

Impact Report

Pioneering Transformation

JUNE 2023





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A word from our CEO



I'm pleased to share these results, representing two years of hard work by Transform SY alumni and the delivery team. With support from our partners, including TEAM SY, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, and UKSE, we made a difference in our region. Transform SY is

Entrepreneurial Spark's 22nd accelerator, the first in South Yorkshire, supporting a region with immense potential. We aimed for the most inclusive and accessible accelerator, adopting a virtual model and expanding our criteria. We accelerated 47 entrepreneurs from across the SY region, with 40% from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Our alumni's achievements are evident (see infographic on page 4). We're proud to have supported future entrepreneurial leaders and their businesses' contributions to the regional economy.

We've established a presence in South Yorkshire, creating community-owned events like Startup Meetups and Get Up And Pitch. These initiatives have been handed over to the South Yorkshire Incubator and Accelerator Network (SIAN) to continue building. Over the last 18 months, 550 people benefited from these events, fostering connections and reducing startup isolation.

We plan to remain active in the region, hosting a flagship event from our Space Accelerator in September. It will enable regional businesses to network with space startups and explore collaborations. We are also exploring programs that target specific challenges in the region's entrepreneurship landscape. By the end of 2024, we anticipate even bigger results, incredible founders, and more inclusive growth.

Mike Stephens, CEO
@Entrepreneurial Spark

Impact

47

Entrepreneurs supported

14

Products launched

>20

Jobs created from companies on the cohort

Over
1600

hours of support received

40%

of the entrepreneurs were from a minority background

100%

of cohort members graduated with a clear growth strategy

Confidence in business model and funding strategy increased by

35%

Building Transform SY

What

Transform SY is a people accelerator. It is designed to accelerate the personal and business development of early-stage entrepreneurs by equipping them with growth tools, connecting them with great people, and delivering learning and accountability. Transform SY is free for entrepreneurs due to the funding provided by the European Regional Development Fund and our regional partners.

As an accelerator led by inclusive growth, we had broad criteria for acceptance. We supported entrepreneurs that were aiming to become investable, but also those that wanted to grow revenue, launch a product or build a team.

Transform SY was formed as a result of a partnership between Entrepreneurial Spark and TEAM SY - a joint project between public and private organisations that aimed to grow South Yorkshire's startup and entrepreneurial ecosystem and create the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders in the region.

Why

After learning about TEAM SY, Entrepreneurial Spark saw a great opportunity to make a difference in South Yorkshire's tech and startup ecosystem. With insights derived from working with high-growth entrepreneurs from all over the world, we knew our human-centred approach could support the growth of local future leaders, and lay the foundations for change as part of the wider project of 17 accelerators.

How

We set out to build Transform SY using all the insights and knowledge we've derived from delivering 22 accelerators across four continents in the last 10 years. Our approach focusses on working deeply with our founders, mostly 1:1, enabling them to develop the mindsets and behaviours required for entrepreneurial growth. On average, our founders received 32 hours of support during the programme.

Transform SY is also a collaborative project from start to finish. Underneath you can see all the different organisations and stakeholders that provided support, expertise or access to networks during the programme.

