

Episode 51 Securing our future

Thu, May 18, 2023 6:10PM • 45:42

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

podcast, people, community, bank account, CIC

SPEAKERS

Sarah Lawrence, Berenice Smith, Michael Hughes

Michael Hughes 00:04

We're all co-hosts! Who is pressing the button.

Sarah Lawrence 00:08

I've done it.

Michael Hughes 00:10

Okay. That sounds like that's that's the good soundbite for the beginning of the episode. I think that bit right there.

Berenice Smith 00:17

Do we know what the hell are we doing?

Michael Hughes 00:33

Welcome to the podcast, a childless community podcasts with Berenice Smith, Sarah Lawrence and me, Michael Hughes. And if this is your first time here, our podcast delves into the many facets that make up the childless identity, as well as what is going on in our wider community. And our hope is that with all our special guests, we can help you craft your own narrative, and what it means to be part of the childless community. And we also aim to educate those who are not in it. So they can begin to understand and support those they have in their lives who may be facing a life without children. Now, this episode is just the three of us as we celebrate four years of podcasting together, we still can't believe it. And we are extremely excited to share some huge news with you all about the future of the podcast, and our future plans. So let's get cracking with this episode.

Berenice Smith 01:36

Happy birthday.

Michael Hughes 01:37

Happy birthday. Happy 50 Happy Well, this would be 51. But happy 50

Sarah Lawrence 01:42

Happy birthday to us, four years.

Berenice Smith 01:47

Our listeners as well. Thank you for being with us for four years if you've made it for four years. Well on. Honestly, Oh, that's great.

Sarah Lawrence 01:59

Yes. Yeah.

Michael Hughes 02:02

We are listened to every continent except Antarctica?

Sarah Lawrence 02:06

Really?

Michael Hughes 02:07

And maybe there is someone that listened to us down there, but they we just don't have get the stats from that part of the world?

Berenice Smith 02:12

Are there penguins in Antarctica?

Michael Hughes 02:18

Yes, yes, there's penguins in Antarctica, but they're not in the Arctic.

Berenice Smith 02:22

Okay. Oh, good. Penguin facts always handy.

Michael Hughes 02:27

How do we go from birthdays to to penguins?

Berenice Smith 02:33

Let's get going! We've got some news, haven't we? And it's the three of us this month, so we can share some good news with everybody. And nice news. Sarah, I think you need to go first. Because what you say impacts on everything that Michael and I are going to say?

Sarah Lawrence 03:04

No pressure. No, yeah. So the great news. And I'm just so grateful that we persevered with it, because it's been a long, long time coming, isn't it since we first started looking into this, and started talking about it. So yes, the good news is finally, finally, we've set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC). And what that means is that in a way, because well, we've been doing the podcast for four years. And I don't think any of us believe for a minute, when we first set up, we're going to be here doing it four years later, when we put it together on the back of a post it note! In setting up as the community interest

company, it means that we are making The Full Stop a permanent thing. We're going to be a permanent fixture now like furniture, we're always going to be here. It means that we won't just come and go, it also means in setting up as a CIC for the benefit of everybody, because we didn't really know what they were when we first heard about them. It means that we're completely transparent. We're not set up as a business, we're set up as a community interest company, which means that we will be very honest and open about our finances, our processes, all of that stuff. So in essence, you're almost part of it as well, because we didn't just want it to be a business. So you, our listeners and us, are part of this fixture of the childless community. So yeah, we're really excited about it. It's taken over a year.

Berenice Smith 03:55

Can we just say a big thank you. I don't know if he listens, but we're probably going to make him listen to Daniel Our accountant who I've termed the Saviour, of all CICs. That's his kind of strapline because he's absolutely brilliant. Thank you so much, Daniel, for what you've done to help us. You talked us through everything as well, we had trouble just finding an accountant that could get the vibe of what we were doing. And that was really important in where we can we get people on board who understand the importance of supporting a community as diverse and as interesting as ours. And Daniel got that straightaway when we spoke to him. It also means that we have an annual report for public record on public scrutiny. We're listed on Companies House. And just to clear up the elephant in the room on remuneration to the directors as that's what we now are. We've agreed a of shareholding. We want to pay back into the community at large as well. So any profits we make won't be to us, they'll be back to the work we do. And the work that other people do, as well becomes kind of more of a collaborative thing. It felt important to support everybody in this and it feels very grown up,

Sarah Lawrence 06:25

Doesn't it?

Berenice Smith 06:28

It's hard not to talk about it hasn't it?

Sarah Lawrence 06:37

We still well, we actually started it last year, didn't we? Because I think we didn't mean without talking about it in the January episode.

Berenice Smith 06:44

In 2022?

Michael Hughes 06:48

We did? We did? Because I think we mentioned it in this January episode, as we were frustrated! Those who aren't in the UK, that this is a UK based entity. And yes, I'm in Australia. But I would just like to say that one of the reasons why we, we decided about this, and one of the things that made me very comfortable is that we don't have this type of entity in Australia. So it is a business with primarily social obligations, whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose into the business or the community that we represent. And that's what really got me is that you know it, it's now written in law, so to speak, that we we give back to the community that we represent. Yeah. Hang on.

Berenice Smith 08:06

lif anyone has any concerns about anything at all, and you're listening, going, Oh, that sounds a bit official. I don't know what it means. Ask us really ask us, it's absolutely fine to drop us an email. Our email addresses our names followed by the thefullstoppod.com. I get the p's wrong in our email addresses. I always miss one out. One of us will pick them up. We don't know all the answers. But we've been through everything. And we were very happy to do this. Because it feels like it secures something, it also means that the podcast, becomes a thing that we can carry on. And if we wanted to, we can hand it to over to other people to grow it, we can add more people and we will always be the directors and founders of it. But other people can come in as persons of significant interest as well. And you never know we might have more directors. We don't know. There's a whole kind of future out there waiting for us, but we know that we are legally compliant as well. We have a bank account with Wise, we had Paypal before. So when you've given us donations, which have helped us out with things like the transcriptions, which are all welcome, and thank you so much for everyone who donated, it's fantastic. But this means that we can now legally trade because we didn't want to do that through our own bank accounts, not least because, um, Sarah and I both have our own businesses, and it becomes dodgy. It's not the right thing to do. So ethically, we're not doing the right thing as far as bank accounts go.

Michael Hughes 10:33

If only people knew how hard it was to get their bank account!

Berenice Smith 10:40

Long story short, we went with one bank account, ethically, you know, he wanted to have somewhere that you know, planted trees and did stuff. They queried Michael's residency. And actually, it's too complicated. It wasn't really what we needed. So thank you very much to Wise, for facilitating all of the things that we needed. And finally doing that once we realised that we had a problem with one of the one of our forms of identity not being very clear. Literally that night before we recorded this episode, that's how quickly we like to fly on the edge of our seats. Yeah. Three bits of news. That's the first bit of news plus bank account as a bonus. Michael what's your news.

Michael Hughes 11:31

Okay. So some time ago, we were approached to be part of an event in Chester, in September. Last year, we did it virtually, but this year, I'm really happy to say, God, I can feel it coming in again. I've been so good lately. But anyway, this year, Vickie and I are going to travel over to the UK so that we can attend the Story House event in Chester in September. Now tickets on tickets aren't available right now. But we're it's all planned. The airfares are paid for. And we're coming over so that Sarah, Berenice and I can be in the same room for the very first time in the life of this podcast. Oh boy, it's gonna be when I cry. I'm going to spring this on you two. So our audience leaves who do not know what's coming. But I'm a hugger. And so I've been there, but I'm a hugger. I know how I don't discriminate. I hug everyone. It's actually quite funny. When when I hug some guys because like what the wallets that you could really feel how uncomfortable it is. I when I Sarah - Sarah Roberts - I hope you're listening. Because I know you listen to the podcast, like and feel that every time I want to hug her partner when I go up to Queensland and go and see them. You know, I like giving him a hug but you can just feel is a

little bit uncomfortable. But oh, making comfortable with it. Don't you worry. I'm just putting me out there. Alright, I'm a hugger. So you just drop me drop me a personal message if you're not a hugger.

