



## 700 Club

### **Business Plan for 2009/10**

#### **Our Mission**

We are working to support vulnerable people in the north-east of England who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress, in particular by the provision of temporary accommodation and assisting them on their journey to more independent living.

#### **Our Values**

The 700 Club will:

- deliver quality and safe temporary accommodation and services which are professional, efficient, effective and equitable;
- ensure that all people who work or volunteer for the 700 Club are valued, respected and provided with opportunities for continuous development;
- encourage partnership and mutual respect between all who work in the 700 Club and people who access its services;
- be open, honest, accountable and consistent in all its relationships;
- endeavour to match support with need through structured planning and balanced decision making;
- promote its services and access to them;
- continuously improve the quality of services to contribute to wellbeing of the people who use the services
- engage in appropriate research and collaborative working to support and develop best practice;
- strive to make a full contribution to the town-wide partnerships

#### **Priorities for 2009/10**

- Preparation for competitive tendering processes/securing the SP contracts
- Diversifying income and fundraising
- Service developments
- Service user involvement
- Partnership working
- Equal opportunities and diversity

### **Preparation for Competitive Tendering Processes/Winning the Contracts**

We continue to live in changing, uncertain times emphasised by the present recession and financial pressures that our traditional funders are facing. A reminder of how uncertain the things can be was the sudden and completely unexpected withdrawal of funding for the Emma Project HMO services that have forced us to close that team, and the services provided within that team, down. We remain financially sound and focused on finding ways to sustain our existing services and develop the new ones to continue with our organisation's mission. We are doing everything in our power to ensure our charity business remains robust and strong and our service provision stays agile and responsive to clients' needs, despite the choppy waters within the voluntary and community sector world, we are still running a steady course.

However, in not so distant future the 700 Club will need to compete with other agencies and organisations to secure the existing contracts, such as Supporting People Programme contract, and perhaps to win some new ones. Whilst we are confident that we are strong competitors already because we:

- are very close to clients (service users) and are responsive to their needs
- have solid financial position and sound governance
- compete well on non-price issues, such as quality, service and effectiveness
- are well-managed with high-grade staff and good people management
- are in tune with community
- are one of the leaders in the housing and support services section of the sector in Darlington and beyond,

we accept that there are no guarantees. As we will do our utmost to serve our beneficiaries and fulfil our mission, we want to introduce a level of certainty in these proceedings. A solid preparation is vital to it. We have already spent the last financial year on:

- Quality management systems and accreditation
- Health & Safety
- Outcomes
- Environment
- Human resources,

and we have achieved all we have set out to achieve in that period. This financial year we will focus on building medium and long term partnerships with potential contracts partners in preparation for the tendering exercises expected this year. In addition, we will focus on costs and efficiencies to ensure we remain competitive price-wise.

### **Diversifying Income and Fundraising**

Our business is homelessness. We know and understand all the issues associated with it, including the fact that demand and associated challenges escalate in difficult economic time as the period we are facing right now is. The funding pots are being restricted despite the clear need for the type of accommodation and services we have been traditionally providing. That can put our organisation at risk. Even worse, with the whole of third sector capacity to cater for the needs of these vulnerable and marginalised groups shrinking due to pressures on statutory sector and corporate funders, there is a real danger that the demand will be unmet. As time progresses, the negative long term consequences of unmet needs may be disastrous for local communities and us a nation.

As a not-for-profit business and as a charity we will do whatever is possible to remain able to help vulnerable people. Diverse and robust income and fundraising is vital for the sustainability and development of the 700 Club and its services, and particularly so in these fluid times. In this financial year we will:

- Have a clear fundraising plan/strategy
- Ensure the organisation fulfils a range of criteria that will make the 700 Club attractive and/or competitive
- Continue to encourage all staff and the Board to take part in fundraising events
- Employ staff or secure services of staff and volunteers to help with a range of fundraising tasks and activities
- Establish collaborative arrangement with a range of partners to increase chances of securing contracts
- Consider previously unused approaches to generate income

### **Service Developments**

As with other headings, last years targets and plans identified in this document have been achieved.

Due to the changing economic climate and the continuous needs for the current type of services, we will focus on maintenance of those services and further personalisation that would fine-tune the service delivery as per individual needs.

