



Case Study: Innovate Trust

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(Rosie Cribb, Innovate Trust)

Tell us more about Innovate Trust....

The organisation stemmed from a pioneering partnership between a group of Cardiff University students and Cardiff social services in 1972. This group of students set up the first model of supported living in the community for people with learning disabilities, a concept that was virtually unheard of until then.

The aim of the present day organisation is to support and enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and to make informed choices about how they wish to live and work, achieving as far as possible a 'normal pattern of life'. Our current services are as follows:



- Supported Living schemes
- Tenant Support scheme
- Respite Care
- Emergency accommodation
- Training and work experience projects (mainly set up with European Social Funding)
- Social Firms
- Supported Employment Agency - supporting people to obtain paid employment in the open labour market
- Student Volunteering Cardiff - volunteer projects with young people
- Mentro Allan – a lottery project encouraging people to be active and use the outdoor environment
- European 'Equal' project testing new and innovative ways of helping disabled adults and young people into employment

Where are you in terms of sustainability?

We are currently working out strategies to ensure that we can sustain our training enterprises beyond the terms of our European funding which provides roughly 45% of running costs. This is through a combination of maximising trading income, developing a fundraising strategy, and investigating soft loan finance. We have also set up our first social firm which has a primarily business focus, and forecasts a break-even point within three years.

What you initially wanted to achieve and how you have done it. What were the main challenges?

Initially we wanted to create opportunities for people to build their confidence and self-esteem, giving them the skills they need to access paid employment. We have achieved this through accessing European and other sources of funding to get two cafes and an organic farming project off the ground, as well as our most recent social firm venture.



We have secured lottery funding as a bridge between the EU funding and the point at which we forecast the cafés will become sustainable. This funding is tapered in line with forecasted income rises. We have also built alternative income streams through selling training, and through new bolt on services such as sandwich deliveries and buffet catering. The buffet catering has been so successful that we have now formed this into a social firm, which has exceeded all predictions since it opened in October 2006. We have primarily developed all our projects internally, but have also benefited from support from funders such as Lloyds TSB and the Equitable Charitable Trust, and from advice from Social Firms Wales who we work closely with.

What advice could you offer other organisations working towards sustainability?

Rationalise what you do so you are not carrying 'dead wood'. Be objective and evaluate carefully what you do to see what is and is not working. If starting something new, do not try to run before you can walk, do not set something up to fail by making it too resource 'hungry'.

Research the field in which you are working and see what works well and what does not. 'Borrowing' other people's successful ideas can make life easier.

A good business plan should be in place. If the business case does not honestly stack up, then it will be difficult to ever sustain.

Have a positive and supportive working group around you. Make sure you associate with people that will be constructive and helpful.

Be clear about your objectives, what you are offering and to whom. Distinction might need to be made between a project that provides meaningful activity for people in the community, and a real work based training social firm, that is focused on time bound training with a paid employment outcome. Business and sustainability may not always be the driving principle.

What impact has this had on your organisation? How has this benefited your organisation and the community?

We have become more diverse, and have started to develop a better understanding of the relationship between achieving your charitable objectives whilst also working towards a level of sustainability. We have had many examples now of people moving from our training enterprises into paid work and it has helped raise our profile, as well as helping to break down prejudice. The community has benefited from some excellent new community services, and people in the community have a much better understanding of disability.

