

Funding Futures CIC

HIGHLY COMMENDED - OUTSTANDING INNOVATION OF THE YEAR



Funding Futures CIC is a Greater Manchester social enterprise empowering disadvantaged women through beauty and wellbeing training. Since launching in 2023, it has supported 164 women facing challenges like homelessness, abuse, and poverty, offering qualifications, work experience, mentorship, and essential support. With a 99% qualification rate and 83% progressing to employment or further education, Funding Futures combines personal restoration with practical skills. Their approach has generated an estimated £868,679 in social impact, achieving a 425% social return on investment.

Funding Futures breaks cycles of disadvantage and builds confidence, making it a standout example of innovative social impact.



What inspired the creation of Funding Futures and the vision behind using beauty and wellbeing as a pathway to employment?

Funding Futures was born from an understanding that many women facing social and economic disadvantages have the potential, but they are often held back by circumstances beyond their control. We were fortunate enough to already own salons, but we were also aware of our social responsibility so we explored how we could meet this need using the infrastructure we already had in place.

Since your launch in October 2023, you've supported 164 women, with 138 mentored into employment, self-employment, or education. What do you think has been the key to this success?

How do beauty and wellbeing help women develop transferable skills that prepare them for sustainable employment or entrepreneurship?

Can you tell us about the role your founding duo has played in shaping and growing this initiative so quickly?

What impact have you seen on the women you've worked with, both professionally and personally?

We believe it has been the combination of a personalised approach to each lady's individual needs. From day one, we create a safe and welcoming environment where they feel valued and understood. This builds trust which is essential for personal growth. We provide each lady with a post programme mentor so that once they have achieved their qualification, they have the confidence and guidance to take their next steps. Our mentors work with them for a minimum period of 3 months, helping them navigate challenges and stay focused on their goal of achieving financial independence. This type of wraparound care helps sustain their journey.

We know that confidence, self-worth and practical skills are equally important when building a sustainable future and that beauty and wellbeing can be powerful tools to unlock them. Beauty and wellbeing are much more than practical services, they are people-focused, confidence building and creative industries. Working in these sectors can provide transferrable skills that are valuable in any career venture. From client communication, customer service, time management, problem solving and sales, these tools are all essential for long term success. For many of the women we support, beauty and wellbeing provides an accessible first step into self-employment with low start up costs and the flexibility to work around family life.

They have been the driving force behind Funding Futures rapid growth. They bring a unique blend of industry expertise and a shared passion for creating opportunities for women who might otherwise be overlooked. They have designed the programmes, obtained funding, formed partnerships and have personally mentored participants. This combination of strategic vision along with a human approach has helped us grow very quickly without losing the sense of community and trust that makes our work so effective.

The transformation we see in the women we work with goes far beyond professional skills. Many arrive crippled with anxiety, feeling scared and isolated and unsure of how to take the next step. By the time they complete our programmes, they carry themselves differently. They speak up in groups, they believe in their abilities, and they are eager to move forward. We've seen them move into employment, self-employment or progress to further education. Yet, the changes personally have been much more profound. They have stronger self-esteem, improved mental wellbeing and a sense of hope for their future. One of the most rewarding parts is hearing the women say they feel like role models for their children.

Looking ahead, what are your goals for Funding Futures and how do you plan to expand or evolve the support you offer?

Our goal is to reach more women across Greater Manchester and that no one is held back from opportunity due to circumstance. We want to build on our model; combining accredited training, mentoring and community, and adapt it to meet the needs of different sectors and career pathways while keeping beauty and wellbeing as a strong foundation. We plan to expand our partnerships within the local community and strengthen our network for NEET women.

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“At Funding Futures, we know that skills alone aren’t enough. Confidence, resilience and opportunity are just as important. Our programmes are designed to equip women with the qualifications they need, but also to provide the self-belief and support network to succeed long after they have completed their training”

HAYLEY DARROCH

**Co-Founder of Funding
Futures CIC**