In line with our long term strategy we will continue to re-evaluate our services, the locations, the way we provide them, the resources invested and the outcomes and perceived benefits achieved. Evaluating performance is vital because times, needs and conditions change and better ways to do things become evident. We are committed to continuous improvement for the benefit of our service users. That is why we will constantly evaluate performance, monitor how well things are going and will make necessary adjustments as required.

### **Service Users Engagement**

As a truly open and learning organisation, we are continuing to find ways to fully involve service users at all levels of decision making. We are confident that the approach is mutually beneficial and it leads to the 700 Club having a robust business model that is flexible enough to address users changing needs. For clients, they are getting a responsive dynamic service that offers appropriate assistance at different stages of their time with us.

Like in the previous year, this financial year there will be:

- Yearly forum
- Casual networking opportunities
- Residents/users panels
- Newsletter
- Questionnaires
- Invites to 700 Club events, such as open day events and AGM
- A range of social and educational activities, as per clients' needs and suggestions, such as out-door pursuits/outings to build confidence and team-work and communication skills
- Life skills training and support
- Opportunities for volunteering

- Further and different opportunities for commenting and feeding back on services
- Taking part in recruitment of our staff
- Taking part in designing our policies and procedures
- Contributing at the Board level
- Fun
- And, new for this year, a service user version of the Annual Report

For all of us in the 700 Club, providing exceptional service to our service users that will support them in time of need but also prepare them for independent life is paramount. Like always, a lion share of our efforts will go towards securing best possible outcomes for the people who we support.

### **Partnership Working**

700 Club wants to play a full role in the life of Darlington. We are committed to making a full contribution to the town-wide partnerships. We want to be a major player in the town as we believe we have a big contribution to make. We are steadily raising the profile of the services and we are becoming increasingly visible as a partner in town-wide initiatives. We feel that approach will be yielding results in terms of new partnerships and collaborations. New service developments, new opportunities for service users, new projects of the town-wide nature and new possibilities on the horizon are a result of the increasing recognition and respect for the 700 Club collaborative direction of travel.

As before, we will seek views and feedback on a range of matters from our current and potential future partners in order to continuously improve our services and our relationships.

A particular aspect of collaboration that we have investigated last year: becoming a member of a consortium or consortia that might increase opportunities for winning contracts and contributing to the wider community for a greater benefit of our beneficiaries, is going to be very much on our agenda this financial year and a lot of effort is going to be put in those activities.

Our openness and willingness to share and work together will ultimately lead to best possible outcomes for our users and for us as an organisation.

### **Equal Opportunities and Diversity**

The 700 Club aims to provide an inclusive environment which values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff, volunteers and service users are respected to assist them in reaching their full potential.

The 700 Club is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in all its conduct, ranging from staff and volunteers recruitment to accessing our housing and support services. Equality and diversity will be a fundamental part of all aspects of our organisation. It is further supported by a range of policies, guidelines and procedures. We will update and action the equality and diversity action plan to ensure it remains fresh, timely and responsive.

We aim to ensure that the accommodation we provide is safe, accessible, welcoming and attractive to all groups. We strive to ensure that our services do not exclude or discourage the participation of any groups. We aim to accommodate anyone who may be in need of

our services. We will consider every applicant for our services and job opportunities equally seriously.

In addition, we will invest substantial efforts into ensuring our accommodation and services are accessible to diverse groups, including culturally diverse groupings, special needs and disabled groups. We will continue to distribute information about our services and how to access them to range of individuals, communities, localities, groups and locations, as we did last year. That way we are hoping to explain our services to minority groups who might not otherwise access our services.

We have introduced a comprehensive equal opportunity monitoring form that covers all six equality strands (age, gender, faith, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation) and we will be monitoring and auditing how accessible and inclusive we are with an aim to improve if there is any need for action.

As a continuation of the last year's efforts, we will allocate time and resources to:

- improve access to our services
- assess need in respect of homelessness that might not be met
- entice individuals from diverse groups to volunteer with the 700 Club
- generally share info about the services we offer, including how to reach particular groups and how to present the information
- find further opportunities for joined working and collaborating

We, as the 700 Club, are confident that if we maintain and build on those approaches, we will ensure that the Charity remains recognised as a valuable contributor to the service provision in Darlington and beyond. Even more importantly, we are confident that, when achieved, the actions identified in this plan will make a lasting positive difference in the life of people who may approach us for help because they will be able to have their personalised needs met in an optimal way.