A Guide to The Engine Shed

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
A Guide to the Engine Shed
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Marian MacDonald, Chief Executive, Garvald Community Enterprises

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I AM PLEASED TO have been asked to provide a foreword to ‘A Guide to the Engine Shed’. The very name captures the dynamism that has driven this organisation to become a highly respected business in Scotland’s third sector.

This is an organisation that can reach individuals and communities – the long term unemployed, those living with disabilities, the disadvantaged – that the public and private sectors don’t always effectively engage with. The Engine Shed demonstrates that social enterprise can, and does, change people’s lives.

Importantly the Engine Shed itself has had to change to ensure its financial security. It is to its credit that this was achieved through hard work and determination of all involved. The successful businesses it operates are well known not only for the quality of the products produced, but also for the added value of its training programmes. These give the participants improved employment opportunities as well as improving quality of life and self-esteem. This mix of business drive and social purpose is a winning combination.

The Scottish Government recognises the contribution that an enterprising third sector can make to our purpose of building a more successful Scotland. The Engine Shed – generating income and creating employment – clearly demonstrates the role the third sector can play towards this.

This document gives a valuable insight into the journey the Engine Shed has taken. I wish its staff and trainees all the best for their continued success.
BACK IN FEBRUARY 2007, the Big Lottery Fund awarded the Engine Shed over a quarter of a million pounds. We were impressed by the aims of the organisation, its delivery plan that included, most importantly, a route to sustainability. The Engine Shed is a well-known organisation, with a fine purpose and an ambition to ensure that ‘disability’ is, can and should be positively regarded. It embraces an approach that matches need with opportunity providing hope, confidence and more sustainable livelihoods for individuals, their carers, families and communities.

Big Lottery Funding is enabling the Engine Shed to deliver a three-year training programme to provide work experience to 50 adults, which will give them the skills to be able to move into mainstream employment. In this respect the Engine Shed represents a shining example of a social enterprise that has the power to transform communities and deliver social change.

It’s been a year and a half since we made that investment and over that time I am pleased to say that this project has made a huge impact in helping many adults with learning disabilities to grasp opportunities and to realise their full potential. It therefore, gives me great pleasure to contribute this short introduction to a guide charting the success to date of this fantastic project.

At the Big Lottery Fund we strongly believe that social enterprises have a long history in delivering innovation; meeting community needs and responding to opportunity by establishing trading organisations with a social purpose and pay back into communities. The Engine Shed’s ‘Towards a Sustainable Social Business Project’ demonstrates the potential that organisations have to be more sustainable in the long term whilst tackling need and achieving community benefit. There are lessons in this report for a range of stakeholders from funders to other like-minded organisations.

The benefits of this funding are already being felt and that is thanks to the ethos, dedication and commitment shown by everyone involved in the running of the Engine Shed. I know there are big things to come for this social enterprise and I wish everyone involved continued success for the future.
Introduction

THE ENGINE SHED WAS established in 1989 as an innovative training project for young people with learning disabilities, to help them improve their confidence, learn transferable skills in a real work environment and move into paid employment within mainstream workplaces. It has achieved these objectives through operating several training ‘workshops’ which provide a working and learning environment for the trainees – centred on a vegetarian café, organic bakery, organic tofu production and conference/catering service. The Engine Shed has been extremely successful, consistently moving 80% of trainees into paid employment.

Over most of this time, our income has been based around ESF Objective 3 funding, and we have seen ourselves primarily as a training project. However, in 2005 we faced a dilemma: the ESF programme was due to end in June 2007, and there was a lot of concern about what, if anything, would replace it. The end of ESF funding meant we could lose around £140,000 per year, and we knew this would be difficult to make up from other sources. A year previously, in 2004, we had commissioned a major external evaluation of our training provision as part of our 15th anniversary celebrations. This confirmed that we were delivering an excellent training service, highly regarded by all our stakeholders, but also suggested we were not making as much as we could of all our commercial activities.

So, in early 2005, we set out to review all aspects of our commercial activities and examine options for the future. We wanted to know if it would be possible to generate enough income from our commercial activities to replace the ESF income.

