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## Fully funded business advice & training

Welcome to the first edition of Bulletin - the new newsletter for Solihull Council's Community Enterprise for Success programme.

We provide free (fully funded) business advice and training to help charities, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises develop and grow.

Last year, our team of advisers supported 120 people across 40 organisations with business planning, governance, financial planning, trading arms, marketing, measuring impact and procurement readiness.

Clients have told us that our work together has enabled them to win new contracts, secure funding bids, build valuable networks, buy from likeminded organisations, create new jobs, protect existing jobs, adapt to funding cuts, increase trading income, raise their profile and be more confident about the future.

This year, we're continuing to offer one-to-one business support, advice



Read all about how we've helped Gro-Organic CIC, p6

surgeries, a comprehensive training programme and are introducing social enterprise study visits - a great opportunity to learn from peers and hear their inspirational stories.

Read more inside...

**i** You can find more details about the support services available and eligibility criteria by visiting our new project website: <http://communityenterprise-solihull.org>

## On the ground, local support



Dave Lane, Development in Social Enterprise CIC

tailored business advice for existing voluntary and community organisations looking to become more enterprising.

Dave Lane said: "We are delighted to be progressing our achievements and relationships with clients in year one, and aim to provide even greater value this year to help charities and community enterprises improve their 'business health' so they become more robust.

"There is real potential for local community enterprises to play an exciting role in the Smith's Wood and Craig Croft Village Centre areas, where we'll be on the ground running enterprise awareness sessions, workshops and giving business advice."

**i** Get in touch, visit the website and follow us on Twitter @Solihull\_ComEnt

Solihull organisations can be confident that they are accessing high quality and sector focused services from Community Enterprise for Success.

Local social enterprise experts - Development in Social Enterprise (DISE) together with the BEST Network and DYNAMIC Marketing - are providing

### Community enterprise online toolkit

A new self-help community enterprise resource for start-up and existing organisations is available to access on our website.

With so many freely available business development resources and toolkits written especially for community benefit organisations - we've decided to organise them by topic and make them easy to find when you need them.

There are 14 modules in total, made up of straightforward guides and information written by our advisers together with links which

signpost users to further online resources. Modules include:

- Community & Social Enterprise
- Business Planning
- Governance
- Finance & Funding
- Commissioning & Procurement
- Market Research
- Marketing
- Measuring Social Value
- Staff & Volunteer Management

**i** Access the toolkit by registering at: <http://communityenterprise-solihull.org/toolkit>

## Events



### From VCO to Social Enterprise - is it for you?

Introduction to enterprise workshops  
10.30am-12.30pm | 20.02.2013  
Three Trees Baptist Church Centre

10am-12pm | 20.03.2013  
Chelmsley Wood Library

10.30am-12.30pm | 17.04.2013  
Smith's Wood Sports College

### Setting up a Social Enterprise or Trading Arm

Examining the Pros and Cons of setting up a trading arm for your VCO  
2pm-5pm | 20.02.2013  
Three Trees Baptist Church Centre

### Social Impact Measurement Made Easy

De-mystifying the myriad of tools and methods to help you understand how to measure your social value simply and systematically  
1.30pm-4.30pm | 20.03.2013  
Chelmsley Wood Library

### Business Advice Surgeries

See a business adviser at a community venue near you. More details online...

### Book your place...

**i** All our events and surgeries are free to Solihull VCOs and social enterprises and available to book online at: <http://disecic.eventbrite.co.uk>

## Study visit to ASAN



ASAN host recent visit from Labour Leader, Ed Milliband MP

New for 2013 are our social enterprise study visits, starting with All Saints Action Network (ASAN) in Wolverhampton on 16th April.

Established in 1998 following the closure of Wolverhampton's Royal Hospital, ASAN has become a much celebrated example of community based economic regeneration both in the West Midlands and further afield, providing employment for local people whilst bringing community assets back into productive use.

Operating as a development trust, ASAN runs several community businesses including *The Workspace*, *The Big Garage*, *Southside Sports* and is currently going through asset transfer with Wolverhampton City Council for redeveloping a former school into an enterprise hub.

Visits to all businesses are included in the half-day event hosted by the chief executive, Christy Acton, plus lunch and networking with staff and managers.

**i** To register and see the programme, go to: <http://disecic.eventbrite.co.uk>. For more information about ASAN visit: [www.asan.org.uk](http://www.asan.org.uk)

## Signpost Inclusion

### For children and young people with additional needs

Signpost Inclusion was set up as a community interest company in 2011 to provide support, training and resources to families and professionals caring for children and young people with learning difficulties and additional needs.

"We are the first to admit that we needed help to become more business savvy in order to sustain our organisation and continue delivering services that many Solihull families rely on. Running a business is not something that comes naturally to us, so the Community Enterprise for Success programme was spot on for our needs," says Tony Ibbotson, Project Lead at Signpost Inclusion.

"Initially we had a meeting with a social enterprise business adviser who really took the time to get to know us and understand our strengths before pin-pointing where we needed help. There wasn't a ready-made plan, it was all bespoke support, designed to meet our specific requirements.

"We started by working together on business development and financial forecasts so that we could see the bigger picture and lay the foundations for a different way of working to achieve our social purpose – setting a mindset shift in motion. Each meeting gave us renewed enthusiasm and energy.

"After business planning, we were mentored by a marketing specialist who worked with us to identify the key

customers for each of our services. This made us realise we were trying to spread ourselves too thinly – we really needed to focus on our core support."

