Unity Business & Enterprise News & Success Stories

Unity
Homes & Enterprise
Supporting BME Communities



May 2025

News Stories : Dentaid





Left: Unity Enterprise Manager Adrian Green (left), Dentaid Fleet Supervisor Richard Hill, and PAFRAS Director Karen Pearse, visiting the Dentaid mobile clinic at Unity Business Centre in Leeds

Leeds housing association hosts Dentaid clinic for people experiencing homelessness

Homeless people in Leeds have been able to access free dental care after Unity Enterprise (UE) hosted Dentaid at its premises in Chapeltown.

The UK-based charity uses a fleet of mobile dental units to provide oral healthcare for those experiencing homelessness, abuse, poverty and harm.

Its team of qualified dentists offer dental screening, oral cancer checks, pain relieving and emergency treatments, preventative and restorative dentistry, and oral health advice.

A Dentaid mobile clinic was held in the car park of Unity Business Centre, one of three business locations managed by UE, the not-for-profit subsidiary of Leeds-based BME housing association Unity Homes and Enterprise.
The session was arranged following an approach from PAFRAS, a long-standing UE tenant which provides support for refugees and people seeking asylum in the city.

Cedric Boston, Unity Homes and Enterprise Chief Executive, said:

“As a BME organisation with our roots firmly in local communities, we endeavour to support the most vulnerable whenever and wherever we can.

“Poor oral health is one of the most pressing health inequalities, with homeless people at particular risk.

“Dentaid do remarkable work in running outreach dental clinics for homeless people together with survivors of abuse, families in poverty, refugees, cancer patients, people recovering from addiction, and others.

“We were pleased to host the clinic at Unity Business Centre and thank PAFRAS for giving us the opportunity to do so.”

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Karen Pearse, PAFRAS Director, said:

“In the UK, refugees and asylum seekers face significant barriers in accessing dental care encompassing financial constraints, limited awareness of available services and healthcare rights, language barriers and variations in cultural norms.

“Many people also contend with psychological barriers stemming from past traumas and the prioritisation of immediate survival needs.

“With so few NHS dentists accepting new patients and so many people accessing support from PAFRAS with dental issues, it is great to partner with Dentaid.

“Having the bus parked at Unity meant that we could offer clients a dental appointment in a location familiar to them and we thank Unity for supporting us in this initiative.”

Jill Harding, Head of Fundraising and Communications at Dentaid The Dental Charity, said:

“We know how important it is that people facing health inequalities have somewhere to turn to when they experience dental pain, whatever their circumstances.

“Partnering with Unity Business Centre and PAFRAS means we can offer our services in a welcoming, supportive environment, allowing those at risk of homelessness and those seeking asylum to access care much more easily.

“We’re thankful to be able to work together in helping vulnerable patients regain their confidence, while alleviating dental pain and helping to give people their smile back.”

PAFRAS
Positive Action for Refugees & Asylum Seekers

Unity
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Supporting BME Communities

'Iconic' tenant thanks Unity Enterprise team for special business adventure



A longstanding tenant of our prominent Leeds enterprise hub has expressed her gratitude to the not-for-profit organisation that helped her business thrive.

Corinne Lapierre has been making high-quality craft kits and textile accessories at Unity Business Centre (UBC) in Chapeltown for over 12 years.

UBC is one of three centres managed by Unity Enterprise (UE), the subsidiary company of BME housing association Unity Homes and Enterprise. It provides affordable units for 93 diverse businesses collectively employing more than 1,200 people.

Corinne arrived at UBC as a sole trader, having spent a year working from her spare room and another in a shared studio.

“My business was very small and signing a contract for a unit for a year seemed like a very big step,” she explained. “I was delighted to find a place which was convenient, professional and affordable. It has always been a very friendly place where I made many connections with like-minded individuals.”

Corinne’s business started to grow and became a limited company in 2015, leading her to sign up for a second business unit. The expansion gathered pace over the next decade and, when she departed UBC earlier this year, she was renting six units.

