

# upkeep



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## Introduction

Shettleston Community Enterprises (SCE) is an emerging Social Firm which has been trading as Upkeep since April 2005. SCE, wholly owned by Shettleston Housing Association, was established in December 2004 and is registered as a company limited by shares.

Upkeep's operational activities include a range of housing related and estate caretaker services that are principally carried out for the benefit of Shettleston Housing Association.

## Issues addressed:

- The Business
- Funding the start up
- Recruiting Staff & Volunteering
- Creating a supportive and inclusive environment
- Growth and sustainability
- Benefiting the local community

Social Firms seek to create good quality jobs for severely disadvantaged people within supportive and successful enterprises

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## Evidence of success

- ❖ Severely disadvantaged people have enjoyed job opportunities.
- ❖ Opportunities for local residents to develop a range of workplace skills.
- ❖ The emergence of a greater “pride in the community” as the environment improves.
- ❖ A reduction in the level of tenant complaints regarding estate caretaker services.
- ❖ Progressive growth and expansion of the business in the first 2 years.
- ❖ The development of a good business track record for delivering high quality services.
- ❖ Moving towards greater sustainability as the income stream increases.

## The approach taken

### • The Business

The business started in a lock-up shop on Shettleston Road but re-located in August 2006 to an adjacent warehouse in Fenella Street. This enabled the company to expand its services and to consider becoming engaged with other synergic activities in the future. The Upkeep team currently deliver a range of services under a commercial service contract negotiated with Shettleston Housing Association.

Upkeep's constitution clearly show that the organisation is fully committed to employing disadvantaged people. It has a board made up of local people and is strongly supported by its parent company.

### • Funding the start up

The business was started with assistance from a financing package acquired from 4 main funders

- Communities Scotland Wider Role Fund
- Futurebuilders Seedcorn Fund
- The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- East End Social Inclusion Partnership

In the last financial year, almost 50% of Upkeep's total income emanated from commercial activity.

### • Recruiting Staff & Volunerring

Upkeep currently employs 12 full time members of staff with 3 of these posts being filled by people who were disadvantaged in the labour market. As there is no personnel department, assistance with recruitment services has been provided by GERA (Greater Glasgow Regeneration Agency), the local development company. Their support is excellent; they circulate the job details to a wide spectrum of job centres and agencies, collect in the completed job applications, send out interview letters and provide rooms for the interviews.

Upkeep also offers volunteering opportunities, including training placements, to people who are not yet at the stage of applying for permanent employment.

### • Creating a supportive and inclusive environment

Upkeep operates transparent recruitment and equal opportunities practice to ensure impartial selection of

## Key Learning Points

- ❖ The support of an interested and experienced parent company is crucial.
- ❖ There is no substitute for determination, diligence and loyalty from staff.
- ❖ Foster the development of a good relationship with your local development company – Upkeep's has been very supportive.
- ❖ Implement a good networking programme to develop a range of helpful contacts.
- ❖ Regularly review and evaluate progress to ensure the business objectives are being achieved and maintained.
- ❖ Be responsive to customer needs and practise sound reliability in delivering quality services - this is critical to developing a good reputation which in turn supports credibility when marketing to new prospects.

## Top tips

- Work hard and have a strong desire to succeed.
- Have a realistic business plan to maintain the focus of the enterprise.
- Practice – do not just talk about – good customer care.
- Try to offer each employee a long term career in order to give the security each worker values.
- Organise the workload efficiently to maximise everyone's time and avoid "downtime" which can indicate to staff a lack of management expertise and understanding.
- Hold regular staff meetings to maintain good communication and assess team morale.
- Stay alert for other business opportunities to enhance the company's future trading prospects.

staff. Good working conditions and terms of employments are important to all employees – there is no substitute for loyalty from staff.

Staff are fully involved in their own development with an emphasis placed on learning through the training plan that has been implemented. Time and money is invested in the training programmes of each employee to demonstrate their worth and to make them feel valued.

Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively ("work teams" are rotated so everyone gets a chance to work alongside everybody else) and treat everyone with fairness in order to promote good morale and teamworking. Everyone also has the chance to work in different areas of the business to create variety and interest; also to create greater work versatility.

Regular staff meetings are held to keep everyone informed of new developments and to listen to any

problems that need addressing. Additionally, staff are always aware that there is support in the workplace for them.

### • Growth & Sustainability

Plans are already in place to develop the range of services on offer and expand into the recycling sector. Through the implementation of their marketing plan, further work is being sought from other Glasgow based social landlords and private organisations. This is designed to capture more profitable business, develop a stronger income stream and facilitate the desired level of expansion. It is also necessitated by the need to replace diminishing grant funding, which in turn will enable Upkeep to reinvest trading surpluses, further expand operations and offer more jobs to locally disadvantaged residents.

### • Benefiting the Local Community

Upkeep operates in an area of Glasgow that is very deprived - a large percentage of residents are on state benefits due to high unemployment levels. Upkeep is a local company, providing employment opportunities to local people and governed by a local board of directors.

Additionally Upkeep's income is all circulating locally within the economy and not flowing out as previously was the case. At the same time, Upkeep has been physically improving the local environment and giving residents a greater pride in their own community.

## Next Steps

- Move towards self sustainability by April 2008.
- Provide more full time jobs and volunteering opportunities.
- Create a new recycling centre for Shettleston in the East End of Glasgow.
- Expand the contract business beyond the East End of Glasgow.
- Remain alert and open minded to the inclusion of other suitable, related and profitable business services.