The past year has been a steep learning curve but things are starting to click into place, says Tony: "The financial planning is coming to fruition and we're embracing change with greater confidence; we're definitely more business focused. We also have a much better understanding of marketing and have found ourselves doing more market research – asking for customer input before we submit proposals and funding applications.

"We've launched a new website, started holding our own fundraising events for a more diverse revenue mix, and improved our database resulting in more targeted email communications. A good by-product of the support has been the connections we've made with the social enterprise community; this has been great for meeting like-minded people and raising our profile.

"Signpost Inclusion is in a much stronger position as a result of the help we've received and being selected as a delivery partner in the national Early Support Consortium has given us an added boost, initiating other developments such as an office move and plans to work directly with siblings as well as parents of children with additional needs."



Community Enterprise for Success assisted Signpost Inclusion with business development, financial planning and marketing support and training.

### Key facts

**Mission:** To benefit the lives of children and young people with additional needs.

**Services:** Parent to parent support groups and drop in sessions, Early Support training and capacity building, resource library with books and sensory resources, signposting to relevant services.

**Established:** 2011

**Legal structure:** Community Interest Company

**Business challenge:** To become more business focused without negatively impacting on service users.

**i** <http://signpostinclusion.org.uk>

**“ Working together to see the bigger picture and lay the foundations for a different way of working to achieve our social purpose – setting a mindset shift in motion. Each meeting gave us renewed enthusiasm and energy.”**

*Tony Ibbotson, Signpost Inclusion*

## Gro-Organic CIC

### Making spaces green and transforming food culture by inspiring everyone to 'Have a Gro'

When father and daughter team, Steve and Sarah Gill, began realising their dream of helping local people to live healthy and sustainable lifestyles, both were unaware that their venture was a social enterprise in the making.

"From the outset, our aim was to support people of all ages and abilities to understand where their food comes from and what healthy living is. In addition, we wanted to support our community by helping them transform under-utilised areas of land into vibrant food growing or communal gardens. Our food education programme - 'Wellies2Bellies' - provides dynamic food growing experiences which enhance land and provide community benefits," says Sarah. "We knew that our legal structure didn't reflect the social purpose of our business and needed advice on what we should do," she explains.

Steve and Sarah were able to access support under the Community Enterprise for Success programme, delivered by local business advice experts. "What we really valued was the time taken by our adviser to understand what we do inside out, asking challenging questions about our future ambitions and helping us to focus our ideas into three work streams - Schools, NEETs and Community Work," adds Steve.

Our adviser recommended that Gro-Organic change its structure from a Company Ltd by Shares to a Community

Interest Company, a common legal form for social enterprises. This would reflect the social purpose of the business and open up finance and funding opportunities as well as networks to make important connections with VCS organisations, corporates, schools and health bodies.

"We'd both had careers in the private sector, so we knew about business, marketing and sales, but were new to the VCS. Mentoring helped us to understand the sector locally and be in the right place at the right time. For example, Gro-Organic pitched at a Dragon's Den style competition for Solihull community enterprises, which produced three really good contacts for us," says Steve.

Steve and Sarah were advised on business planning, financial forecasts and assisted to identify the impacts and outcomes of their work - knowledge and skills that have resulted in Gro-Organic securing over £90,000 of funding for community work.

"Gro-Organic has come so far this year. We've met our financial targets, gained valuable contacts and business partners, taken on our first employee, and have a pool of 15 fully trained and CRB checked volunteers. We owe a great deal to the business support we've received which has not only developed our skills and confidence, but given Gro-Organic a great springboard for the future."



Community Enterprise for Success assisted Gro-Organic CIC with Legal Structures and Company Formation, Business and Financial Planning, Personal Mentoring and Identifying Outcomes.

**"We owe a great deal to the business support we've received which has not only developed our skills and confidence, but given Gro-Organic a great springboard."**

*Sarah Gill,  
Gro-Organic CIC*

### Key facts

**Mission:** Through the provision of food, reach disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, help reduce disengagement and encourage individuals to make a positive contribution to their local community.

**Services:** Regeneration and land reclamation; Support and guidance in food growing; Design and construction of outdoor classrooms; Raised garden beds; Landscaping and ground works; Voluntary opportunities and group working; Community space initiatives; Development of personal and horticulture skills.

**Established:** 2011

**Legal structure:** Community Interest Company

**Business challenge:** Adopting an appropriate legal structure, business planning and financial forecasting.

**i** [www.gro-organic.co.uk](http://www.gro-organic.co.uk)

## About Community Enterprise for Success

Community Enterprise for Success is a programme of free support for voluntary & community organisations in Solihull who wish to grow their business for the benefit of the local community.

The programme is commissioned and supported by Solihull Council with funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

One to one and group support from accredited advisers is available in areas such as:

- Feasibility and assessment
- Market analysis
- Business planning
- Social impact measurement
- Business modelling
- Leadership
- Sales and marketing
- Consortia development
- Entering supply chains

The programme is delivered by a partnership of the BEST Network, Development in Social Enterprise and DYNAMIC Marketing in association with Solihull SUSTaiN.

Community Enterprise for Success is provided free of charge to existing community and voluntary organisations



based in Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Elmdon, Kingshurst, Lyndon, Olton, Shirley East, Shirley South, Shirley West, Silhill and Smith's Wood.

**If you would like to discuss ways of growing your business or find out more, please get in touch.**

Community Enterprise for Success is funded by



### GET IN TOUCH

0121 704 8097 | [business@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:business@solihull.gov.uk)

[www.communityenterprise-solihull.org](http://www.communityenterprise-solihull.org) | [@Solihull\\_ComEnt](https://twitter.com/Solihull_ComEnt)