We set out on what turned out to be a lengthy, but ultimately rewarding journey. This guide tells the story of what we did: the dilemmas we faced, the reviews undertaken, the lessons learned and where we are now. It has been an intensive process, but we have found a way to replace some of the lost ESF money, and make the business side more efficient. I hope some of what we learned will be useful to others.

However, at the core of the Engine Shed is the training and development of young people with learning disabilities – that’s why we exist. We didn’t want any change on the commercial side to damage this work, or the unique atmosphere of the Engine Shed. Part of what we learned through the process of review and change is that our approach to training, developed over many years, is of national significance and interest. So, as well as telling the story of
the Engine Shed as a social business, we have tried to explain what makes our
training so successful, through creating some typical ‘case studies’. These tell
the story of the different Engine Shed ‘journeys’ as we help young people
move towards maturity, employment and independence. I hope this will be
of particular interest to those supporting people with learning disabilities,
but also to anyone interested in understanding the magic of the Engine Shed.

Marian MacDonald, Chief Executive, Garvald Community Enterprises

October, 2008
Background to The Engine Shed
A Guide to the Engine Shed
The Beginning

GARVALD COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES (The Engine Shed) is a charitable company based in Edinburgh. It was established in 1989 as an innovative training project, to give young people with learning disabilities the opportunity to learn skills in a real work environment, and move into mainstream paid employment. Our approach was ground-breaking at the time, and was part of an important change of attitude towards people with disabilities. The Engine Shed was founded on the idea that work is an important way for people with learning disabilities to become as independent as possible, and integrated into the wider social world.

OUR ROOTS

The Engine Shed developed from the work of the Garvald Centre in Edinburgh, a community based on the principles of Rudolf Steiner, which provides a supportive living and working environment for people with learning disabilities. Back in the late 1980’s, trustees and staff of Garvald Centre felt there was a need for a more training and work oriented project to help young people achieve greater economic and social independence. To cut a long story short, Garvald Centre secured a three year funding package from Lothian Health Board to develop the idea, and employed a development worker and part-time administrator to get it going. Their task was to set up a ‘sister’ organisation, focussed on training and employment, which would become a separate company and fully independent of Garvald Centre.

FINDING A HOME

The first task for the new staff was to identify suitable accommodation for the project and this came in the shape of an old ‘Engine Shed’. Built in the 1830’s for repairing and maintaining trains, the building was then owned by Lothian Regional Council and had been derelict for years. The Regional Council renovated the building on behalf of the project and, partly thanks to the excellent architects, it was completed to a very high standard. The finished building included a fully equipped kitchen and café, bakery workshop, offices and meeting rooms.

The Engine Shed today is a striking building which has helped create a unique identity for the organisation – so much so that although its formal name is Garvald Community Enterprises, everyone knows and refers to it simply as the Engine Shed.
Original Aims

AT THE TIME THE Engine Shed was set up most young people with learning disabilities attended special schools, after which they moved to a variety of day centres. Vocational training leading to employment was not seen as a real option for most of them. People with learning disabilities were the responsibility of the Social Work Department, reflecting the view that they required ‘care’ rather than employment. The Engine Shed had a different philosophy and different ambitions for these young people.

Our original aim was:

- To help young people with learning disabilities make the move from day care services and further education into full-time employment, by providing training and work experience in an integrated environment.

Our objectives were:

- To provide a real work environment for trainees

- To structure the training in a way that allowed trainees to gain both the practical and social skills necessary to move into mainstream paid employment.

The Engine Shed’s core philosophy was to follow a ‘work’ model rather than a ‘care’ model, while still operating as a caring organisation according to Steiner principles.

It is this mixture of the caring and the practical which has been the key to much of the Engine Shed’s success over two decades.
Achievements

THE ENGINE SHED HAS established itself as a successful training centre and as a well know ‘brand’ locally.

A SUCCESSFUL TRAINING CENTRE

At any one time we have around 30 trainees on a three year training programme. Young people can join and leave at any point in the year, so we normally have about 10 completing their training every year and 10 starting.

