

## The Unit – Area Board project

**Proposal: to support The Unit with a £10,000 grant for a period of organisational development and fundraising.**

*Proposed by Cllr John Brady, supported by Cllr Ricky Rogers and Cllr Paul Sample*

### About The Unit

**The Unit** is an enterprising, contemporary approach to working with young people in Salisbury, developed in consultation with young people and partner organisations. Its key aims are to help young people find positive things to do and places to go, and to foster citizenship by encouraging involvement in local decision making and social enterprise. It does this by providing or enabling a programme of projects and events, usually led by young people, and also by working in partnership with a range of local organisations and service providers.

The Unit works from a modest city centre “drop in” shop with a carefully developed online network via facebook, twitter and posterous, etc, in order to work with other organisations and venues to host various projects and programmes, providing a variety of ways for young people to get involved. In addition, in only 18 months since launch The Unit has quickly become a hub or one stop shop for information about provision and opportunities for young people. As well as dealing directly with young people it manages referrals and enquiries on a day to day basis from parents, grandparents, clubs, issue based groups, schools and cultural organisations.

With low overheads, good online presence, and a simple working model The Unit is able to respond dynamically to issues concerning young people. For example young people have been explaining how difficult it is to find part time work to fit in with school / college work, and that they would like to work both to earn money and show on their CVs, so The Unit now has a part time jobs stand, and a job of the week feature online.

Projects also provide opportunities for young people to volunteer and develop leadership skills, for example:

- Cafe Marshmellow (The Unit’s pop-up cafe) is led by young people who make decisions on menu, organising the buying and sourcing of food, and serve at Cafe events. (supported by adult volunteers with appropriate professional experience and food hygiene qualifications). So far the cafe events have made a small profit each time, and the team are currently growing herbs and food in The Unit to be used at the next cafe event, in partnership with Salisbury Festival.
- The Unit Records is a new young bands management enterprise - led by a local young man who has negotiated a year’s work placement at The Unit as part of his University course. On the first night of the August civil disorder and riots The Unit Records had 150 young people and parents/ family members enjoying an “all ages” gig in central Salisbury.
- The Unit town planning and design “fringe” group for young people called Re-Vision is led by a professional architect volunteer - ideas and feedback from young people are presented to the Vision board, and we have a big partnership design project coming up with Salisbury Arts Centre and another with The Chapel nightclub.
- The Young Reviewers Club is incredibly popular with nearly 40 members of all abilities and backgrounds, attending and reviewing a whole range of events, and being featured regularly on BBC Wiltshire Sound and Sparksite
- From October The Unit will be one of the first organisations in the world to deliver a new global Social Enterprise Qualification (SEQ) training to young people and adult mentors, with commissions ready and waiting.

The Unit is run by Firestarter Arts, a Community Interest Company (CIC) social enterprise with three volunteer Directors: Ruth Jones, Juliet Brain, and Hugh Davies. (A CIC is a legal company format for companies which operate for community rather than financial benefit).

The management committee of six people with professional and educational expertise has recently been strengthened by the appointment of two new members: Businesswoman and ex president of Chamber of Commerce Louise Howard (who will be spearheading a crowd funding/community sponsorship campaign for The Unit with local small and medium sized businesses tba in September) and Chief Executive of the National Federation of Music Societies Virginia Haworth-Galt who has joined the committee since standing down after her term as Chair of BBC Children in Need (SW )

There are two paid members of the team: Heather Minto, Project Development Co-ordinator, currently on a six month full time freelance contract ending in December and Keith Gale, part time youth work manager, supervising after school and Saturday drop-in sessions.

**Current position:**

The Unit is clearly successfully working with young people, and has many developments in the pipeline, including potential to bid for commissioning, as well as income generation through its social enterprise qualification work and consultation. The team have also made applications for funding support to a range of sources, and stand a good chance of success. However, due to a combination of the decision making timescale of these applications and the key volunteer fundraiser being inactive earlier this year due to a family crisis The Unit needs to find short term support to allow a further period of fundraising and development of a sustainable business plan, which includes taking over and continuing the work of a local registered charity (Harnham Youth Venture, to be renamed Salisbury Youth Venture). The appointment of a Project Development Co-ordinator has vastly improved the organisation's capacity to fundraise and manage volunteer support.

Area Board support now of £10,000 will automatically release a pledged grant of £5,000 which has been agreed by the Fricker Trust trustees, and The Unit's landlords Gala Coral Estates have given them a rent holiday until March 25<sup>th</sup> 2012. This will enable The Unit to contract both the project Development Worker and Youth Worker for a six month period from January – June 2012 and gives a sound period of time to continue to work with young people whilst securing additional funds/income.

The alternative is to make an announcement on 17<sup>th</sup> October that The Unit will close at Christmas, due to being unable to provide paid staff supervision and support.