

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AND ITS BENEFITS

**Warrington Council for Voluntary Service has developed this short guide to explain how businesses can benefit from CSR and how it can impact your bottom line. Your employees, customers, suppliers and the local community are all affected by what you and your business do. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can help you create and maintain effective relationships with wider community.**

CSR doesn't have to cost you anything; in fact, CSR can help you to improve your business and its performance. You are able to avoid unnecessary costs such as wasted energy and more importantly, it can help you to keep winning business.

### **The business benefits of corporate social responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) isn't just about doing the right thing, it offers direct business benefits. Building a reputation as a responsible business sets you apart, especially within your local community and to your employees.

The business benefits you can achieve are:-

- A good reputation makes it easier to recruit employees and gain customers
- Higher staff retention - employees stay longer, reducing the costs and disruption of recruitment and retraining.
- Improved productivity levels with employees as they are better motivated.
- CSR helps you to comply with regulatory requirements.
- Activities such as involvement with the local community are ideal opportunities to generate positive press coverage and build a local business brand.
- Develop good relationships with local authorities.

### **Understanding the environmental impact of your business**

Your company affects many different people - employees, customers, suppliers and the local community as well as having a wider impact on the environment. Even the simplest energy efficiency measures, like switching off lights and equipment when they aren't needed, makes a real difference. Reducing the use of water also directly cuts your costs and minimising waste makes an important contribution. Simple steps like reducing the amount of paper you waste can immediately cut costs. Caring about the environment can increase income too; customers prefer to buy from responsible companies. Ethical trading is on the increase, with consumers preferring to buy from companies who have a strong ethical policy.

There are all sorts of ways you could think about reducing the environmental impact of your business such as:-

- creating recyclable products
- sourcing responsibly (eg using recycled materials and sustainable timber)
- minimising packaging
- buying locally to save fuel costs
- creating an efficient (and fuel-efficient) distribution network
- working with suppliers and distributors who take steps to minimise their environmental impact.
- working with suppliers who promote ethical trading such as selling fair-trade products

### **Working with the local community**

As mentioned previously, working with your local community can bring a wide range of business benefits and there are many ways to get involved and this is where the Warrington Council for Voluntary Service can help.

Warrington Council for Voluntary Service manages the Warrington Grassroots Endowment Fund, which provides grants to local, voluntary community groups from £250 upto £5000 throughout the Warrington area on behalf of individuals and businesses. In addition to the business benefits already mentioned, we can help you to create publicity for you and your business as well as tax incentives from giving to the Endowment Fund.



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Many businesses like to involve their employees in working with the local community, either through volunteering for community activities, fundraising or providing expert advice to those in need. Again, there are direct benefits to your business, it can help to motivate your staff, improve team relations and develop interpersonal skills or you could give your employees the opportunity to make regular charitable donations from their payroll, to initiatives such as the Grassroots Endowment Fund.

### Measure the effectiveness of your corporate social responsibility

It is important to measure any business activity and this includes, corporate social responsibility. CSR can cut costs and boost sales, which is measurable but you mustn't focus solely on the financial, as we have mentioned other benefits that can be achieved. However, it is worth noting that measurements will probably only show the immediate impact of CSR. The biggest benefit can be the long-term improvement in your reputation.

Make the most of your corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities by publicising them. Ensure that customers, suppliers and the local community know what you are doing. The local media are always interested in good news stories and CSR helps to achieve this kind of coverage.

Publicity like this can be a key part of using CSR to win contracts. It differentiates your business from your competitors. But CSR is not a one-off and it should be incorporated into your business plan and reviewed regularly.

### About Warrington Council for Voluntary Service

Warrington CVS has existed for nearly 100 years. During that time Warrington Council for Voluntary Service has developed and adapted to serve the needs and promote the work of the voluntary sector in Warrington and its surrounding areas. Warrington CVS offers a range of help, support and services to local community and voluntary groups to enable them to carry out their work achieve their aims and become more effective.

### About Warrington Grassroots Endowment Fund

In Summer 2008 Warrington CVS was chosen to launch the Grassroots Grants fund in Warrington and the local area. This is Government money to provide small grants to small and local voluntary, community and faith groups. Community and voluntary groups from Warrington with an income of £30k or less a year are invited to apply for up to £5k over 3 years. Applications are assessed by an independent local panel and grants are awarded based on the information provided in the application.

The programme has 2 elements, a small Grants Fund for applications between £250 and £5000 and an endowment scheme. Warrington CVS is actively working to set-up an endowment scheme through approaching businesses and individuals within the community to donate and invest to ensure that the award grants continues post-2011.

If you would like to know more about how you can get involved with the Warrington community and get involved with the Warrington Grassroots Endowment Fund, then please contact us at:-

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