Partners

The organisations that provided the funding for Transform SY



Content delivery

Companies that helped us delivering the content on the programme



Community support

Organisations that provided support in our community-building efforts



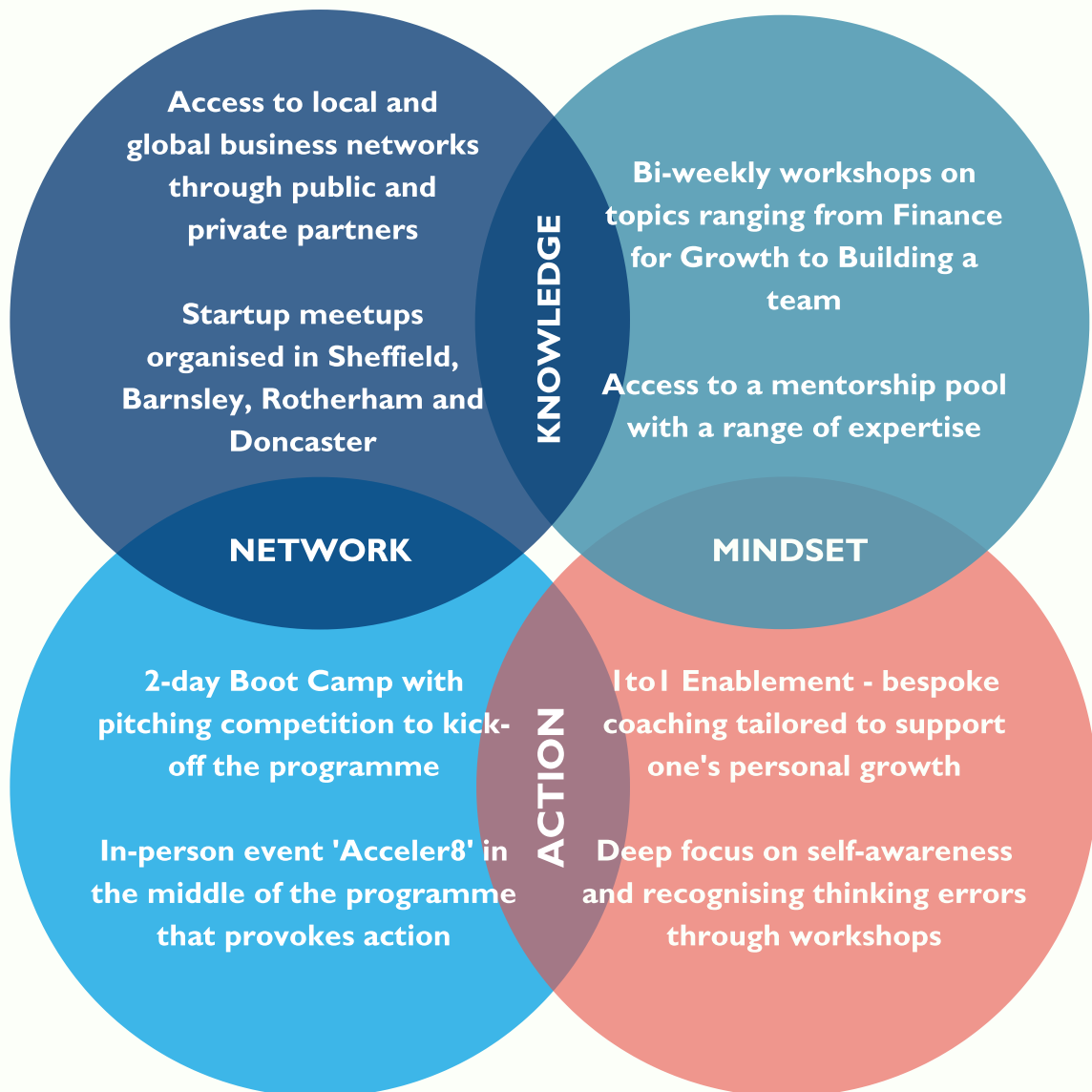
Reach-out help

Organisations that supported us in reaching entrepreneurs in South Yorkshire



Accelerating by design

Building regional ecosystems requires a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by different communities. That is why the Transform SY team conducted deep research with key stakeholders when designing our programme. We wanted to make sure we were complementing, not replicating, existing regional support structures, and filling gaps that entrepreneurs told us they saw. Based on this insight we designed a programme with 4 core areas - network, knowledge, action, and mindset!



Timeline



Jan - June '22: Cohort 1 is completed



Nov '22: We hosted a 2-day sprint called 'BizJam'