Sarah Lawrence 14:03

I'll be honest, I do hug but it's reserved for special people. So you will get a hug.

Michael Hughes 14:11

Alright.

Berenice Smith 14:14

Ooh judgy!

Sarah Lawrence 14:19

Yeah, only the exclusive people!

Berenice Smith 14:21

I have never thought about hugging, I have to say this is an interesting digression into something that I wasn't really thinking about!

Michael Hughes 14:30

I'm very aware of it because when I can't when I go out when I get Australia, it's not a big thing. Us blokes - we hug and it's a sort of mates thing that you do. But I've noticed when I go over when I go out of the country, it's not something that a lot of males in particular feel comfortable with.

Berenice Smith 14:30

Post COVID as well maybe?. We must be respectful of if people want to hug or not? I think I probably am a hugger of special people. I have to give actually give mention here actually because those funniest things ever was, was when I met you and Vicki in that pub in Shepherds Bush. I was actually walking down the street trying to find Steph from World Childless Week. There's Steph and I literally on our mobiles on the street walking down, they're still talking to each other. Whilst we could see each other and kind of finally putting it down when we hugged each other!

Michael Hughes 15:46

Just to finish off with Chester and just say that so far, we will be we're planning to do a lot of podcasts there. So which is which is great for me. Sorry for all our listeners can't see this...can you the cabinet? That's all my technology. So I've got wireless microphones. And I know, I know storage issues. I've got lots of stuff.

Berenice Smith 16:47

Michael was just showing us a table full of boxes of stuff and tech nerd idea, obviously, most people go abroad and they take a suitcase for things they want to take back. Michael was taking an extra suitcase with things he wants to take there. Oooh he has a microphone. Microphone, everybody.

Michael Hughes 17:21

It's a wireless microphone

Berenice Smith 17:24

I'm sure they've got them in UK!

Michael Hughes 17:26

They probably have. But no, but but, but if, because one of the things we talked about earlier was that what maybe we should do an do some sort of event on the east coast of the UK. On the east coast of England, because obviously Chester is west. I've got gear that we might be able to use that or we, we might even be able to interview some people who knows,

Berenice Smith 17:59

If you're up for something, then there's a venue and you think you want to kind of do something with us, then please let us know, within what the possibilities are of Michael's travel plans.

Michael Hughes 18:38

More than happy to pay if we pass and stop in for a cup of tea that we've had a few offers already. So that's my travel plans covered? You're gonna meet quite a few people that you've helped and supported along the way. So I'm really looking forward to that.

Sarah Lawrence 19:41

We're going to be invading Chester. It's going to be amazing.

Michael Hughes 19:52

I've got one other request. Vicki is has been driving me mad. "So Michael, you need a uniform". The Full Stop on a t shirt or shirt or something. Let me know because I'll organise it.

Berenice Smith 20:10

A friend Isabel was doing loads of sterling work with a Eurovision Song Contest review last night and we started to watch at home, wondering what outfit could work on stage. There wasn't anything suitable so I think a t shirt sounds like a great idea.

Sarah Lawrence 21:08

I was gonna say the alternative would be what like a onesie slashed the waist or something?

Berenice Smith 21:12

I don't know there was there was some very dodgy outfits on Eurovision last night, very dodgy indeed. I didn't see any of it. I don't watch it. We don't normally I'd be honest. And we just got dragged into it by virtue of social media and various friends and mostly Isabel, who, if you're listening is about blame it entirely on you as to why I went to bed so late last night.