All our trainees gain qualifications, such as the National Certificate in Food Hygiene and SVQs in Counter Service, Food Preparation and Craft Baking. The number and type of qualifications depends very much on the ability of each trainee.

Over and above this formal training, our trainees learn social skills and forge friendships that will serve them for years to come. We organise regular social activities and encourage trainees to meet by themselves outside the Engine Shed. For many, this is their first opportunity to make a social life independent of parents or carers, and is an important step on the road to maturity.

One of our former trainees sits on the board of directors of the Engine Shed and is a first class ambassador for the organisation.

The Engine Shed has developed a highly successful ‘employment model’ and more than 250 people with learning disabilities have successfully completed the 3 year training programme.

Over the years, approximately 80% of our trainees have moved directly into full time paid employment and 20% into further education.

A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

The Engine Shed was set up as a training project with funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), matched by the local Social Work Department.

However, almost by default we became a successful business, generating a substantial part of our income from commercial activities.
The whole point of the Engine Shed was to use a working environment to teach trainees vocational skills. To this end we created a vegetarian café, bakery and tofu production unit as ‘workshops’. But the workshops needed customers to make them real, and these customers quickly responded to the good food, lively atmosphere and unique setting of the Engine Shed. We soon established a loyal customer base, not only within the Engine Shed, but through selling our bread, tofu and other products to shops across the city.

Within a year of the Engine Shed setting up, we added a further conference/catering workshop with the conversion of the top floor as an attractive venue for small conferences and seminars. This consisted of a large conference room, a smaller meeting room and a kitchen. Having a separate kitchen upstairs meant we could cater for in-house events as well as offering an outside catering service.

In 1996 we leased a retail unit in Bruntsfield and opened the Engine Shed Shop. This became a successful health food shop and gave our trainees the chance to experience work in a retail environment.

All these developments were primarily added to offer new opportunities for trainees. The effect however, was to create not only a successful training centre but a successful business.

The Engine Shed has always generated around half of its operating costs from this wide variety of trading activities. It has successfully established itself in the local organic food/health food market and is highly regarded by its customers.

A survey in 2004 found that 98% of café customers rated it ‘very good’ and 2% ‘good’ while 92% of shop customers rated the service ‘very good’ and 8% as ‘good’.
The Development of a Social Enterprise

Ethos

THE ENGINE SHED’S APPROACH is based on Rudolf Steiner’s work in curative education and social therapy, which began in the early 1920’s.

Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925) was an Austrian philosopher and educationalist who brought new ideas to areas as diverse as agriculture, the arts, medicine and social life. His approach to human psychology and education is based on the understanding that in every human being there is a spiritual individuality at work, creating its own destiny.

In practical terms, what this means for the Engine Shed is:

- Recognition of the value and uniqueness of every individual and the importance of enabling everyone to realise their potential.
- The value of meaningful work is recognised as very important for the self-esteem and development of an individual into adult life. Work provides a helpful routine and structure to the day and also offers the opportunity to make a contribution to society.
- Building into our day to day work the sense of being valued and appreciated by others.
- It is important for everyone, regardless of ability, to work to their maximum ability, providing as high a quality of service or product as possible.
- Cultural life is very important i.e. seasonal festivals, connection to and awareness of the environment, as well as arts/crafts and relationships.
- Seeing the individual in a holistic way and the need for rhythm in your life i.e. work and leisure, weekday and weekend, regular working routines and holiday periods.

The Engine Shed has a very particular atmosphere, which we feel is the result of this philosophy which links the practical to the personal and social.

‘Creating an organisation such as this is not only about following prescribed rules but also that a deeply held commitment to your ideals is essential to create the magic of the place’. (Marian MacDonald, Chief Executive)
Services

TRAINING SERVICES

The Engine Shed’s core purpose is to address the vocational needs of people with learning disabilities who have the potential to move into mainstream work. Although we can take anyone aged between 16 and 60, the majority of trainees are below 25.

Training is for up to three years. It starts with a period of full-time work at the Engine Shed, followed by part-time placements with mainstream employers alongside ongoing training at the Engine Shed. Most stay for the full three years, when they move into full-time paid employment.

