

## Derby College

### Best Newcomer

## The Food Hub at Broomfield Hall

### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

The Food Hub at Derby College's land-based campus at Broomfield Hall to inspire students and the communities of Derby and Derbyshire to recognise the potential of growing their own produce and the business potential of diversification into greener business practices.

The Food Hub promotes local growers and producers by offering them an established retail outlet and café through which their produce can be sold and showcased.

It is also a community meeting place where groups and individuals can learn how to grow produce, even on a small scale in their own back gardens to enhance their health and well-being, and to become more sustainable.

The Food Hub's outreach work extends into schools and the wider local community through growing projects. These involve residents establishing collective growing areas which they can maintain for their communities on a sustained basis. This work is based on a social enterprise model where profits are reinvested back into community projects once the initial lottery 'Local Food' grant funding ends.

#### Project partners

The Food Hub is supported by Derby College and the National Lottery to encourage local people to contribute to the sustainability of their communities through local food production

### Section 2 The results

#### The problem

The Food Hub project was born out of Derby College's objective to provide practical training and support to local people – providing the skills needed to grow their own produce.

Changes in the funding of adult learning meant that such training would have to be charged at full cost and would therefore exclude many people on financial grounds.

The development of the Food Hub with a creative programme of events and training has made this accessible to a wide range of local communities and age groups.

The shop and café to showcase local food producers was an integral part to the Food Hub programme – providing income to support the community work and encouraging such producers by giving them an affordable and ethical outlet for their wares.



#### Profile

- FE College
- 13,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1002 staff
- Urban/Rural

## The approach

The food hub project commenced in July 2010 with an initial capital investment of £350,000 into the refurbishment of an existing College building to form the café and farm shop which subsequently opened in October 2011. The farm shop/café has an approximate a turnover of £130,000 a year.

The facilities were further enhanced in July 2011 with the development of demonstration areas which show different ways to grow produce. Derby College Horticultural students have assisted with hard landscaping and preparation of these areas and project workers and volunteers assist in the ongoing maintenance.

The Food Hub project workers facilitate four community projects a year to support people to grow their own produce with an annual revenue investment of around £70,000 p.a.

From December 2011 The Food Hub launched a programme of seasonal food festivals - bringing together local producers at events which have been well supported by the general public.

Regular school holiday 'Plant a Pot' activities have been offered since opening as well as weekend Gardening Guru sessions to give free help and advice to local people.

Children's birthday parties are held at Hub to generate additional income and provide related activities to a younger audience.

## Our goals

- Engagement with, and development of at least 30 local growers and producers. This will be 10 per year supported through workshops, mentoring/advice and resale of their goods within the hub.
- Development of 12 local community growing schemes. This will be 4 per year supported with set up of growing spaces, use of tools and equipment from the hub, access to non accredited courses to develop their skills and confidence and ongoing support and advice from a key project worker.
- Within the growing schemes our outcome would be engagement with at least 200 people. Through individual support and encouragement we will develop their skills to be able to continue to produce their own food in a sustained way as well as improving their awareness of healthy eating and lifestyle choices.
- Development of a market of local people in excess of 1000 to use the hub to purchase food and refreshments from it to enable it to become self sustaining after 3 years.

## Obstacles and solutions

On site building work at Broomfield Hall has hampered our client take up	We continue to market the food hub and recognise that the building work will impact on those who are willing to venture onto the site. Our larger events have helped to raise awareness of the hub and have bought new customers
Certain stock in shop not selling well	We continue to speak to our customers about what they would like to see in the shop and altered stock accordingly.
Need to increase customer numbers	New web pages have been developed advertising the Shop and Café and promotional offers to help to increase customer numbers

