager Geraldine Scott-Smith explains:

“We set Pluss up as a Social Firm because we wanted to provide good quality employment for disadvantaged people within a viable business. Our central purpose is to provide high quality services for disabled people and Pluss has to be a well-run business if it's going to help a lot of people. Greater efficiency means we can do more good, so we have focused on creating a sustainable, dynamic business; it just so happens that a lot of our talented employees are disabled.”

Star Social Firm status is a great recognition of our team's commitment and talent. We are proud to demonstrate that you can run a commercially sound business while staying true to your ethical visions and helping disadvantaged people fulfill their potential in a good job.”

Geraldine thinks that the development of Social Firms across the UK could help address a variety of social problems. She says:

“The Social Firm model can help address the Welfare to Work, Child Poverty and Social Inclusion agendas within the UK. It is a very young sector and new Social Firms need guidance to achieve their great aspirations. The identification of successful Social Firms through the Star Social Firm quality mark will set the standard and help new ventures combine entrepreneurship with social purpose to the best possible effect. The future success of Social Firms relies on their flexibility to meet both the needs of the individuals and local commerce.”

Pluss operates in a very dynamic environment, offering great challenges and opportunities. The company’s business plan identifies significant areas of growth that should enable Pluss to meet its commercial, and therefore social, aspirations.



Case studies of severely disadvantaged people at Pluss

Ian Matthews had an accident during a bicycle race in 1979. He suffered a fractured skull and brain damage causing epilepsy and problems with his speech and communication skills. Following the accident Ian was unable to work for 16 months before undertaking a number of short-term jobs. In 1984 he joined Cannington College as a computer technician, but the epilepsy worsened and in 1989 Ian was officially classed as medically retired.

Ian still had a great desire to work and so decided to attend the National Centre for Epilepsy which helped him to control his condition and allow him to do a few more short-term jobs. It was whilst he was unemployed again for a brief period that he heard about a vacancy at Pluss entering PATS data. Subsequently he joined the Print and Design Section at Pluss and became a printer/designer. Ian says that being at Pluss has increased his confidence and self awareness and without the support he would have found it very difficult to get long-term meaningful employment.

The newly launched Star Social Firm logo signifies a first-rate business with high standards of employment for severely disadvantaged people. Customers have a real social impact when they buy from Star Social Firms. www.socialfirms.co.uk

For more information about Pluss, visit: www.pluss.org.uk