Oct '21: Transform SY launches alongside TEAM SY

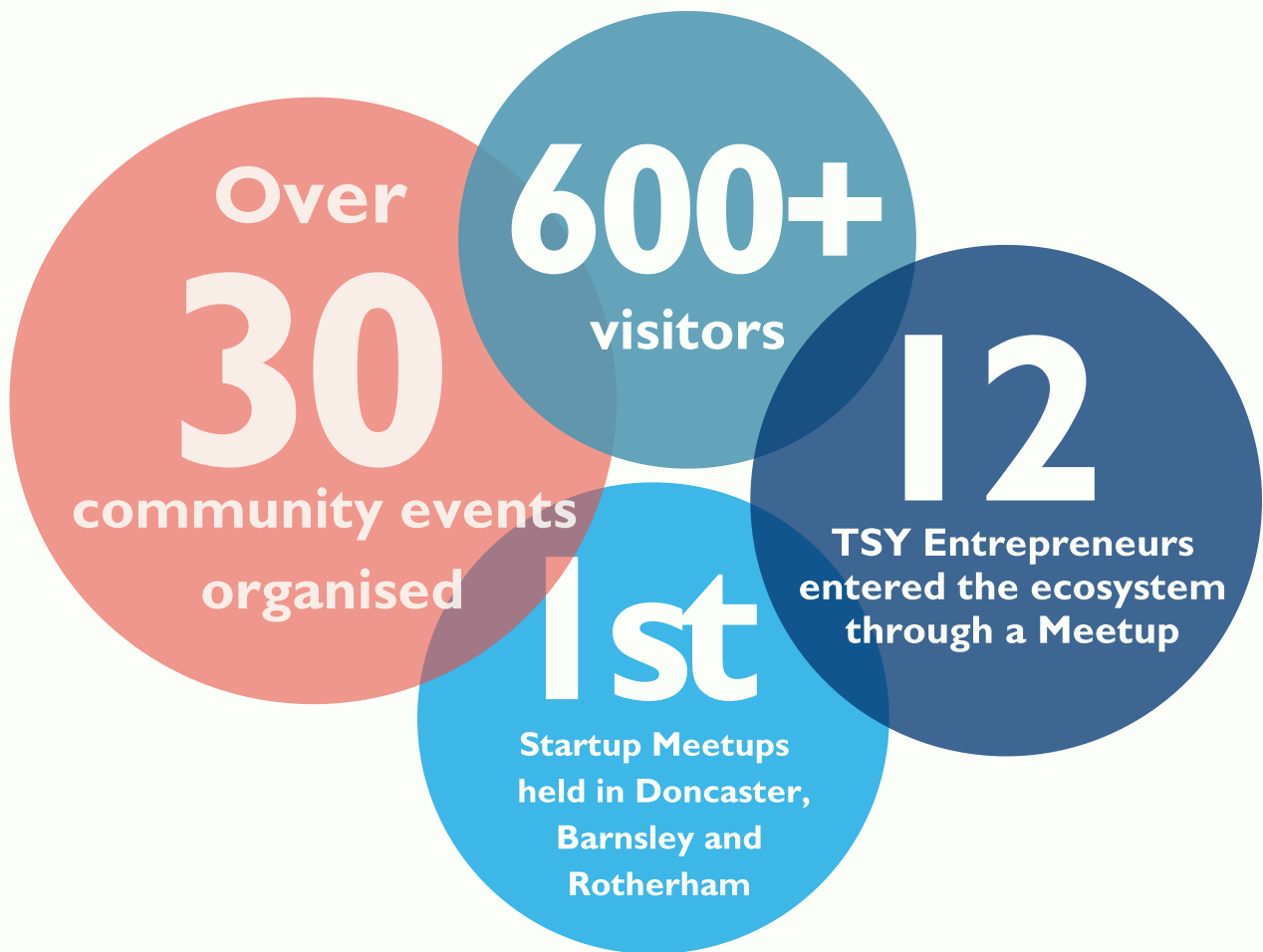


July - Nov '22: Cohort 2 is completed



Jan - June '23: Cohort 3 is completed

Community



Transform SY embarked on a mission to foster a strong startup community in South Yorkshire as an integral part of the overall ecosystem. Recognising the significance of connectedness, the accelerator appointed a dedicated Marketing & Community Lead to facilitate this development.

Leveraging our experience in various cities and countries, Entrepreneurial Spark collaborated with multiple stakeholders across four locations, diligently establishing an infrastructure that promotes thriving and resourceful entrepreneurial communities in South Yorkshire.

Startup Meetup Sheffield



- Our longest-tenured event with 17 editions.
- We have delivered 6 different formats of the meetup, including 'Find a Co-founder' and 'Q&A' with local entrepreneurs.

Startup Meetup Doncaster



- Delivered the first Startup Meetup in Doncaster ever.
- Connected with a local community champion and started working together; helped to organise 2 more events.

Startup Meetup Rotherham



- Delivered both a standard networking event and 2 Q&A events.
- All events were delivered at different RiDO locations in Rotherham to serve different communities.

Startup Meetup Barnsley



- Organised first Startup Meetup in Barnsley.
- Increased the connectedness of founders in Barnsley with stakeholders and entrepreneurs from other parts of South Yorkshire.

Keep the community alive!

Building a startup community is an ongoing effort. It requires continuous work from the entire ecosystem and its constituents. Completing the first phase of Transform SY doesn't signal the end of community building; it marks the beginning of sustaining the progress and collaboration. We have laid the foundations for a thriving community, and now our mission is to maintain momentum by fostering ongoing meetups, Get up and Pitch events, and other community activities. We know this mission is important because of what people tell us about the events.



