

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Local business named 'Star' quality employer for disadvantaged people**

Devon based business Pluss, today announced it is among five outstanding organisations in the UK officially awarded a special status for the quality of their business and the employment they provide for severely disadvantaged people. Pluss has received the new Star Social Firm quality mark for creating rewarding jobs within a market-led business for people who would otherwise have substantial problems finding employment.

Pluss provides employment and equipment services to disabled people. It does this by offering a range of training and recruitment services and through direct employment in its own manufacturing and mobility equipment businesses.

The company is dedicated to creating quality employment opportunities and more than 50 per cent of the organisation's workforce is severely disadvantaged in the labour market. An independent evaluation found Pluss met the criteria for the prestigious new Star Social Firm status.

All Social Firms create jobs for disadvantaged people within a real business context; this includes people with physical and learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, and people with long term health conditions. They are orientated around enterprise, employment and empowerment and like any other business they are run by custom, not charity. Those special companies that have been awarded Star Social Firms status are the very best, setting a benchmark in the sector. Star Social Firms like Pluss have been independently assessed and found to be sustainable operations that excel both in good practices and quality employment opportunities. Each has a sophisticated business approach in areas like financial management, marketing, HR and forecasting.

The Social Firms sector has grown from just five businesses in 1996 to 137 in 2006. Social Firms UK is the registered national charity dedicated to supporting the development of Social Firms in the UK.

Social Firms UK and its members , together with SFEDI (Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative), have developed the Star Social Firm assessment process and quality mark as a way of identifying enterprises that combine the highest standards of both business practice and employment opportunities.

Martin Davies, Managing Director of Pluss is delighted with being accredited with the Star Social Firms quality mark. He says:

*“Star Social Firm status is a great recognition of our team’s commitment and talent. We are proud to demonstrate that you can run a commercially sound business while staying true to your ethical visions and helping disadvantaged people fulfil their potential in a good job.”*

Sally Reynolds, Chief Executive of Social Firms UK hopes to see Pluss enjoying increased income and publicity as a result of becoming a Star Social Firm; thus enabling it to provide even more great employment. She says:

*“We are delighted that Pluss has been awarded the Star Social Firm quality mark. We hope it will help potential customers understand that by buying a product from a Star Social Firm like Pluss they are increasing employment opportunities for people who face extensive difficulties. The whole concept of Star Social Firms enables people and businesses to use their consumer power to make purchasing decisions that have a positive impact on society.”*

**-ends-**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Pluss**

Already identified as one of the best of its kind by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, Pluss has supported over 2,000 people in work and training over the last year and has an annual turnover of £20 million. 500 people currently work at Pluss, 260 of whom are officially considered as severely disadvantaged in the job market. The company’s vision is to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled and empowered to reach their goals. Pluss have many case studies of employees who are willing to share their story. Visit [www.pluss.org.uk](http://www.pluss.org.uk)

### **For more information and case studies on Pluss please contact**

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**About Social Firms UK**

Social Firms UK is the registered national charity dedicated to supporting the development of Social Firms in the UK. Social Firms UK is launching the Star Social Firm quality mark for first-class businesses which provide quality employment for severely disadvantaged people.

Visit [www.socialfirmsuk.co.uk](http://www.socialfirmsuk.co.uk)

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