Sarah Lawrence 21:58

It's a whole it's got a whole subculture on it, isn't it,

Berenice Smith 22:03

And of course, Graham Norton because I just love Graham Norton's commentary, mostly known, just listened to him. We're digressing. Again! It's got nothing to do with the podcast. So our next news. The last bit of news, just in case you were overwhelmed by news is that we are setting up a community space. And it's a place a gathering spot, a meeting point, really, people we're inviting you in to be part of the podcast bit more part of what we do, and also a bit behind the scenes. And we've settled on a platform that we would like to use for this, which is very lovely bit like looks a bit like Facebook, but it's not Facebook, because this hours, one of the things we're doing anything on any other platform like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, anything that we do, it's their kind of data, not ours. And it's not always particularly safe. And you can get locked out of places like that to quite easily. There's a whole kind of security thing around that we wanted to have something that we could develop that was ours. And within that, we will be offering things such as recording the podcast within the platform. So you can come along and you can be in our virtual audience. We will be looking at things like something I've termed a nickel Culture Club, about sharing stuff, chat around kind of comedians and going out and things like that enabling people to connect with each other. And generally kind of shaping it the way that our community would like to do it. What would you like us to do in there, we've got some ideas, and we are looking to soft launch this over the next few weeks. And by the next episode of the podcast, we will be inviting people to come into it. That's our deadline, we're setting it for ourselves because otherwise, we will sit and wobble about it and go probably break it that's gonna happen. We're not you know, we know this stuff, but we're learning with you and to create spaces. So the idea is that there will be going forward, potentially two levels of membership so that there's an option for access to some areas at what we believe to be a reasonable amount of money. We were doing trials for free as well but looking at that to people and have just a month to play around to see if they like it or not. And then a higher level of membership that will give you access to more things. And we're working out right now what those more things are, what the other things are, so that they will always be business as usual, we turn up every month recording podcast, we're just gonna do it in a different place, it won't be on Zoom, which will be a bit different for our guests. But it means our guests get to meet some of our community as well. So it's a great benefit for them to the podcast will still go on the website, as it always does with the same cover sheets in the show notes. And the newsletter will continue. Currently, the newsletter will continue in the way that it does at the moment. But it might well be that it alters a little bit perhaps in some of the ways that it works. And again, if you've got any feedback on our newsletter, we're always welcome to, to listen to you about that to shape that as well. But it seems like it's currently very popular. So thank you to all the people that read it. But our engagement rates are tremendous. And I always find that quite overwhelming because I know what it's like in business world. When you do a newsletter, I know the engagement rates, our engagement rates are to be envied. So thank you for being part of that with us. So we're Yeah, we're at the exploratory point right now. And you will see it very soon, on our website, look out for a page coming very shortly, with details of what it's going to look like and what we're going to be doing in it. In our next newsletter after this one we were hoping to invite you in. So you can come and have a round and have play and see if you like it. And if you like it, then we would like to welcome you into our space, We do have to put a charge I'm so sorry about that. I know that's a difficult thing for us to ask of anybody. But the software itself costs us money to do. And one of the reasons why we wanted to become a CIC to open the bank account and to do the things we do is to continue our longevity. And to do that because of rising costs. But that all said, if you want to know our

costs, in the interest of transparency, we will tell you what they are, we're not hiding that from you. Anytime you can ask any one of us and we will let you know.

Sarah Lawrence 27:48

Okay, yes, we're doing this. I think the important thing to take away is that, like the podcast, you know, we kind of feeling our way, aren't we? But ultimately, it goes back to our very reason for starting and that's the community. So as Berenice has kind of said, we've got some ideas. You've probably got ideas. And as time goes on, it'll evolve. But we just want to have a really open safe space, basically, to bring the community together. I mean, for me, though, I remember googling when I first joined this community, and I could find so little, and it's all spread out, isn't it as you say, there's some loud voices there's not so loud voices, but There's so much valuable stuff. And we just kind of want to bring it all together in a nice, safe, friendly environment. People can get together, you know, whether it's as an individual as a business, whatever your interest is, but there is at least somewhere for us where we can grow and develop together, really. And that's why we've done it, isn't it? Yeah. Community.