Reflecting on her time, Corinne was full of praise for UE staff including Manager Adrian Green and Enterprise Co-ordinator Pauline Macnamara.

“Adrian has always been very understanding of what issues and worries small business owners might face, and has organised many events such as breakfast meetings, one- to-one coaching with business advisers and presentations from guest speakers,” she said. “This was a real catalyst for me in understanding how to scale up and having the confidence to change our systems.”

Corinne eventually accepted that running six different units was not the most efficient way to operate.

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“Having Adrian and Pauline’s friendly support made me extremely reluctant to look for somewhere else, they both make a wonderful team,” she continued. “I would never be able to find somewhere quite as unique as UE, but I did have to take the plunge and move to a bigger single unit. It has been a bittersweet change, both exciting and scary, comparable in many ways to leaving home as a young adult!”

Corinne added: “Being at Unity Business Centre has been a very special adventure for 12 years, full of special memories. I do hope many future tenants can benefit from the same kind of support I received from Adrian and his team. In a society where many small businesses are struggling, especially in the early years, organisations like UE are invaluable.”

Her final day at UBC was marked with a small gathering of UE staff and tenants where she was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Adrian Green, UE Manager, said:

“We are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year and Corinne stands out as one of UE’s most successful and celebrated tenants.

“As ever in business, there have been highs and lows – perhaps none lower than during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we worked closely with Corinne and her team to get them back to full production.



“She has become an iconic figure at UBC and will be missed by us all.”

Cedric Boston, Unity Homes and Enterprise Chief Executive, said:

“As a BME housing association, we passionately believe that entrepreneurship can change lives for the good, create new jobs, build prosperity and regenerate local neighbourhoods.

“UE’s mission is to support and enable people living in BME communities to start up their own sustainable business. This includes the provision of holistic business support to largely fledgling entrepreneurs who would otherwise not have the opportunity.

“The team should be proud of their role in Corinne achieving her business dreams.”

Unity Enterprise plays host to 'inspiring' International Women's Day event

Unity Enterprise, the not for profit subsidiary of Leeds-based BME housing association Unity Homes and Enterprise, was proud to host an unforgettable International Women's Day weekend event, bringing together more than 60 women from the Chapeltown community.

Organised by Beverley Brown of Ebony Milestone, the Preloved Fashion Collective Launch was a special two-day gathering to celebrate, connect and empower women through sustainable fashion.

The event was held at Leeds Media Centre, one of three business centres in Chapeltown managed by Unity Enterprise, which provides affordable units for 93 diverse businesses employing over 1,200 people locally.





Beverley Brown said:

"The event was more than just a celebration—it was a space for women to network, share experiences, and embrace the power of preloved fashion.
"Over 60 incredible women came together to celebrate togetherness, sustainable style, and ethical African-inspired fashion—all whilst embracing the power of preloved fashion.

"Through engaging discussions and styling sessions, we explored how sustainable fashion choices can positively impact both our personal style and the environment.

"The event was a true reflection of women supporting women, style with purpose, and the beauty of community.

"A huge thank you to Unity Enterprise for supporting this initiative and championing community engagement.

"Seeing so many women connect, learn, and uplift each other was truly inspiring."

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Alisha Wright, who attended the event, said:

“Getting to meet so many inspiring women and celebrating in my community is so grounding.

“From former nurses to CEOs, everyone had their own stories showing the diverse range of what 'success' looks like.

“It's so important to stay in touch with what's happening in your community and supporting where you can.

“Thank you to everyone who took part in creating such an amazing event.”

Adrian Green, Unity Enterprise Manager, said:

“It was an absolute privilege to host the Preloved Fashion Collective Launch which was an enormous success.

“Bringing people from different communities together is a key part of our role.

“We look forward to working closely with Beverley on future events.”

Cedric Boston, Unity Homes and Enterprise Chief Executive, said:

“International Women’s Day is an important date in the calendar, and we were delighted to play our part in celebrating it.