Learning Through Doing

There are a lot of stereotypes around people with learning disabilities, and low expectations of what they can achieve. These stereotypes exist not just in the minds of employers, but within public agencies and the general public. The Engine Shed has developed a very successful approach to training which is vocationally focussed and which is aimed at breaking down many of these stereotypes.

Training takes place in a very lively, public environment, helping trainees to develop social as well as work skills. Clear rules and boundaries are set, and high standards of behaviour and work are expected. Trainees respond well to this clarity, which helps them gain the focus and discipline necessary to achieve their goals. Training is also very practical and learning is achieved by doing, which is ideal for people with learning disabilities.

Making Friends

However, the Engine Shed is also very much concerned with the personal and social development of its trainees. Regular social events are organised outside working hours, including a summer outing (to places like New Lanark or Blair Drummond Safari Park), a Christmas meal and trip to the theatre, as well as other events during the year such as ten pin bowling outings, or a visit to the Tattoo.

We also encourage trainees to establish a social life outside the Engine Shed that is independent of parents or carers. For example, encouraging them to make arrangements to meet up for coffee or go to the cinema. The realisation
that establishing friendships requires effort is part of a maturing process: trainees start to see that just working with a group of people does not mean they are automatically your best friends. Lunch break and tea breaks allow trainees to experience this and the peer group situation is a very important element in personal development. Our trainees learn a lot from role models and seeing how others deal with situations.

**Taking Responsibility**

We also hold a monthly meeting to give trainees an opportunity to contribute in a larger, more formal group. This is partly an information sharing event, partly for planning social activities and partly to bring up issues relating to work. The meeting can also be useful to look at training and behaviour issues connected with work, for example, expectations of how they should behave at break times.

*The Engine Shed delivers an integrated, comprehensive and trainee centred training package and supports trainees from assessment of their training needs right through to job placement and aftercare, and promotes their personal and social development.*

**COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

Our training takes places within a variety of commercial activities i.e.

**Café**

- The café offers hot and cold drinks, home baking and a lunch option of soup, salads, snacks and hot dishes. It used to be open Monday to Friday, but following our business review, it started opening on Saturdays from the end of 2006.

- There is extensive use of fresh fruit and vegetables and approximately 70% of the ingredients used in the café are organic. A vegan option is always available.

- The food is wholesome and filling, clearly appealing to its many regular customers, and the café has been very positively reviewed in both the local and national press.
Bakery

- The bakery produces a wide range of organic breads, rolls, oatcakes, tray bakes and pastry items for sale in the café and for use within the conference/catering unit.

- Many of these items are sold to shops throughout Edinburgh.

- We are very pleased that our organic oatcakes are also being sold through Harvey Nichols in Edinburgh – a testament to their quality.

Tofu Production

- The tofu workshop produces plain, marinated and smoked tofu together with tofu burgers and cottage cheese for sale in the café, and to shops and restaurants in the city.

- All tofu products are certified 100% organic.

Catering

- This part of the operation prepares and delivers catering to those attending events in the meeting rooms at the Engine Shed.

- We also offer an outside catering service.

Health Food Shop

- We ran a shop for 10 years in the Bruntsfield area of Edinburgh, open from Monday to Saturday. It stocked an extensive range of produce including fresh fruit and vegetables, dried goods, dairy produce and snacks and household items and was 100% organic in approach. The shop met all expectations of a wholefoods retailer and aimed to be a ‘one stop shop’. However, following the business review we took the decision to close the shop. See part 3 for more detail.
Meeting Needs

THE TERM ‘LEARNING DISABILITIES’ covers a very wide spectrum of abilities. Many young people defined as having learning disabilities attend mainstream schools, and are able to make a successful transition to work and independent living with just some extra support. Those with more severe learning disabilities, however, attend special schools and these young people are our main target group.

We focus our efforts on those young people who need longer to acquire the skills, aptitudes and confidence to move into employment and become as independent as possible. Although the Engine Shed takes a few young people straight from school, most of our trainees attend college for 2 or 3 years after school.

However, it’s not uncommon for people to drop through the net when they are young. Sometimes they are only picked up by support services at a later stage, so we do have older trainees as well.

