

senSCOT Briefing

Local Social Enterprise Networks

What are they?





SENs: Building a network of support for Scotland's social entrepreneurs

Local Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) have been and continue to be established across Scotland - providing grassroots social enterprises with the support they need to connect, collaborate and grow at a local level.

Membership and/or engagement with a local SEN brings a number of benefits that include: information-sharing; access to events and services; support with funding and grant applications; guidance with procurement and more. Membership tends to be free of charge - although some of the constituted SENs do charge a nominal fee.

Regular network meetings are organised, where members can make new contacts and find avenues for sharing resources and cutting costs through collaboration. The peer support that comes via each SEN enables members to network, share experience and ensure that local social enterprises enjoy the force of a collective voice to be able influence relevant agendas – both locally and nationally.

Local SENs: What are they?

The term 'Network' can be confusing - with different kinds of organisations from umbrella bodies to specialist service providers using the term. It is therefore worth clarifying what Local SENs are and what they're not.

Local SENs are groups of active social enterprises who come together regularly with the intention of developing and growing opportunities for themselves and the social enterprise (SE) community in their area and, in doing so, look to deliver their services and products more effectively within their respective communities. They are intended to be run for members – by members – in a democratic and transparent manner.

The SENs' purpose is to provide members with opportunities for:

- **Peer support; resource sharing; joint working and/or development of markets;**
- **A focal point for issues specific to social enterprise;**
- **A collective voice both locally and nationally;**
- **Raising the awareness and profile of social enterprise both locally and nationally.**

Purpose

SENs exist to meet the needs of the local social enterprise community. It is not their purpose to evolve into intermediary organisations or deliver services which could and should be delivered by either their own members or other local or national agencies. Their role is about acting as the key conduit between those delivering services and those they are intended to benefit.

[Click here to read SENs Blueprint in full.](#)

Local SENs and their contribution to the SE community in Scotland (2004 - 2018)

Over the years, two of Senscot's key activities have been to help facilitate and support local and thematic SENs; and to develop, with others, new services to help support, develop and sustain the SE community in Scotland.

The new services and organisations that have been established are a direct result of feedback from SENs and their members – as well as others across the SE landscape.

On page nine is a timeline charting the emergence of the SENs and new services – and, more recently, the distinct achievements of SENs themselves as they have secured their own resources/staff etc.

Today, there are 16 locally-based SENs. The local SENs have over 900 SEs as members or actively engaged. Eight local SENs are constituted and have their own designated staff. Over the years, Senscot has responded to feedback from local SENs and their members in seeking to establish, with others, new services to support their growth and development.



The SENs in numbers:



16 Local SENs in Scotland



Combined turnover of £500m+



Over 12,000 employed



Over 900 local SEN members

Current Context

Scotland's social enterprises operate in the context of **Scotland's Economic Strategy** - the social enterprise community promotes inclusive growth by creating jobs, developing skills, contributing to local economies and delivering wider economic, social and environmental benefits.

The **Social Enterprise Census 2017** states there are an estimated 5,600 social enterprises in Scotland.

In 2016, Scottish Government published a ten-year, national social enterprise strategy, which sets out shared ambitions for social enterprise in Scotland, jointly developed with the sector.

Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy 2016 -2026 will be accompanied by a series of three-year Action Plans – the first, **Building a Sustainable Social Enterprise Sector**, was published in 2017.

We will work with Local Government and third sector partners to encourage coherent and localised strategies for developing the social enterprise sector in every part of Scotland, linked to local Community Planning arrangements.

Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy p28

There are currently a number of SENs engaged with local authorities in taking this forward including – Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and North Ayrshire.

During the consultation phase of the Strategy development, 'extending and strengthening SENs' consistently ranked highest on an online poll relating to priorities for the SE sector.

Currently, a number of SENs are constituted – others are not. Some are partners within their local Third Sector Interface (TSIs) – others, at present, are not. Some SENs employ their own dedicated member of staff – others are reliant on the goodwill of TSIs to allocate staff resources to support the local SEN.

We will support the extension of Scotland's Social Enterprise Networks to every part of Scotland that wants one. These should develop as an important collective voice on key issues for the sector, establish an extended range of peer mentoring and peer-to-peer support, and facilitate further collaboration between social enterprises.

Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy p36

Impact of SENs

During 2017/18, three local SENs – Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow took part in a pilot project, Unlocking More Than Potential (U>P), funded via the SE Action Plan and delivered by Assist Social Capital.

U>P provides a cloud-based tool to evaluate and measure the value of social networks based on social capital.

The information gathered can be used to measure, monitor and manage the social capital within a network such as a community group, project or organisation providing information on change and outcomes of the network which can be used for reporting as well as strategic decision-making to strengthen the impact of the project.

The evaluation highlights:

- **900% increase in total connections can be observed**
- **Members clearly increased their connectivity as result of being a member of a SEN**
- **Over 500% increase in trust across the network**
- **Network coordinators play a key role in facilitating the building of relationships and trust**
- **This level of connectivity is crucial in providing services for support, sign-posting, representing as well as arranging internal and external events and meetings for the SENs**

[Click here to read a full summary report.](#)



Established: 2007
Staff: 3
Income: £160,000
Legal Structure: Co. Ltd by Guarantee with charitable status
Members: 45
Employees: 731
Combined Turnover: £24m

@DundeeSEN



@DundeeSEN



dundeesen.org



The Tayside Social Enterprise Network was set up in 2007 to support social economy organisations in Tayside. As the group developed it became Dundee Social Enterprise Network (DSEN).

Since then, DSEN has been delivering direct practical support and advice to Dundee's social enterprise community around areas such as funding, procurement, business support and training.

The network now has 45 social enterprises that are full members, 25 aspiring members and 11 associate members. Together, the full and aspiring members employ 731 people and have a business turnover of £23.7 million.

Dundee SEN charges for membership, from £50 to £120 annually depending on the size of the organisation, while it also uses the Social Enterprise Code of Practice as criteria for full membership.

Dundee SEN has been actively involved in wider initiatives in the city.

These have included being the third sector representative for the City Region Deal for Tayside; co-chairing Dundee's Social Enterprise Board in partnership with Dundee City Council; and managing a local start-up fund for the city.

Dundee SEN is a full partner in the local TSI and is also represented in the SE Code Steering Group.



Established: 2005
Staff: 4 (2.65 FTE)
Income: £137,337
Legal Structure: Community Benefit Soc.
Members: 156
Employees: 4398 FTE
Combined Turnover: £133m

@EdinburghSocialEnterprise



@SocEntEdinburgh



edinburghsocialenterprise.co.uk



Edinburgh Social Enterprise (ESE) was established in 2005 as a community benefit society.

Its mission is to create opportunities for Edinburgh's social enterprise community to develop and thrive, recognising its positive impact on society and the local community.

Like other constituted SENs, ESE provides a range of services for its members in addition to its core function in providing information; peer support access to resources, events and training. Organisations must be compliant with the Social Enterprise Code of Practice to qualify for full membership.

With over 150 members, ESE has been instrumental in leading on a number of initiatives including Social in the Gardens, Buy the Good Stuff and the Edinburgh Social Enterprise Strategy.

More recently, ESE has become the lead for social enterprise and third sector engagement and representation in the local

City Region Deal – where it will vice-chair the advisory body to the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal.

ESE currently has a staff team of four and is located at the Charteris Centre in the Pleasance area of the city. It is a full partner in the local TSI.

ESE receives core TSI funding of £66,600 and £10,000 from the local authority. All other income is through project funding.





Established:	2004
Staff:	2 (unpaid)
Income:	£0
Legal Structure:	Community Benefit Soc.
Members:	117
Employees:	Not available
Combined Turnover:	£49m

[@FifeSocialEnterpriseNetwork](https://www.fifesocialenterprisenetwork.com)

[@FifeSEN](https://twitter.com/FifeSEN)

fse.squarespace.com



Fife SEN (FSEN) acts as an independent membership organisation which promotes, supports and represents social enterprises in Fife.

The network was launched in 2004 with the backing of local social enterprises – supported from the outset by BRAG Enterprises.

Since then, the network has grown and established connections with local institutions – such as Fife Council, Business Gateway Fife and Fife Economy Partnership.

FSEN aims to provide resources and support for its members by offering access to a strong, member-led network, engagement with influential agencies in the area and the opportunity to promote business through its online platforms.

Having experienced difficulties in securing funding, FSEN was ‘dormant’ for a couple of years but has reformed over the last 12 months – again with support from BRAG.

FSEN currently has an unofficial membership of around 120 social enterprises, with meetings regularly attract over 30 locally-based social enterprises.

Unlike their colleagues in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, FSEN is not a partner in the local TSI and does not receive any support in the shape of funding or an allocated resource.