'If it wasn't for Startup Meetup Sheffield, I wouldn't have started my business. Seeing all the support available, all other entrepreneurs working hard to build great businesses in Sheffield inspired me to do the same.'



'We used to get together in Doncaster all time before the pandemic, but everything stopped with it. Startup meetup is a great opportunity for founders in our town to recognise the need for community and work on it.'



'Sometimes it feels lonely to be a founder in Rotherham and events like this make it much better. Meeting other founders and hearing from other people has motivated me to work even harder and I can't wait for the next meetup!'



'I haven't been to a networking event where people are friendlier. The buzz in the room is fantastic and I'm learning something new with each conversation.'

SIAN

The South Yorkshire Incubator and Accelerator Network (SIAN) will continue to drive the startup and entrepreneurial community action. The organisation exists to promote the success of all startup supporting bodies in the city, and has taken on the organisation of the event series. Scan the QR code on the right to learn more about them!



Get up and Pitch

We created THE pitch practice event for entrepreneurs in South Yorkshire

'Get up and Pitch' was the result of listening to the entrepreneurial community in South Yorkshire - they wanted a place to pitch and receive feedback, and we created it!

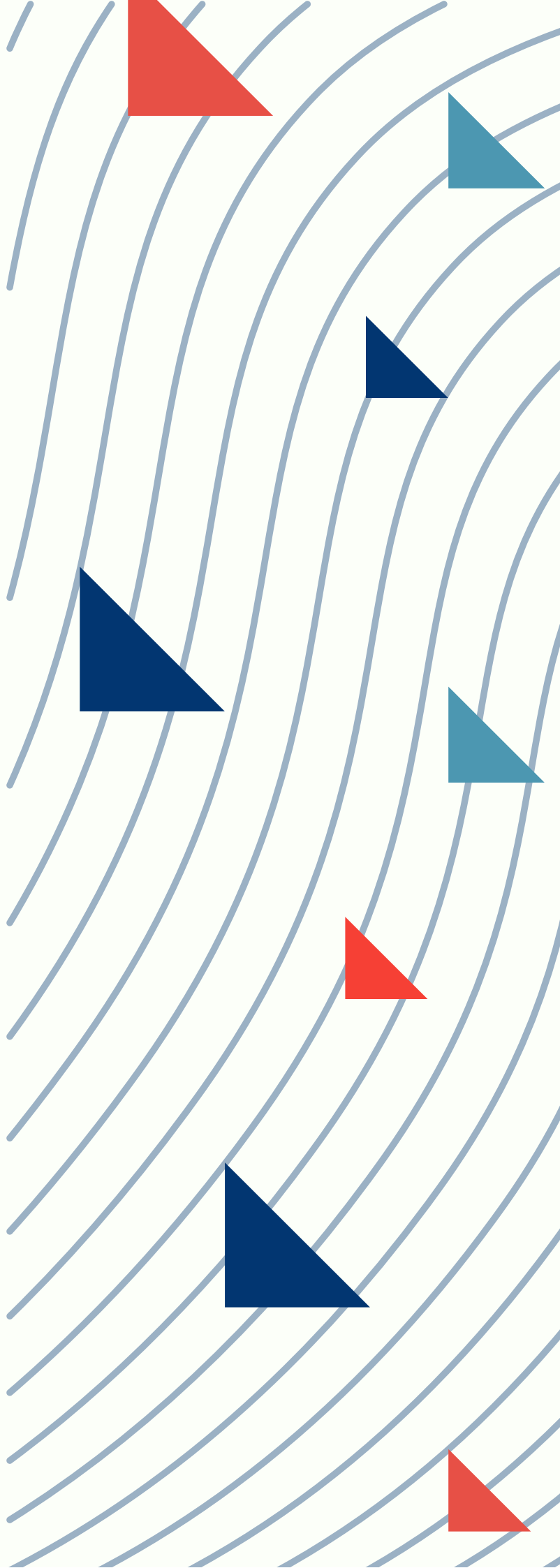
The format is simple - entrepreneurs deliver their 5-minute pitch and then the audience, comprised of other founders, investors, etc. give them actionable feedback.

We held 6 events and supported 19 entrepreneurs with their pitches - that is on average 20 minutes spent per founder per event to help them improve their pitch performance.