“Congratulations to Beverley for organising such a memorable event over two days. I have no doubt it will be the first of many.”



Free Leeds business start-up training programme set for relaunch

Places are filling up fast for a free course designed to equip aspiring entrepreneurs in Leeds with the knowledge and confidence to start and build their own business.

Organised by Unity Enterprise (UE), the not for profit subsidiary of BME housing association Unity Homes and Enterprise, Steps to Business is a series of eight two-hour workshops using non-conventional training methods.

The course – which can be completed full-time over four days or part-time over eight weeks - provides fun and interactive learning resources, plus access to business mentors, coaches and advisers.

At the conclusion, there is an opportunity for participants to pitch their business idea to real investors.

Steps to Business was launched by UE in February 2023 and has run several times since.

UE is particularly keen to encourage social housing tenants to sign up for the course, with a special emphasis on Unity Homes and Enterprise tenants.

”A number of other Unity Homes and last course have also set up their own business. It is a proud record of achievement we are determined to continue.” Cedric Boston

More information about Steps to Business, including how to sign up, is available at stepstobusiness.co.uk.



Someone who successfully completed the programme is Saskia Fishley, a Unity Homes and Enterprise housing tenant and owner of O’Fishley Baked.

Established in May 2018, O’Fishley Baked is a collection service based in Leeds offering a range of bakes such as cupcakes, cakes, loaf cakes, cheesecake, brownies, blondies and cookies.

Saskia said:

“I have been baking since I was seven years old. When I decided to turn my hobby into a business, I used a play on the word ‘officially’ and her surname to create the company name.

“O’Fishley Baked had been going well, but the guidance and mentor support I received from Steps to Business really helped me take it to a new level.

“I now own and run a second company, O’Fishley Brunched, which specialises in brunches and afternoon teas for all occasions.

“I would encourage anyone with a good business idea and the determination to establish their own enterprise to sign up for Steps to Business. It could change your life.”

Unity Enterprise makes the grade with glowing responses fro m business tenants

Our not-for-profit company which provides affordable space for businesses that collectively employ over 1,200 people in Leeds has achieved a tenant satisfaction rating of 9.25 out of 10.

Unity Enterprise (UE), a subsidiary of BME housing association Unity Homes and Enterprise, invited the 93 tenants occupying 142 business units across its three centres to complete a written questionnaire on the quality of its services.

Of the 65 responses received, 89.2% rated the friendliness of UE staff as “Very Good” or “Excellent,” and 88% judged their efficiency in resolving queries to be in the same top two categories.

85% of respondents graded the efficiency of reception staff as “Very Good” or “Excellent,” while 81.5% placed the UE team's efficiency in completing repairs again in the highest two levels.

The business tenants were also invited to add their own general comments about UE’s performance and services.

“Our experience with Unity has been excellent and couldn’t ask for better service. The manager is approachable and supportive. Reception staff are very welcoming. They make you feel like you belong and part of a big happy family. They always offer a smile.”

“I just want to say thanks to the whole Unity team for being so supportive and just generally excellent at their jobs!”

“Very happy with the premises and the service of fered.”



UE is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with a programme of special events including VIP visits, business masterclasses, roundtable discussions and networking opportunities.

Adrian Green, UE Manager, said:

“The needs of our busin ess tenants will always be our absolute priority. Knowing that we have their support is vitally important and it is deeply reassuring, from the high volume of responses received, that they are pleased with the services we provide. However, there can be no room for complacency and we will continue to strive to improve their overall customer experiences.”

Cedric Boston, Unity Homes and Enterprise Chief Executive, said:

“We are proud of the work that Adrian and his team are doing. Through their efforts, local people in inner-city Leeds are being given the tools to set up their own sustainable businesses at low cost and improve life chances for themselves and others.”

Celebrating the Unity Community!

Unity Business centre would love to share with you this fantastic success story! We interviewed Robina Bibi who has a non emergency ambulance service which supports the NHS.. Below is what Robina h ad to say about starting and running a business.



