

# CASE STUDY

## Serving deprived **communities**

Exploring innovative social enterprise solutions to challenging social issues, the Ideas Mine is an action research consultancy with a particular interest in how social enterprise can regenerate and refresh communities.

As a team of people with experience in the successful planning and delivery of complex projects, they work with businesses, charities, community enterprises and public service providers. They aim to serve people from economically deprived communities, including: The National Offender Management Service to develop social enterprise solutions which facilitate reducing re-offending; NorthYorkshire Learning Consortium on the feasibility study and business plan which is helping them to acquire an asset and develop a new social enterprise; Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service on a leadership development programme; Coast and Moors Voluntary Action providing support for the development of a successful multi-million pound resource; Scarborough Shopmobility providing a feasibility study into the development of a resource centre for people with mobility issues.

The Ideas Mine is a Community Interest Company, which means they run their business for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage. Getting the Social Enterprise Mark was important to them.



*We applied for the Mark to broadcast our status as a bone fide social enterprise, to strengthen our ties with the social enterprise community and to consolidate our status as a social enterprise for our own benefit and we feel good about it!* ”

**John Sargent** - Managing director

However, the Ideas Mine did not immediately qualify for the Mark, as it did not meet the criteria to have social aims in their governing document. John Sargent explains their reaction:

*“We weren’t surprised. We set the company up long before the community interest company model was created, and at a time when our own thinking lacked clear focus. We took limited company status – and the memorandum and articles of association which went with it – for convenience and because there was no clear alternative which appealed to us.”*

*“Following advice from the Assessment Manager, Sue Bladon, at the Social Enterprise Mark, we began by re-writing our original mem and arts with social clauses inserted, but the hybrid didn’t work. Sue then advised us to look at and consider the CIC Regulator website model rules. We then selected those most appropriate for our organisation.”*



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*“It does take time to make these changes. We thought about it for some months, in the context of a more general conversation about our position in the market and how we wished to be seen and understood. The conversion itself took a couple of months.”*



*The cost was minimal. We did not incur legal fees, and the mem and arts came from the CIC regulator website free of charge. The real cost was in the time we spent thinking through the move from a limited company to a community interest company. ”*

*“Was it a worthwhile use of our time? Yes! It was a very useful process: the journey was as important as getting there. Now that we are a Social Enterprise Mark holder we feel that our identity fits the way we are.”*

John provides valuable advice to other businesses thinking of converting to social enterprise:



*Don't go into it lightly; the Mark is a strong statement of what kind of business you are, and if it's not right you shouldn't go for it. Use the application process positively: it is an opportunity to refresh your thinking about your business and how it trades. You also need to think about how having the Mark will affect your marketing and the way that you engage with the world. ”*

John Sargent - Managing director

[www.theideasmine.co.uk](http://www.theideasmine.co.uk)

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