Built for Inclusion

- **Being inclusive means we treat everybody with respect and accommodate to peoples' needs.**
- **We set out diversity targets (race, gender and location) and achieved 70% of them.**
- **We are fully-funded so we can stay free for all entrepreneurs and ensure everyone can apply. We have broad criteria to include outlying founders.**
- **We followed Dyslexia-friendly style guidelines and designed our website and report to be accessible to people with visual impairments.**
- **We used gender- and race- inclusive imagery and language in our physical and digital marketing and training materials.**

Case Studies



Linda



Pioneering transformation in preventive healthcare

Dr. Linda Mizun had a vision to transform healthcare and make it more preventive, which led her to found Hero of Health along with other practitioners.

Rather than prescribing medication, Linda and her team started community groups where they enabled people to start moving more, forge connections, eat better and change their mindset around health.

Since joining cohort 2, Hero of Health has made significant progress. Their dedication and commitment have earned them the attention of numerous national publishers, and they have helped hundreds of patients reverse diseases such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and fatty liver disease. They are now building a digital solution so they can scale their method to hundreds of thousands of patients.

The Problem

Approximately 40% of premature mortality in the UK is attributable to preventable non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. These debilitating conditions not only claim lives but also put an immense strain on the National Health Service and the economy.

The Solution

Linda and her team created an integrated digital and in-person solution for their patients - community groups for people to foster and a smartphone app where you'd get personalised habit, nutrition and exercise plan.

What's next

The Hero of Health team is in the process of finalising their first round of investment while continuously developing their solution.

'Transform SY helped me understand better what my business is about - community and transforming peoples' lives. The connections I made through the programme are invaluable, and I feel more prepared about my entrepreneurial journey!'



Akeem



Pioneering transformation in managing carbon projects

Climate change is the challenge of our time. In order to give ourselves a fighting chance, we need to reduce our dependence on carbon dioxide.

Small and large enterprises that produce CO₂ by creating energy need to offset that carbon and that is done through the purchasing of carbon credits - a process that is currently very sophisticated, time- and paperwork- intensive.

Akeem wants to change that by digitising the process through the creation of an integrated platform that serves both the carbon credit sellers (clean energy project owners) and carbon credit buyers (CO₂ emitters).

With a focus on empowering the global south and clean energy projects in Africa, Akeem is also taking on the mission to help economic growth in his home continent.

The Problem

Process of carbon credit trading is too sophisticated and the barrier of entry is too high. That prevents more investments in clean energy projects, especially in the global south, thus slowing down the drive towards large-scale clean energy production.

The Solution

EnergyFund are creating the 'SeedLegals' of Carbon Project Development'. Their solution will automate carbon credit documentation workflows, thus eliminating middlemen and shrinking timelines, while being a digital platform will democratise the access to trading carbon credits.

What's next

EnergyFund are currently raising a Pre-Seed round that would allow them to build an MVP of their platform and start testing with users. Platform is expected to be launched by the end of Q2.

“A key takeaway I took from Transform SY is the continuous need to tweak your business model to achieve your vision and mission. The ItoIs in particular were eye-opening and the support from the programme post-graduation has been fantastic.”





Dan & Alex

Pioneering transformation in ending pointless work

Many of us spend our days in front of our laptops, eager to make a difference through meaningful work, yet find ourselves bogged down with tedious tasks.

Dan and Alex, as software developers, experienced the same frustration. They recognized that they were spending too much time integrating various SaaS solutions instead of developing them! Driven to make a change, they founded Ferrio.

What started as a solution for their own needs soon evolved into something bigger as the team realized that their struggle resonated with many others.

With the support of Transform SY cohort, they secured pre-seed funding, expanded their team, and developed Ferrio Connect – a platform that liberates clients from pointless work.

The Problem

According to research, manual tasks like syncing software and data entry not only waste valuable time (estimated to be an average of 30% of an employee's work week), but can also lead to increased errors and decreased job satisfaction.

The Solution

Ferrio's Connect platform allows companies to integrate a wide range of SaaS solutions like Sage, Airtable, Shopify and more. Their platform is built to serve all departments within the enterprise and is intended to save time that could be used on moving the business forward, gaining new customers and taking care of the existing ones.

What's next

Ferrio are in the process of raising another round of investment in order to further grow their team and expand their client base.

'After being part of an incubator previously I really appreciated the focus on the entrepreneur at Transform SY. This is my first business so that focus on my own development into the role of a leader was incredibly helpful. I still keep in touch with Mike and the team and I am still learning from them!'



Endre

Pioneering transformation in Osteoarthritis treatment



Osteoarthritis in dogs can be a debilitating and painful condition, often leading to limited mobility and a decrease in quality of life for the furry friends we love.

StemCell X, founded by Endre Kiss Toth, has set out to solve this problem by developing a stem cell treatment specifically for dogs with osteoarthritis.

Endre's team is full of experienced researchers and practitioners and Endre joined Transform SY particularly to learn more about what it means to be an excellent entrepreneur and to develop some of the essential skills needed to succeed in this role, such as pitching, delegating and planning strategically.

His growth throughout the 6 months on the cohort has been inspiring.

The Problem

Osteoarthritis is a condition that causes joint inflammation, pain, and stiffness, making it difficult for animals to move around comfortably. This can affect their quality of life, mood, and ability to perform activities they enjoy. Current treatments for osteoarthritis in animals are unaffordable and temporary.

The Solution

The StemCellX team has developed a stem cell treatment for Osteoarthritis for animals which comes in the form of a single injection, can be performed by non-specialist veterinary centres and have little to no side effects.

What's next

StemcellX is wrapping up their equity fundraising soon so that their clinical trial programme can be completed in the coming months, putting them in a position to apply for an authorisation to start selling their stem-cell therapy.

'It has been a privilege to work with the Transform SY team and to cover all aspects of the various challenges that entrepreneurs face when building a business. Being part of the cohort enabled the time and space for insightful discussions with my peers who are developing diverse businesses and to recognise that we are not alone.'





David & Gabriele

Pioneering transformation
in food growth

Fresh, leafy greens are an essential part of a healthy diet.

But most of the leafy greens that reach our plates are not that fresh - they come all the way from Spain or beyond, and aside from the reduced freshness, they also leave a large environmental footprint as well.

David and Gabriele, fuelled by their love for plants and innovation, decided to do something about it. They created the 'Future Greens' vertical farm and soon after that joined Transform SY to accelerate their growth. 18 months later, they are pioneering the first ever circular vertical farm.

The Problem

The energy crisis made vertical farms economically unsustainable, thus leading to leafy greens sellers to depend on imports which are not as fresh and have a large carbon footprint.

The Solution

Future Greens is creating the first circular vertical farm, generating energy through waste and upcycling the leftovers into fertiliser.

What's next

Future Greens are closing their pre-seed round and building the world's first fully circular vertical farm that uses organic waste as the main input and produces fresh greens as the main output.

“Starting a business is very challenging and lonely. Thus we are grateful to Transform SY for supporting us through our first entrepreneurial challenges.”



Sam & Zeb

Pioneering transformation in music education

In a world of ever-changing educational priorities, music always falls behind.

While the industry offers more jobs and opportunities than ever before due to the wave of digitalisation, traditional music curriculums don't reflect the new landscape which musicians find themselves in - and leave them unprepared to deal with working life.

Link Learning are changing that - they provide a better, more engaged, innovative and up-to-date method of teaching music that inspires students to channel their creativity productively - not put in on the side.



LINK
LEARNING



The Problem

Music education curriculums are outdated and ill-inspiring and creative students don't have a clear idea about potential careers in the industry.

The Solution

Link Learning provides engaging and up-to-date music and arts & crafts lessons in tens of schools in Sheffield. Their structure is scalable and adoption process by schools is short and seamless.

What's next

Sam and Zeb founded Link Learning Communities CIC in March to expand their work into supporting underserved communities in Sheffield with community-based creative activities. They are exploring funding opportunities to expand their work.

'We're a team of musicians and artists with a love for teaching. We want to inspire original thinking in our pupils and give them the confidence needed to pursue their creative ideas into reality.'

About Entrepreneurial Spark

Transform SY is powered by Entrepreneurial Spark, through a decade of experience working with entrepreneurs. Founded in 2012, when accelerators were still a fairly untested concept in the UK, we took on the mission to support great people, who in turn would build great businesses. We believe that over time these businesses will solve key problems, create wealth in communities, and promote inclusive growth.

After starting in Scotland with one accelerator space and 35 entrepreneurs, we collaborated with NatWest and opened 13 hubs spreading from Edinburgh to London and supporting over 4000 entrepreneurs over six years. Our partnership ended in 2018 and at that point we expanded our footprint across the globe, supporting female founders in Central America and supporting Ignite Bermuda to set up the first accelerator on the island.

Most recently here in the UK we have powered the Transform SY programme and the UK Space Agency Accelerator. The key focus for all this work though is putting the entrepreneur at the centre and supporting them as humans to overcome challenges, build confidence, improve business knowledge and deliver their version of success. That's what drives us - and we look forward to continuing to help great people build great businesses.






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