Berenice Smith 30:23

Yeah, enlisting the resources, I think is really important, too. So it'd be certain areas that will be accessed to everybody. And that will also mean the resources as well. So I think if you're doing something, and again, this goes with the website as well, if you're doing something and you want us to list it onto the website, for the full stop, and you can do so as well, you just need to email me about that. I'm very nice at the full stop pod.com. And we'll get that sorted out for you. That really matters, that we are giving equal weight to everybody. As long as it's for the childless community, again, like everything this is really important is that our guests are all childless. So there's no trigger points or anything that we don't know of, we can't begin to look through every resource because there's so many of them. We trust that people will recommend things to us that they think is safe, based on what they know of us. So, yeah, I think that's a really important point to add. There we try keep it as safe as he possibly can. We would really like to hear from people who are doing something already in the community. This is not set up as a competition to anything. It's done with the godness of our hearts to kind of create the central place, which we've always been wanting to do, and to build on your audience that we've got in the sense that, you know, it's this is quite a unique thing, a podcast talking about childlessness, I don't think there's anything else quite like it. And of course, that means we have different audience, perhaps to other ventures going on. But it doesn't mean to say that we can't share any of that, too. We're also very conscious as well, that social media is really tricky. really tricky. I mean, I principally I suppose probably look after most of the social media, and it's really hard. Twitter is, is doing okay, a surprise to me. Facebook is really hard right now, I think anything with Meta is difficult. But we're on LinkedIn, and LinkedIn is going really well, too. But they're all disparate things. And we don't always share the same stuff across every single platform. Because it doesn't always work on every platform. And what this does is brings everyone together, but it might help I think in terms of tracking what people are doing, because there's so much stuff going on right now particularly around them. We're conscious that Today is Mother's Day, for some of you at the time of recording in the international audience. Father's Day is coming up in the UK, getting all that support together really matters as well.

Michael Hughes 33:03

And we will be the only community hub that spreads across every gender identity. Yeah, we welcome

Berenice Smith 33:14

all I think that's the important thing. If you're childless by choice, we welcome you all, regardless of gender and sexuality. It's an open space for everybody.

Michael Hughes 33:24

So I remember one of episode we were asked about a singles club?

Sarah Lawrence 33:40

That's where my brain went.

Michael Hughes 33:42

I'm not suggesting that's going to happen. But I just thought it was worth mentioning. Because it was quite fun.

Berenice Smith 33:49

The safe space something we've been asked about for a while. I think this is the thing that is really important to point here is that it's a big risk for us. I mean, CIC is a risk, the bank account, vaguely risk, probably least risk actually growing all of this is also a risk too. There's quite a lot of stuff going on here that. Yeah, it's taken its toll on us a little bit as an IT, I think it's probably fair to say just thinking about, you know, it's coming up for Mental Health Awareness Week as well. And just thinking about our mental health and our capacity and how we're feeling about stuff, too. It's a bit scary, actually. It's quite a lot to take on. So that we've been asked, and if you're asked about something, and we think we can facilitate it, and when we think we can then you know, this is a good thing. We could very easily break stuff because you know, why would we not? And then might be other stuff. It might well be that you're listening to this going yeah, okay, well, that's all right. You know, we know quite like this idea of kind of a community hug. Sounds great. But what about this one? About that, again, let us know if there is something else, we might not be able to facilitate it ourselves. But we might have the resources, we might know something, we're exploring things, because now we're CIC, we can explore things like grants. Because we have the necessary legal stature to be able to do that now. So it might well be that perhaps you can facilitate something through the community hub, it's a venture of yours that you think will benefit the community. And we can look at that with grants and other things, too. It's kind of like a, an open forum. And obviously, as directors, we have a responsibility and a due diligence with our names above the door. God, that sounds so weird to say.

Michael Hughes 35:46

But I think you're right, though, I love that. I love that idea. That way, as a community. So, you know, I was always a little bit uncomfortable about having a paid membership thing, but, you know, we've got to see, I see, we've now got a firm law that we need to give back to our community. And how, how good can that how good would that feel? That someone goes, Look, I've got this idea. And I need help. And we can go, here's the grant. Yeah. Because your community gave us the, the resources and the wherewithal to be able to help you, regardless of where you are in the world. So it's, you know, it's not just salary, it's a whole community, being able to help other people, we just facilitating that, that

organisation to be able to do and I just think it's bloody wonderful. I'm just surprised I didn't choke on that one, too.