The Engine Shed is one of several post school options available in the city, and we have to ‘compete’ with these to attract trainees. However, our approach is quite distinct and offers a different service to that available elsewhere.

We have been successful largely because we satisfy the needs and expectations of all our different stakeholder groups. We know this because a few years ago we commisioned external research, asking all our stakeholder groups for their views. These were overwhelmingly positive.

TRAINNEES
All the trainees interviewed said they had enjoyed their time with the Engine Shed and felt they had developed a lot as a result.

Trainees felt it had given them the opportunity to meet new people, gain new skills, learn the importance of timekeeping and learn about fair discipline.

Former trainees said they felt able to call into the Engine Shed or pick up the telephone as and when needed.

‘I really enjoy dealing with people and I like serving and talking to customers the best. I have made many friends’.

PARENTS
All the parents interviewed said that the Engine Shed had a very positive impact on their child and had provided a supportive learning environment.
A number emphasised the extent to which their child had matured during their time at the Engine Shed, considerably exceeding their initial expectations.

‘Without question or reservation we would highly recommend the work of the Engine Shed because of the development it gave to our son’s ability and maturity and for the help they gave to finally providing our son with a job’.

EMPLOYERS
One of the clear messages from the employers surveyed was that employing an individual with a learning disability had helped to break down barriers within the workplace.

They were also satisfied with the level of communication and information provided by the Engine Shed in relation to setting up and running work placements and felt that they are an effective means of helping trainees move towards permanent employment.

‘My staff have become more tolerant and had the opportunity to develop their own training skills by supporting trainees’.

FUNDERS
The funders interviewed said that the Engine Shed had a history of meeting its targets, and providing high quality support and training to people with learning disabilities. The Engine Shed was voted winner of the Most Effective Overall Use of Objective 3 Funds, by the ESF Partnership in 2006. In making this award the Partnership noted,

‘This project has been able to achieve a high level of outcomes particularly considering that the target group is among those who have the lowest economic activity for all groups of people with disability. (It) looks to have a sustainable, successful future ahead’.

CUSTOMERS
Customers of the café were surveyed, with 98% rating the services as very good and 2% as good.

More than one-quarter had been visiting the café for the last ten to fifteen years, demonstrating the widely recognised fact that we have a loyal customer base. We are clearly doing something right!

‘I like the people who work here, the food, the building, the baking, the flowers on the table, everything in fact!’
Looking to the Future

THE RESEARCH REFERRED TO in the previous pages confirmed we were providing a high quality and much valued service. BUT, it also brought into focus issues we needed to address, some of which could potentially spell the end for the Engine Shed.

FUNDING

The report re-iterated that with the existing ESF programme coming to an end in June 2007 and uncertainty about what would replace it, the Engine Shed had to develop a longer-term strategy. We could not afford to assume that a new ESF programme would seamlessly emerge. We had to look at all options.

TRAINEEs

For a few years we had been finding it harder to recruit the same type of trainees as before. While the research did not directly address this issue, it recommended further work to find out if the nature of the client group had changed, whether they needed to be reached in new ways, or whether we should consider broadening our range of trainees to include those with other disabilities. This could potentially involve major changes to the way we operated.

BUSINESS

The report pointed out that we were relying too heavily on existing customers, and that we should revamp our promotional activities to generate more income from our trading activities. We needed to stop thinking like a training project and get more business-like.

A POINT OF TRANSITION

At the beginning of 2005 we had reached a point of transition. Although the Engine Shed was highly valued, there was no guarantee that we would continue indefinitely. We were determined to do our best to make the Engine Shed sustainable in the long-term, and in February 2005 drafted in an outside adviser to help us set out where we would like to be in the future. Very quickly, we formed some key objectives:
We needed to decrease our dependence on ESF funding. More of our income should be generated through trading, as well as accessing more and/or different income streams for delivering our training activities, including broadening our trainee base if necessary.

We needed to become more business-like in how we thought and how we operated: controlling our costs, making better use of IT and with more business oriented roles for staff.

