

THE COTTAGE FAMILY CENTRE

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“From the outset, we have received exceptional guidance from the Community Enterprise Accelerate Programme. The Cottage Family Centre - Big Hoose Project’s growth over the past 15 months has been driven by the needs of children and families across our communities experiencing significant hardship and, thanks to the Accelerate team, we now have the support and structure within our organisation to move forward with confidence.”

- Pauline Buchan, Strategic Manager at The Cottage

Background

The Cottage Family Centre, established in 1987, provides a range of core services to vulnerable families in Kirkcaldy. Part of these services includes the distribution of goods and food items to local families at Christmas and other times of the year.

Early in 2022, following an intervention by ex-local MP and Cottage Patron, Gordon Brown, Amazon made the decision to work with local charities to donate surplus goods to families in need across Fife.

The Cottage, with its track record and local connections, was identified as the ‘link’ between these goods and those families most in need and, with partners, has established a dedicated warehouse in Lochgelly.

The project includes the provision of free goods to low-income families; donations to local charity shops; and retailing items of high value online, with profits being re-invested in expanding The Cottage’s services – contributing to its future sustainability.

Need for support

The success of the initiative presented The Cottage with two immediate issues – firstly, coping with the growth of the project (with many other suppliers signing up); and, secondly, the impact trading income would have on its charitable status.

What we did

Faced with these challenges, The Cottage sought the support of Accelerate to carry out a legal options appraisal, supported by an implementation plan to ensure the governance was structured to accommodate the new trading activity. Accelerate’s engagement has seen The Cottage update its Mem and Arts and, in addition, set up a trading subsidiary - the Big Hoose Project. These actions now allow the Cottage to continue to distribute goods for free and also to receive the profits generated by the online sales. The project has now seen over 500,000 items with a value of approximately £10m, being donated to families in need, not only in Fife but across other parts of Scotland.

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