

Business in the Community: ProHelp



Business in the Community (BITC) is a national business-led charity committed to forging better relationships between business and society. In the East Midlands BITC supports businesses to integrate responsible business practices and connect them with the local community to help tackle social and environmental issues.

From July 2012 to June 2015 BITC has run its second ERDF funded ProHelp contract divided into five projects across the East Midlands, including Derby ProHelp; Lincolnshire ProHelp; Nottinghamshire ProHelp – North Nottinghamshire; and Nottinghamshire ProHelp – Nottingham City.

The project aims to engage private sector businesses in the region who wish to give a proportion of their expertise to social enterprises, including solicitors, architects, accountants, marketers, PR companies, website and graphic designers, and IT and health and safety experts.

As of June 2014 ProHelp had provided at least 12 hours of support to 33 organisations across the region and was in the process of supporting 96 other organisations with the support delivered by 85 businesses. This support included:

- Bolsover Community Voluntary Partners supported by Economit to improve their computer systems.
- Home-Start Nottingham supported by Arch Communications to help raise their profile and increase fundraising.
- Hope Springs Horticulture CIC receiving help from Shoosmith Solicitors and McGregors accountants to become a community interest

company and sustain their future programme.

- The Smile, Stop Hate Crime campaign supported by Pete Ramskill Design to improve their logo and marketing materials to support their campaigning.

ProHelp also manages a network of 130 Business Champions who provide support to social enterprises. Ranging from those who have managed their own start-ups to managers within large businesses and retirees, all of the Business Champions have a minimum of five years management experience.

One example of the work of the Business champions is working with groups in Derby City, in conjunction with Community Action Derby, Children & Young People's Network and Derbyshire Learning & Development Consortium to look at how they might work in collaboration.

ProHelp has a total contract value of around £309,000 with a 62 percent intervention rate, match funded by BITC.

In regard to the ERDF application process, Ann Hilton at BITC explained that although the application form was similar to that of other funders applicants should take into consideration the length of the application process especially if applying for a second time in order to try and maintain continuation and provide a seamless transfer between projects.

Ann Hilton also stated that she found the team at the Department for Community & Local Government who managed their contract, very supportive, flexible and willing to listen. The introduction of the automated review process for reporting has also been positively embraced.

For further information on ProHelp visit www.prohelp.org.uk.

“It has been a beneficial experience and I would not hesitate to recommend ProHelp to anyone” **Sue Fenton, Service Manager, Home-Start Nottingham**

“The support we have received through BITC has made the world of difference to us an organisation. We are sure that without the help of ProHelp firms we would not have reached this stage” **Helen Powers, Director, Hope Springs Horticulture CIC**

“Not only do these occasions confirm why we operate a business like ours to deliver independent advice but I am also glad we joined ProHelp to deliver the service” **Nick Gall, Joint Managing Director, Economit**