

SUYSE - McSence - Case Study

McSence is an acronym for Mayfield Community Self-Employed Natural Collective Exercise and sums up the reason for its formation.

The McSence Group of businesses, a social enterprise, started in 1988 as a response to the economic devastation wrought by the closure of local coal mines, and the ultimate decline of the mining industry. The repercussions in Dalkeith, a small town situated about 20 miles south of Edinburgh city centre, were extreme and were felt particularly acutely in the Mayfield and Easthouses region of the town. Responding to this devastating effect of pit and factory closures collections of £5 per week were sought from local traders. The aim was to raise funds to help *local* people start a community business which would create local employment. Through fund-raising events and sponsorship, the first business, McSence Heatwise Ltd. was established. This business undertook draughtproofing and insulation work under the National Government Home Energy Efficiency Scheme and created the first local jobs in McSence.

Since then, the group, incorporated as a charity, has grown substantially to include Care at Home, Cleaning Services Commercial Property Letting, Property Maintenance, Training and Conferencing. Around 200 staff are now employed, delivering services in Midlothian, Edinburgh, East Lothian and the Borders. Turnover had reached £1.9m by 2016. The Group operates as a Social Enterprise with each of these operating as a separate trading company. This success has been recognised by several awarding bodies

From these humble beginnings, McSence has become highly regarded by both the public and private sector and is often consulted on issues relating to community benefits by both statutory, and voluntary bodies. Our group of companies has evolved from the original draughtproofing business, through a locksmith business, a call centre, a training company working primarily with schools and government funded training to the business it is now. None of the original businesses that enabled McSence to get off the ground now exist as we have had to read and react to changing times and demands from the market.

This means that we are constantly developing and trialling new products. An example of this is our Care at home company which grew from an original EU funded project to train 50 unemployed people to become home carers. On the back of this we established our own care at home company, which now employs almost 100 staff and has a turnover of around £1.5m. In tandem with this, because we had a need to invest in the development of our own care staff, we redeveloped the training company to move away from Government funded training projects, an income stream that was being radically cut back in light of the economic downturn, and focused more on the training demands of our own and other care staff and local customers. We became an SQA approved centre and our training company now has an annual turnover in the region of £120k per annum.

Each of the trading companies is a stand-alone organisation with its own professional management team, tasked with returning profits to the McSence Group. At the end of each financial year, the profits accrued are gifted to the parent company, McSence Ltd which is a registered charity. McSence Ltd then uses these profits to reinvest in new business ventures, or alternatively to distribute money to the community in the form of grants. Various community voluntary groups have received support in this way, including all the local schools, many individuals and families.

McSence has a fundamental belief in the empowerment of under-privileged communities to help themselves to regenerate, by encouraging partnerships, self-help and increased public awareness.

It is sustained by the philosophy - “community businesses empower people”. The business must come first, because without a thriving sustainable company, the community cannot benefit.

Although McSence is focused on the delivery of professional services to clients, it continues to be a business run by the community, for the community.