Established:	2008
Staff:	1
Income:	£78,000
Legal Structure:	Co. Ltd by Guarantee with charitable status
Members:	137
Employees:	2160 FTE
Combined Turnover:	£79m

[@GlasgowSEN](https://twitter.com/GlasgowSEN)

[@GlasgowSEN](https://twitter.com/GlasgowSEN)

gsen.org.uk



Glasgow Social Enterprise Network (GSEN) is a membership network of social enterprise leaders operating in the Greater Glasgow Area.

Since its set up in 2008, it has proven invaluable for members in providing a range of services from information-sharing and peer support to resources and access to events and training.

GSEN was formally constituted as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in the spring of 2017. In 2018, GSEN moved into new premises at The Briggait in Glasgow and appointed its second member of staff: a membership and business administrator to support membership engagement, communications and data management.

GSEN now has 137 engaged members and has been actively involved in a number of initiatives in Glasgow, as well as across Scotland – see activities in 2018.

Most notably, this has included playing a leading role, in partnership with Glasgow City Council, in developing the Glasgow SE Strategy (2018-28). The Strategy will be overseen by a Social Enterprise Board of which GSEN will vice-chair.

GSEN is a full partner in the Glasgow Third Sector Interface (TSI) - and is also a member of the SE Code Steering Group.





Established: 2006
Staff: 7
Income: £25,723
Legal Structure: CIC
Members: 337
Employees: 1250 FTE
Combined Turnover: £62m

@ScotBordersSEC



@ScotBordersSEC



sbsec.org.uk



Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber works to promote and support the development of social enterprise in the Scottish Borders area.

Membership of the Chamber is free and offers access to support in relation to funding, business planning, capacity building, marketing and financial management.

The Chamber works with members to develop local services from the bottom up, relying on an ethos of communication, collaboration and co-production.

At present, its membership accounts for a combined total of 1250 FTE jobs – generating £62.5m for the Scottish Borders economy.

The Chamber is a founding member of the Scottish Borders TSI, receiving £25,723 of funding from the £305k pot annually.

Members are given support to access £1.5m of LEADER

funding, which is supplemented by a further £1.15m in match funding from Social Investment Scotland.

The Chamber also offers various routes to employment for people in the Scottish Borders and has so far supported 64 young people into employment through SCVO's Community Jobs Scotland programme.

Work is also underway to develop four social enterprise hubs across the region, in keeping with the needs of local members.



Established: 2013
Staff: 2 x 28hr posts
Income: £50,000
Legal Structure: Co. Ltd by Guarantee
Members: 64
Employees: Not available
Combined Turnover: £16m+

@WestLothianSEN



@WL_SEN



wlsen.org.uk



West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSen) is a member-led network organisation set up in 2013 to support the development of social enterprise in West Lothian.

Social enterprise in West Lothian first came together in 2011 to start a SEN. Constituted in 2014, the SEN aims to provide promotion, representation and development for their members to achieve their goal of having a robust, vibrant social enterprise sector in West Lothian.

With over 60 members, the SEN is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and led by a board made up of SEN members and sector advisors.

Core funding is received from West Lothian Council alongside a contract with Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (West Lothian's Third Sector Interface).

Functioning with two part time members of staff, the SEN is a vital lifeline for the social enterprises in West Lothian by creating networking opportunities, access to peer support, and array of other benefits.

WLSen works hard to facilitate trading opportunities between members, while access to subsidised training and events is also offered.

The SEN is now recognised as 'voice' of social enterprise locally and has developed strong working relationships with the public sector – representing and giving evidence on various local fora.

Other local SENs currently active in Scotland

Aberdeen	First formed in 2005 – and formally constituted in 2010. Following a period of inactivity a re-launch is being planned for early in 2019.
Argyll & Bute	First formed in 2005, ABSEN formally constituted before merging with the local TSI. Following a period of inactivity the SEN relaunched in 2017 and has developed a local action plan for the area.
East Lothian	East Lothian SEN launched in 2006, merged with the TSI and is currently supported by a TSI staff member.
Forth Valley	Three SENs merged - Falkirk, Clacks and Stirling SENs - to form the Forth Valley SEN which launched in Sept 2018. Forth Valley SEN is supported by a TSI member of staff that works across the three localities.
Inverclyde	First formed in 2010, Inverclyde SEN is supported by a TSI member of staff.
Moray	First formed a SEN in 2009, Moray SEN was constituted before merging with the local TSI. Following a period of inactivity the SEN was re-launched in June 2018 and is supported by a TSI staff member.
North Ayrshire	First formed in 2015 and relaunched in 2018, supported via North Ayrshire Council and TSI.
Perthshire	First formed in 2015, PKSEN is supported by TSI staff.
Renfrewshire	First formed in 2014, Renfrewshire SEN is supported by a TSI member of staff.
South Ayrshire	First launched in 2012, SASSEN is formally constituted and is currently exploring options for funding and support.

