

AT A GLANCE

TRADING FOR IMPACT: HOW TO BUILD AND SCALE NEW INCOME STREAMS

25th March 2026, (in-person, Provision House, Dudley)

Please see below the session summary of notes from the March 2026 Social Economy FORUM meeting focused on 'Trading for Impact: How to build and scale new income streams'.

OUR HOSTS | This session opportunity was kindly hosted by [Provision House](#), High Street, Dudley, DY1 1PY.

FACILITATED AND WRITTEN BY | [Jakira Khanam](#), Partnerships Lead, [BSSEC CIC](#)

This session was designed to equip social economy organisations with the knowledge, inspiration and practical steps needed to reduce grant dependency and build diversified income streams without compromising their social mission.

In the current economic landscape, the transition from grant dependency to resilient income is a foundational requirement for long term survival and impact. We heard from three different perspectives and their journeys to diversification. Our guest speakers included:

- [Dinesh Patel](#), Head of Employability and Social Economy Growth, [Provision House](#)
- [Cheryl Jones](#), Director, [Grand Union](#)
- [Matthew Inniss](#), Founder and Managing Director, [Fitniss Wellbeing and Care](#)

Provision House

Launching a CIC to support charitable missions

Provision House operates as a comprehensive community hub of support, delivering services designed to move individuals from immediate crisis to long term economic stability. Their core charitable services Rehabilitation and Stabilisation provide home starter packages including essential furniture and household items to vulnerable households. Complementing this is the Food Club which is a dignified membership based system, providing a reliable alternative to emergency food banks. The organisation also provides integrated advice and guidance to address critical needs such as financial advice, housing and mental health support.

The final stage of their service model is Progression, which focuses on long term resilience through employability progression programmes. This includes structured training and work experience in fields like retail, warehousing and business administration for adults and NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Collectively, these services act as a preventative stream, intervening early to protect residents from falling into deeper crises such as homelessness, exploitation or severe debt.

Provision House has systematically added trading services to its model, including:

- **Membership fees**
The Food Club uses a paid membership model rather than free handouts, encouraging dignity and recurring revenue.

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- **E-commerce**
Moving beyond high street footfall by selling donated and restored goods via eBay and Vinted.
- **Service contracts**
Delivering local welfare provision and employability programmes.

Provision recruitment CIC and jobsite

Provision House's most recent and innovative diversification is the launch of Provision Recruitment CIC and its associated Jobsite. The recruitment agency represents the final stage of their Progression strategy. They take long term unemployed residents through a 24 week training programme (retail, warehouse or admin) and give them real world work experience within the building and then use the Recruitment CIC to place them into sustainable jobs with local employers.

Operating as a social enterprise recruitment agency connects work ready candidates with local businesses. Provision Recruitment reinvests 100% of its surpluses back into Provision House's charitable missions. jobs.provisionhouse.co.uk

Grand Union

Acquiring an asset for long term sustainability and impact

Grand Union is an art gallery and artist studio complex as well as a key anchor cultural organisation in Birmingham. They are currently acquiring and transforming Junction Works, a Grade II listed building in Digbeth. The derelict heritage building is being transformed into a multi-use cultural hub that will house a public gallery, high-quality artist studios, a cafe and event spaces. Digbeth is undergoing massive regeneration (including the arrival of HS2 and the relocation of the BBC from the Mailbox to Typhoo Wharf). With rents in the area rising, Grand Union made a strategic decision approved by the Board to acquire Junction Works. By acquiring the building, Grand Union can ensure that artists aren't priced out of the neighbourhood they helped to make cool whilst also supporting the local economy through public engagement and collaboration spaces.

Phased acquisition and development

After successfully raising £675,000 from the Local Enterprise Partnership and private developers, Grand Union completed Phase 1 in 2022 which included four bespoke office suites for creative enterprises. A landmark milestone was reached in 2025 with the strategic support of Birmingham City Council's Enterprise Zone and Community Infrastructure Levy grants, the organisation secured a 150 year lease on Junction Works.

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Fitniss Wellbeing in Care

A profit for purpose model

Founded by Matthew Inniss in 2012, the organisation provides innovative physical and mental health sessions tailored specifically for vulnerable individuals in care settings.

The venture began as a mission to bring smiles to faces through movement and music. Inniss focused on perfecting a person centered approach, ensuring sessions were accessible to everyone. Since its inception, the organisation has seen massive growth. It has delivered over 30,000 sessions in more than 500 care settings across the UK.

Unlike many social economy organisations that start as charities, Fitniss was established as a Limited Company from the outset.

- Operating as a private business allowed Matthew to scale rapidly, secure commercial contracts with leading care providers (such as Bupa and various local authorities), and reinvest profits directly back into the mission.
- By relying on traded income rather than grants, Fitniss has maintained the freedom to innovate its service offerings based on market demand and resident needs rather than funder requirements.
- The commercial structure facilitated expansion beyond the West Midlands into regions like Surrey and Manchester.

Regional considerations

- As highlighted by Grand Union and Provision House, navigating assets and new legal forms is a significant barrier. How can we better facilitate pro-bono legal advice on governance and asset acquisition across the region?
- Following the Grand Union model, the WMCA should work with local authorities to ringfence Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Enterprise Zone funds specifically for social economy asset acquisitions. This protects the Everyday Economy from being priced out by private regeneration.
- Fitniss Wellbeing proves that commercial structures can deliver high level social value. How can procurement frameworks better focus on social outcomes and local impact rather than favouring legal forms?
- Diversification requires new expertise e.g. commercial, legal, digital. There is a regional need for a pipeline of diverse trustees/directors who understand both the social heart and the commercial head.

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- Organisations should review their legal structures at key growth milestones. As seen with Grand Union, shifting from a Limited Company to a CIO can be a strategic move to unlock specific funding or trading opportunities.
- Social economy support providers should offer trading seed capital e.g. small flexible loans or grants specifically for social enterprises to test trading activities.

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Our thanks to all who attended this **SHARED VALUE IN PRACTICE: PRACTICAL MODELS FOR SOCIAL ECONOMY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR** session, our speakers and for the engaging contribution to this topic.



Other Sources of Finance

- Heritage Project
 - Commissioned Items
 - eBay
 - Vinted
 - Car boot sales
 - Antique fairs
- Need a "larger" source of regular finances
 - Social Enterprise

