



Buying from – Social Value & Procurement

Accord AddVentures Supports Residents to Develop a Range of Social Enterprises and Community Ventures

Accord is encouraging AddVentures start-ups and local social enterprises to contract and supply goods and services to them and are working to embed social value in their procurement processes.

Background:

The Accord Group has around 13,000 homes across the West Midlands, and employs about 4,000 people. It provides many other services for its tenants in addition to housing, including help with skills issues, employability and health and welfare. Around 70 per cent of its residents are economically inactive.

Accord AddVentures, first set up in late 2011, aims to support and nurture social entrepreneurship and enterprise across the West Midlands. It works with residents and communities to improve their skills, increase access to employment and develop new enterprises. This includes working closely with the CPS and probation service to help ex-offenders.

During the past two years, AddVentures has looked to its supply chain for additional help in supporting individuals in gaining employment.

Objectives:

- To strengthen the local community.
- To increase value for money in services.
- To help residents see what skills they have and how they can use them to develop a business which benefits local people.
- To help residents from all backgrounds, including those facing disadvantages, into employment.

Action:

AddVentures' Employment and Skills Team consulted with its supply chain to understand what they could do to help residents in practical ways, such as by providing apprenticeships and shorter work placements.

Many tenants are keen to start up trades based businesses as bricklayers, carpenters and window cleaners. Accord looked to its suppliers for support which included practical items such as high-visibility jackets, hard hats or tool boxes, as well as skills and training through longer volunteer placements.



One of AddVentures programmes, RiSE (Residents in Social Enterprise), offers help to residents and service users wanting to set up, or grow, a local community enterprise. This may include providing office space, offering marketing and communications support, enabling access to start-up capital or supplying general business support and mentoring.

Accord tenants are supported by AddVentures if they want to set up a business which will help the community, such as a mobile hairdresser to help people who can't get out of the house, or a locally-based gardener to help elderly people. Support from AddVentures can also help with purchasing items such as tools and business cards.

AddVentures also support sole-traders and small businesses to start up. The Group recognises that, any business that supports those furthest from the labour market to become employed, is a business that has social impact. For instance if a resident starts a small for profit catering enterprise their neighbours, friends and wider community get to see that working and earning a living are an accessible means of securing a future. This creates positive role models and helps to support sustainable tenancies.

Additional support is provided by Accord partner Ashram, a housing association based in Tyseley, Birmingham, who deliver employability skills training in partnership with Bournville College.

Alix Drysdale, Enterprise Manager with Accord AddVentures, says: "We want to ensure our residents get more than just cost effective services. People pay us in the hope we will spend responsibly and it's about what social value we can add to the pounds we spend."

In order to support this process Accord Group are adjusting their procurement processes and making a concerted effort to encourage social enterprises to tender for contracts and have produced a Guide to assist this process and are advertising contract opportunities locally and through their third sector networks including www.socialenterprisewm.org.uk

[Rising Stars Cleaning](#)

Accord is currently working with Rising Stars Cleaning, a social enterprise run by an ex-offender. This offers employment to single parents on child-friendly hours, providing them with cleaning products at the rates which Accord buys them in



bulk from suppliers. Rising Stars Cleaning is looking at whether the business can provide cleaning services to a new Accord site as a sub-contractor.



Rising Stars Cleaning is set up to provide employment opportunities, training and work experience to disadvantaged groups of people in the West Midlands. We do this by providing a domestic, commercial and specialist cleaning services. We approached our local social landlord, The Accord Group, with our business model and they have been a huge support us on our journey.

The Accord Group offered us support to compete for some ad-hoc cleaning work they required as part of a new housing development they were building in Redditch. With guidance we ensured we had appropriate insurances, risk assessments, and site-safety plans in place before we took on any work. We met with the Risk and Facilities team, Regeneration team, and the Procurement team who have helped us to help us to prepare to compete for larger contracts with other organisations.

The Accord Group staff guided us through the process of becoming contract ready step-by-step to ensure we were taking into consideration all the aspects that large organisations do when they look to secure a new supplier – value for money, environmental impact, timescales, monitoring, etc., we were also offered Accord Group rates with their lead suppliers so that we could purchase PPE and cleaning products in bulk, more cheaply than we had been buying from our own suppliers.



Thanks to the help of the Accord Group we are now in a much better position to secure more work in the future, and we know that when we need advice, guidance or support, the staff team are there to help.

We cannot thank the Accord group enough for all their hard work and the faith they have in us as a new local social enterprise.

La'Toyah Lewis
Managing Director



Learning:

When the AddVentures project, as it was then known, was first developed in 2011/12 it was thought a single, 'one size fits all' approach would work. It became apparent however, that the needs of diverse groups of people such as offenders, women fleeing domestic violence and young people from across the West Midlands are all very different people, so different aspects of the programme need to be delivered with a more tailored, bespoke project which suits individuals, and not an inflexible offer for the masses.

During 2013, the programme was tested and re-shaped to take the above into account.

Next Steps:

Moving forward, it will involve greater partnership working with suppliers, with new ideas being constantly tried and tested. Although the programme is very pro-active in its delivery and overall engagement, we have found that most people in need of the service come to us at points of crisis, and not before – so many people make contact with the employment and skills services when their benefits have been sanctioned, or the 'bedroom' tax leaves them with more financial burden. We know that a lot more of residents need support to become more employable and find jobs, our job now is to look deeper at the issues faced by our residents that lead them to long-term unemployment. Our aims are to be more proactive in seeking out those residents who need our services most, but are the least motivated to access them – we are striving to change, not just to be more innovative in our approach and delivery, but to change the culture of benefit dependence that influences our residents and communities.

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Links

<http://accordgroup.org.uk/addventures>

For more information about this case study contact SE Housing Hub at:

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