Berenice Smith 36:46

I got emotional the other week, because of the whole thing was kind of meeting both of you. I've met you both, but you've not met each other. We've not all sort in the same room. I'm quite overwhelmed by where we've come from. Michael was talking to me about True Crime podcasts and listens to podcasts I listened to. And then Sarah, it was your skills, the way that you talk with people the way that you have this brilliant mind at questioning people - you think of questions I could never think of how. And of course, the whole counselling, the way that you look after people and create spaces, and I thought and actually, I thought, Oh, I could build a web site that I thought anything beyond myself apart from building is pretty website really actually. Then launched in the May. The following March, I went to an event about social media in Cambridge. And there was a guy talking about podcasts, and that you need to get past eight episodes. And to get past episode eight, then you'll be on the way it'll become a habit and you'll get on with it. And you need to have this equipment. I was thinking, Oh, good. We've done all that. We ticked off this stuff that this guy had said that we should do already. It became official, then it's quite amazing that we've managed to do something for four years. This length of time. Goodness, our guests have been all university brilliant. It's been difficult and we still carry on. You know, we have personal lives we also have professional lives as well plus the podcast it's not particularly easy to do and there is a sense that yeah, there's a lot of emotion here today about this because it feels like a big thing last night when the bank account was approved! And that was on my mind last night I didn't sleep very well, not for any reason other than just probably feels a bit like sort of like a big thing to us. And that was one of the other things that sorry.... I'm digressing, again, is that one of the areas we wanted to create on our community hub will be a little chat area where people can celebrate something important to them. Because they're very aware that this was very important to us. Sorry, so much in my head at the moment. It's like a whole kind of like mess in there right now. But yeah, celebrating people's achievements as well. So that might be that you planted a plant that's come out. Maybe you've graduated, or maybe you signed up to a new course, or I don't know, maybe, maybe you're running a business and the client paid you on the same day, you invoiced. There are things that are really exciting things that happen. So an area for that I think will be really lovely. So we can celebrate with you, as well. I think that's important. It's about honest conversations, it's about finding help, it will be about probably some live stuff going on, you might do some tea breaks, we would like to invite moderators to do things like that, too. Because they're trying to create a bit more of us, and a bit more engagement with us too, but not too much of that you feel like you're just completely bored of us, you're allowed to say that to everyone has a voice. Yeah, shaping it, you know, trialling it out, testing it out, seeing where we get to finding out what we can do to support other people in our community, and also all of our guests as well, I think that matters, as well, because our guests give up couple of hours of their time on usually Sunday morning, it can also be in a different time zone. So being able to give them more access. And something back is also really important too. So a big thank you to everyone that's been a guest on our podcast, and to everyone that's listened. Thank you so much. We wouldn't be talking and having this conversation if it wasn't for all of you.

Michael Hughes 43:22

I'd love to back that up with some of the stats that we have. And when you look at that long list of countries that we listen to, it's just absolutely incredible. And so I wish I could speak all the languages, but I'm just gonna hit on me a simple man and I can only speak English. Thank you in as many languages as you can imagine.

Sarah Lawrence 43:46

Because quite humbling, doesn't it? It does. So yeah, big thank you to everyone. And I'm very excited. I have to admit I'm very excited to be doing this. It feels like an A next big step, but a really important one for us and for the community. So yeah, thank you for listening for the last couple years.

Michael Hughes 44:10

Thank you for listening. And we again are sincerely thankful for all your loyalty to our work. And for those that have donated to us, we are eternally grateful. If you want to find out more about our podcast, we have a burning topic we have not covered please reach out to us as we would like to be as inclusive and diverse as possible. And you can find us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and of course at our website, WW dot, the full stop pod.com. And of course, once we launch our community hub, so keep an eye on our socials and our website for that news. Better still, if you haven't already, pop over to our website, where you can sign up to our listeners list where you can keep up to date with what's going on with the hub. And if you'd like to support us, you can also find the links to donate here too. We would love it if you could write the podcast and the platform you're using. And this will help the algorithm get us in front of more of our community. And as always, it's important for us to let you know you're not alone. Yeah, okay.

Berenice Smith 45:22

Thank you to you too. As long as the emotional stuff. It's gonna be weird.

Michael Hughes 45:32

I just like to say I love us. I love us.

Berenice Smith 45:36

We love you, Michael.

Sarah Lawrence 45:38

Okay, it's gonna be weird seeing your legs. I gotta be honest.