

CASE STUDY - Wellbeing at Whistlewood

Diversification and Partnerships Through Covid-19



KEY POINTS

Support Received

- Webinar support
- Adviser support
- Access to finance

Outcome

- Upskilling the business
- Diversification and the development of a Covid recovery plan
- Enhanced partnership working

Wellbeing at Whistlewood is an award-winning social enterprise for wellbeing set within a 10-acre community owned woodland which is part of the National Forest. They are hosted and supported by the Whistlewood Common community in an accessible woodland setting, underpinned by the permaculture ethics of “Earth Care, People Care and Fair Shares”. The vision is to create a “Community for Health” by offering opportunities to connect to nature and others. In 2020 Wellbeing at Whistlewood were named by the Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT) as the first ever “Green Therapy Business of the Year. The business offers retreats, classes, workshops, Forest Bathing, Forest Therapy and Expressive Arts experiences. These are offered to self-funding individuals, corporates, group customers and the business supports charities free of charge.

The Covid-19 Pandemic presented particular problems for the enterprise with reduced income due to the cancellation of most of their events and affected planning wellbeing services for a changed Post Covid World.

The D2N2 Growth Hub were able to support the business by creating a post Covid ‘green recovery business plan’ which included an evaluation of the development needs within the business which resulted in attending several of the Growth Hub’s webinars. This support facilitated networking opportunities which then led into East Midlands Chamber membership. The recovery plan also reinforced the need to develop partnership working with organisations such as The National Forest and Derbyshire Mind. The latter partnership resulted in the opportunity for the businesses community wellbeing services to be available to NHS patients via Green Social Prescriptions. The business also focused on developing existing partnerships such as the one with the University of Derby’s Nature Connectedness Research Unit resulting in the offer of free training and support to improve mental health. Finally, the Growth Hub supported the business by providing guidance on access to finance which provided access to funding streams so that Covid secure adaptations could be made.

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We have survived as a social enterprise during the most difficult of times and are thriving with the expert support and development opportunities within the D2N2 Growth Hub. The lives and needs of our customers and partners are different in 2021 so we have adapted our services to be responsive to a changing World. In moving forward confidently as restrictions lift, we look forward to providing wellbeing and Nature connection opportunities to our customers in the knowledge that our services are needed and appreciated more than ever. Our community wellbeing programmes are now being funded through charity partnerships, corporate support including from Toyota and NHS Green Social Prescriptions to ensure that people in the most need have access to our wellbeing services.

Anne Bramley, Wellbeing at Whistlewood

info@d2n2growthhub.co.uk

0333 006 9178

www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk