

“Peninsula Enterprise – supporting the growth of social enterprise in the south west”

Under the identify of ‘Social Enterprise Focus’, Peninsula Enterprise – a leading business support agency in the south west region – is working with partners to grow the social economy. Social Enterprise Focus currently operates in the urban areas of Plymouth and Torbay, and across the county of Cornwall. In each of these areas, the approach has been tailored to meet the needs of the local economy, and reflects the support needed.

In **Plymouth and Torbay**, Social Enterprise Focus service provides advice and information to pre-start and established enterprises. Since it started in 2010, over 300 people and businesses have accessed the programme’s support.

In these areas, the service is part of the wider Urban Enterprise delivery programme in Plymouth and Torbay, funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the local authorities in each area. A particular objective within this is to inspire and promote opportunities among groups and individuals who are under-represented in business or generally considered more ‘distant’ from enterprise.

Social Enterprise Focus is delivered by two business advisers, who have specialist knowledge of the sector and economy. The support includes training on legal structures, finance, marketing, etc, and one-to-one meetings and mentoring to help social enterprises develop successfully.

The programme is having considerable success in engaging with clients from across all equality groups, with encouraging levels of representation among women, disabled people and Black & Minority Ethnic communities. This reflects the wider trend for greater diversity among the ownership and management of social enterprises. Adviser Andrew Allchurch explains: “A significant proportion of the



clients accessing support through Social Enterprise Focus come from 'non-traditional' business backgrounds, and it is interesting to discuss their motivations for setting up an enterprise. Many identify more strongly with the values of social entrepreneurship, and the desire to run a business which genuinely benefits the community as well as generating income.”

Clients represent many different activities, but there are particular trends around health and well-being, education, re-cycling and the arts. A number of social enterprises feel that they can improve on the way that services are currently delivered by the public sector or large private companies; services they themselves may have accessed. Andrew Allchurch comments “Social enterprise gives an opportunity to provide services at the heart of the community, which can be more responsive - and arguably more effective - in meeting the needs of service users.”

In addition to its core advisory work, the programme has distinct elements to promote social enterprise among students and young people. The Social Enterprise Focus Schools Programme is delivered by the Real Ideas Organisation, a dynamic Community Interest Company which specialises in developing the culture of social enterprise potential for the future. They encourage secondary schools to set up their own social enterprises, led by students, providing them with first-hand experience of running a business for community benefit.

Plymouth University provides information, advice and guidance for staff and students who are considering social entrepreneurship. As the lead UK university on social enterprise research, they are well-qualified to provide expert support. As part of the Social Enterprise Focus activity, the University has delivered knowledge transfer sessions, educator development clinics (for staff and managers) and also internships for students within local social enterprises.

More information: [Social Enterprise Focus Plymouth & Torbay](#)



Social Enterprise Focus in **Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly** aims to increase the number and size of contracts being won by social enterprises. The programme works by facilitating business development, collaboration, and engagement of potential product and service buyers.

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Programme, the service is delivered by Peninsula Enterprise in association with Cornwall School for Social Entrepreneurs, and specialist consultants The Fruit Tree, Sue Morrish, Buckman Associates and W Wills Consulting.

Social enterprises are offered impartial business advice and support to help them build capacity and become 'contract ready' for when opportunities are available. These opportunities - largely from public sector commissioners and procurers – are identified with help from the programme manager, through 'Meet the Buyer' events, direct contact with procurement managers and published tenders.

Small social enterprises which would not otherwise be able to bid for contracts are encouraged to network with others with a view to collaboration. By working together in a partnership or consortium, they often have the ability and capacity to bid successfully. Additional advice is provided to help programme clients understand the bidding process, and to overcome some of the barriers. Many social enterprises are very successful at delivering services to communities, but may lack business resources and expertise to be confident in understanding and submitting tenders.

Some of the key areas where social enterprises are being encouraged to bid include health and social care, family support, ICT, environmental services, leisure and education.

More information: [Social Enterprise Focus Cornwall](#)