## Performance and results

- **To date we have carried out 8 community growing projects reaching over 800 local people.** These projects have encouraged participants to understand the benefits of growing their own food. The feedback from participants has been very positive regarding their own intentions for their future growing.
- **We have engaged with all age groups:** including nursery aged children in Little Explorers nursery; primary school children at Arboretum, Morley, and Cavendish Close schools; Derby College students and the general public.
- **Our project work has touched all income levels of the community** -from those from deprived communities to those who can afford to travel and visit our site.
- **We have also engaged with a large cross section of the Derby population.** The schools we have worked with have been from some of the most deprived wards in Derby and are from very different locations which have ensured our coverage is broad particularly from a cultural diversity point of view.
- **People continue to benefit through our project work.** We are delighted that our project work has been so successful and we have received interest for more than 4 new projects for the coming year please we consistent repeat business for our activities and food fairs.
- **Our half term children activities continue to grow in popularity.** This gives us the opportunity to encourage and educate both children and adults in growing and gardening. We estimate over 600 children have benefitted from these opportunities over the last 2 years and many return each holiday.
- **The Café and Farm Shop is becoming established as a quality venue selling locally grown and produced food.** The Food Hub cafe was a runner up in the Derby food and drink awards best out of town category in 2011. Our ethos enables us to ensure we are supporting local growers and producers and encouraging the community to do so. We estimate that over 8000 people have visited us over the time we have been open.
- **Potential for the future.** Once in profit situation within the café and farm shop, it remains our intention to reinvest the money by continuing to support our local community with further projects
- **We continue to attract new customers.** Our customers compliment us on our business whether it is for children's activities, the food we cook and serve in the Café or the service and produce we provide through the Farm Shop
- **We are working with over 30 local producers on a regular basis:** and are encouraging more to come on board through our food festivals.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

- The Food Hub demonstrates what can be achieved with a small amount of resource to enhance an old building to become a centre to showcase sustainable living.
- We have proved how innovation and being willing to take a risk can build into something exciting to enhance a college community and local community.

- We continued to demonstrate how enterprise can sit alongside the main college business to demonstrate sustainability.
- We have developed best practice in how the organisation can engage with the wider public to share knowledge skills and experience and to act as a catalyst for change.
- We demonstrate how to thrive and survive through difficult times as we have had many challenges along our journey and are still striving to get to the point where we ourselves can sustain our community work following the end of our project funding.
- We are an excellent example of how being willing to take a risk can demonstrate our beliefs.
- We have a proven model of building a social enterprise as we aim to continue with the Food Hub becoming self-sustaining after 3 years environmentally, socially and financially. Once the Café and Shop are in a profit situation it is our intention to reinvest the money back into further community projects. Activities will be costed to bring in some revenue to help with this.
- We are willing to share our business planning and methodology with people as this is a project that can be easily replicated elsewhere.
- The Food Hub demonstrates that, as FE and HE providers, we can also demonstrate and education in non traditional ways and add some real value back into our communities.

### Sharing your project

We continue to engage with both our existing and new suppliers and to promote and develop existing and further product ranges. In order to encourage more footfall from the Café to the Shop, we have continued with advertising fresh produce for sale on our Promotional Screen in the Café which is updated weekly. We continue to produce seasonal activities flyers along with Food Festival Flyers which are promoted through local media, magazines and newspapers, our web-site, Face Book, Twitter and Derby College Internet, plus distribution through our database of customers, local schools, community groups and our suppliers.

Our activities include:

- Children's summer activities
- Attendance at local Fairs/events promoting the Food Hub projects activities, suppliers and general ethos.
- Derby College events (as at local fairs/events)
- Web pages to be updated accordingly
- Facebook and Twitter pages
- PR and advertising in the local media
- Seasonal Food & Drink Fairs on site
- Children's parties based around farming and growing activities
- Seasonal flyers to promote activities, 'guru' days etc.

The above are all promoted with the assistance of Derby College Marketing and PR department.

### What has it meant to your institution to a Green Gown Award finalist?

The positive recognition of what we have achieved has been positive for the Food Hub both internally within the college and with external clients. It has been allowed us to spread the word even more about our vision and has boosted our confidence in what we are delivering for our communities.

### Further information

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