Hey Robina, thank you for taking part in this interview, firstly can you tell us a little bit about you and your background?

I am a proud single mum with over 20 years of experience working in a hospital environment. My journey has been one of resilience, dedication, and unwavering ambition to make a difference in the lives of others. Balancing the demands of motherhood and a thriving career has taught me the value of hard work, compassion, and perseverance. Throughout my career in healthcare, I have worn many hats, contributing to the well-being of patients, supporting colleagues, an d ensuring the smooth operation of a dynamic and challenging environment. My passion for helping others drives me daily, and I am deeply committed to creating meaningful change in whatever I do. As a single mum, I've learned to embrace every challenge as an opportunity for growth, and I'm passionate about inspiring others to do the same. I firmly believe that with determination and a clear vision, there's no limit to what we can achieve.

What is your business and how did you start it?

My business is a non-emergency ambulance service. It was inspired by the need to support the community in attending appointments under the care of qualified staff, ensuring a safe and reliable transport option for those who require medical assistance. Addi t ionally, the service aims to alleviate pressure on the NHS by helping meet the demand for 999 calls and reducing response times, ultimately contributing to better healthcare outcomes for everyone.

Celebrating the Unity Community!

Why did you choose to rent from Unity Enterprise and what help and support have you received?



- Comprehensive Services: Unity Enterprise often provides a range of rental options for equipment, tools, or software tailored to businesses
- Cost-Effectiveness: Renting allows access to premium equipment or technology without the significant upfront costs of purchasing.
- Flexibility: Short-term and long-term rental agreements allow businesses to scale their resources based on demand.
- Access to Expertise: Unity Enterprise may offer consultation and guidance on the best solutions to fit specific project needs.
- Quality Assurance: The company likely maintains high standard s , ensuring that the rented items are reliable and in good condition.
- Technical Support: Assistance with installation, setup, or troubleshooting of rented equipment or software.
- Customer Service: Dedicated teams to address billing, contract, or general inquiries. · Training and Tutorials: Provision of guides, training, or workshops to maximize the value of rented solutions.
- Upgrades and Maintenance: Regular updates, repairs, or replacements to ensure smooth operations.
- Custom Solutions: Tailored rental packages designed to meet unique business requirements.



What is the biggest accomplishment and challenge you have experienced in your business?



One of our greatest achievements has been the significant growth we've experienced over the years, especially during the challenging times of COVID-19. We are incredibly proud of the role we played during the pandemic, supporting our community and contributing to a collective effort. Additionally, we've maintained continuous growth while building and sustaining a glowing reputation in our industry, which stands as a testament to our dedication and hard work. Our biggest challenges have been navigating fierce competition and managing internal struggles. Both have required us to adapt, improve, and grow stronger as a team, enabling us to maintain our position in the market and continue delivering excellence.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to start a business?

Go for It: Take that leap of faith, but ensure you have a solid plan in place. Validate your idea by researching the market, understanding your target audience, and identifying a unique value proposition. Stay Focused: Keep your vision clear and break it into achievable milestones. Avoid distractions and stick to your strategy while being flexible enough to pivot if necessary Expect Highs and Lows: Entrepreneurship is a rollercoaster. Celebrate successes but stay grounded, and treat failures as learning opportunities. R esilience and adaptability are key. · Do Not Let Either Deter You: Maintain your end goal as your north star. Surround yourself with supportive mentors, peers, or a community that uplifts you during tough times and grounds you during the good ones. · Practical Extras: Plan Financially: Budget realistically and manage cash flow wisely. Keep Learning: Stay informed about industry trends and continuously improve your skills. Network: Build relationships with people who can provide guidance, partnerships, or opportunities.



Considering starting a business? Contact Unity Enterprise to find out more about how we could support...

If you are interested in Business, Enterprise or Employment at Unity, check out our website www.unityenterprise.co.uk

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