A timeline of the SENs

- Fife SEN was the first SEN to be set up - with support of the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) and BRAG Enterprises
- Social Enterprise Academy set up to provide peer learning programmes for grassroots social enterprises

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 24

2004

- East Lothian SEN; Dumfries and Galloway SEN; Borders SEN

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 190

2006

- Glasgow SEN; Clacks SEN
- *Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan 1 launched by Scottish Govt (This supersedes the 2005 strategy)

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 265

2008

- Inverclyde SEN
- Senscot Legal set up to provide to provide accessible and affordable quality legal support to SEN members and the wider third sector in Scotland

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 348

2010

2011

- Edinburgh SEN; Argyll & Bute SEN; Aberdeen SEN
- Senscot establishes the Senscot Exchange, where experienced practitioners provide one-to-one support to emerging SEs. SENs and their members help co-ordinate the first SE Conference and Ceilidh at New Lanark.
- Publication of Social Enterprise Strategy*

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 119

- Dundee SEN
- Senscot Exchange merges with Scotland UnLtd to form Firstport

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 215

- Moray SEN
- Ready for Business set up as a partnership between Senscot, Social Firms Scotland and CEiS – providing a web portal and advisory service to help SEs access public sector markets

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 310

- Stirlingshire SEN; West Lothian SEN; Aberdeenshire SEN
- Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan 1

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 395

- South Ayrshire SEN
- SE Voluntary Code of Practice launched – setting out five criteria on the values and behaviours by which SEs in Scotland could recognise each other
- SENs in the Borders, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow becomes full partners in local Third Sector Interfaces;
- Dundee SEN co-produces SE Strategy for the city

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 442

- Falkirk and District SEN; Renfrewshire SEN;
- Scottish Community Re:Investment Trust (SCRT) formed
- GSEN host Glasgow's first social enterprise trade show at the Briggait

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 585

- SE 10 Year Social Enterprise Strategy
- North Ayrshire Council SE Strategy launch and Advisory Group set up
- P4P established - a partnership with Social Firms Scotland, the Scottish Community Alliance and Co-operative Development Scotland - to provide support for SEs looking to work in partnership and/or to bid for public sector contracts
- Edinburgh Social Enterprises hosts its first Social in the Garden
- West Lothian SEN forms unique contract agreement with TSI to deliver social enterprise outcomes

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 743

- Forth Valley SEN; Moray SEN re-launched
- Glasgow SEN co-produce Glasgow SE Strategy and holds vice-chair of Social Enterprise Board
- Dundee SEN launches new Network Directory
- Glasgow SEN's Pocket Guide launched
- Dundee SEN contributes to development of Tay City Deal
- Argyll and Islands SEN develop a Local Social Enterprise Action Plan
- Edinburgh SEN delivers Social in the Gardens
- Edinburgh SEN holds vice-chair of Edinburgh and Lothians City Deal
- Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee participate in the 'Unlocking Potential' (U>P) pilot
- SENs participate in the SE Action Plan Reference Sub-Group – set up for membership-led and frontline organisations to assess progress of SE Action Plan

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 926

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

- West Lothian SEN
- GSEN develops the first mapping of social enterprise, which would subsequently be used as the basis for a national census
- Sencot holds series of local events with VAS towards creating a more consistent approach to SE support among TSIs

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 512

- North Ayrshire SEN; Perth and Kinross SEN
- SEN members actively contribute to the development of the SE Vision – which was the precursor of the SE Strategy 2016-26 and the 2017 SE Action Plan
- Edinburgh Social Enterprise launches 'Buy the Good Stuff' marketing campaign
- SE Census 2015

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 652

- Glasgow SEN begins development of its Social Enterprise Pocket Guide
- SE Census 2017
- Building a Sustainable SE Sector 3 Year Action Plan

SEN Members/SEs engaged = 833