



## Happy 10th Birthday POP – Celebrating The Community of Us!

### Keynote Speaker



Indy Johar (left) discussing the *Dark Matter of the Democracy of Cities*.

This year's keynote speaker is Indy Johar, described as 'one of the most influential people in London' and founder of the organisation Dark Matter Labs which is focused on radically redesigning our cities, regions and towns for a more-democratic future. One of the projects DML is currently working on is "Trees as Infrastructure: Rewilding Urban Forests". Book a place to hear Indy and his views on Wednesday the 8th at our AGM.

Plymouth's favourite octopus is celebrating its tenth birthday! To mark the occasion, we're reaching our arms out – all of them – and inviting you to join us as we celebrate 'The Power of Us'. There will be a host of events, talks, workshops and a party! Now we just need you to help put the 'happy' into birthday and come and celebrate with us.

Ten years old and still growing. Since its early beginnings in 2013, POP has learnt so much from our members: from the inspirational tiny grassroots projects to the neighbourhood networks spreading across the city. As Matt, our chief executive says, the future is looking bright:

**"In the last few years, we've seen much greater recognition of the importance of the work – and power - of communities. And now, what's really exciting, is the genuine change we're seeing in the way citizens, businesses and public services are willing to work together, and learn from each other, to find a better way forward for all of us."**

In ten years, POP has evolved into a vibrant organisation with more than 300 members. Some are big, such as St Luke's Hospice,

Livewell Southwest and Plymouth City Council but the majority are grassroots organisations, flying 'under-the-radar', yet making a profound difference to their participants, such as the community singing project, Soul Singers. It was set up four years ago by MJ, a former primary school teacher, who believed that, through singing, she could help improve people's health and wellbeing;

**"I know the impact it can have on people's lives," says MJ. "I know that there are times when someone struggles to get here but they're glad they did. I see the change in them, and I see them walk out of here like a different person."**

It is projects like these that POP supports, enabling the people behind the projects – people, like MJ – who might otherwise have no-where to go for information and advice. It is a unique service that has provided business support and funding advice to nearly 700 different groups and organisations. It is a service, says Imogen Potter, POP's capacity building manager, that has contributed towards real social change in Plymouth:

**"We've seen a real shift in the number of people with lived experience now coming forward to set up their own organisations and run their own projects. This has given individuals a greater choice and, in many cases, a more profound experience."**

Pioneering projects supported or funded by POP being run by – and for – people with lived experience include:

- Marbles Lost and Found
- Art, Craft and Laughter
- NeuDICE Plymouth Living Lab
- Plymouth Recovery & Empowerment Group
- Moondogz
- Hidden Lives

We're really excited about some of the changes we are starting to see across the city in the way decisions are being made; those who are consulted and the provision of services. We believe there is a genuine change in the way people – service providers and service users – are starting to engage with each other about what might be best for those receiving support. We are proud to feel that our work – our commitment to trust and collaboration and our willingness to encourage innovation – may have contributed to this new approach.

### POP goes the funder

Three years ago POP took a radical decision to become a funding organisation. We decided to use some of our own funding allocation to fund local people running local projects and, by doing so, we would help to generate citizen action and strengthen communities across the city.

Since then, POP has invested more than £600,000 in more than 400 projects of all shapes and sizes. Through initiatives, such as, the Learning & Collaboration Fund; POP Collectives and £250-a-POP we have supported, for example, The Tree Project in Keyham using yoga and mindfulness to support children & young people's health & wellbeing; the Mindful Art Club which help's people to manage stress & anxiety and the Red Velvet Cinema which provides entertainment & companionship to older people. We have funded projects for young people; projects to encourage people to be more active; projects tackling climate change; projects to bring people together and projects related to health & wellbeing. There really is something for everyone! And as Sarah Foulis, a regular at Soul Singers says, grassroots projects like these can make a big difference to people:

**"It's lush," she says. "It makes you really happy and no matter what sort of day you're having, it makes you feel that you're in control."**

Take a look at the many free workshops and events we've scheduled to celebrate 10 years of POP. Come along & find out how we might be able to help you turn your good idea into action.



Creating change: Mindful Art Club

### Esmée's Second Gift

Earlier this year we were delighted to learn that the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation had chosen to invest a further million pounds in POP and its work in Plymouth, following an initial grant of £1.3m five years ago. Veda Harrison, the Foundation's Director of Creative, Confident Communities at Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, believes it is money well spent:

**"We have seen POP reach out and build the capacity of grassroots groups and organisations, supporting them to connect with each other as well as with decision-makers. We know that place-based and place-led change takes time and so we're pleased to support them with a further grant to deepen and broaden the connections already made and move them towards influencing system change more purposefully."**

## Come join the party!



Wonderzoo with guitarist, Stefan Daniel, at the South Hams Literary Festival

Our good friends Wonderzoo are throwing us a birthday party! They've booked the bands; cued up the vinyl and arranged the food. Now we just need you! Party with us at The Plot on Friday the 10th of November.

**POP  
AGM**

**The Community of Us.**

**We'll be taking up residence in Stonehouse from Monday the 6th to Friday the 10th November. Visit [www.support.plymouthoctopus.org/agm-2023](http://www.support.plymouthoctopus.org/agm-2023) for more details and to book your place at our events.**