We needed to do all this while continuing to meet the demands of all our stakeholder groups. We had to maintain the ethos of the Engine Shed, while adapting to meet increasingly high expectations of quality from all our customers and stakeholders.

Knowing what we needed to do was the easy part, but how would we do it? In Part Three, you can read the story of how we started making ourselves more efficient and businesslike. However, the trainees are at the heart of what we do, so Part Two explores some of the typical ‘journeys’ our trainees take, and hopefully puts the business developments in a wider context.
PART TWO

Life as a Trainee
A Guide to the Engine Shed
The Route to The Engine Shed

This section explains how young people reach the Engine Shed, and provides case studies to convey what the experience is like for them. Although these are wholly fictitious, they are also realistic. As you will see, our approach takes a tremendous amount of care and patience from everyone involved. It is also complicated, with a lot of different agencies potentially involved. The Engine Shed’s success is hard won.

Most of our trainees have attended one of the several Special Schools in the city. From school, more than three-quarters of these young people move on to a variety of ‘Life Skills’ courses at local colleges. When the Engine Shed was established, young people with learning disabilities moved from special schools into a variety of special day centres. This process was managed by Social Work. Now, most of those who attend special schools go on to college. Generally this process is managed by Careers Scotland.

There is now a wide range of college options for this target group, which act as an extension to school, and gives them time to mature and develop social skills. Young people will stay at college for 2 or 3 years, with part of the programme designed to help them decide what they want to do next.

**THE RECRUITMENT / REFERRAL PROCESS**

Although the Social Work department contracts with the Engine Shed to provide 30 trainee places, they are not responsible for recruiting or referring trainees. We take referrals from a wide range of agencies and have to promote our services to a lot of different organisations.

While some trainees make their way to the Engine Shed through self-referrals from individuals, their parents or carers, most are referred through other organisations.

**Colleges & Careers Scotland**

- The numbers referred vary from year to year, but these two bodies are generally responsible for between 50% and 80% of all referrals

**Community Health Teams (Learning Disability Nurses)**

- The learning disability nurses have an increasingly important role to play with this client group and have taken on many of the responsibilities which used to fall to social work
The nurses work with all age groups and are becoming increasingly important in referring trainees to the Engine Shed. Together, the Colleges, Careers Scotland and the Community Health Teams are generally responsible for almost all the referrals to the Engine Shed.

**Employment Service**

- Jobcentre Plus will occasionally refer an individual. This tends to be people in older age groups who have fallen through the net.

**Social Work**

- Social Work used to be responsible for all referrals, but with changing responsibilities between different agencies, they now work mainly with people with high dependency needs who would not be able to cope with the Engine Shed.

- Occasionally an individual social worker will refer a client, usually from an older age group.

**Supported Housing Agencies**

- Ark Housing, Edinvar Housing Association and the Action Group provide supported accommodation to many people with particular needs, including learning disabilities. Often they are working with older age groups, as people with learning disabilities may be older when they move away from the family home to live an independent life. The support workers often refer clients to the Engine Shed.

By the time a trainee reaches the Engine Shed, there has already been a big investment of time and care in their development. However, in terms of vocational and work related skills, they are just beginning. The following case studies give a flavour of what life is like for a trainee once they join the Engine Shed. The first one is the most comprehensive, painting a detailed picture of what happens over the three year training period. The other case studies are much shorter, giving a flavour of the very different needs of our trainees.
CASE STUDY ONE

John’s Engine Shed Journey

The main character in this case study is John, who is 19 years old when he joins the Engine Shed. He represents the most able type of trainee we would ever have, and his three year journey with us is remarkably straightforward.

JOHN’S BACKGROUND

John lives in Edinburgh with his parents and an older brother who works, and a sister at university; all the family are very supportive and encourage him to achieve as much as possible. He is a lively and chatty teenager who loves football and music and is plugged into his i-pod whenever possible. He likes hanging about with his pals and going to the pictures at weekends.

EDUCATION

John attends a special school in Edinburgh, where he gets on very well. In his last year of school, he takes part in a work experience project in a charity shop; working a half-day per week for several weeks in the back shop, which he loves.

When he reaches 17 John leaves school and like many of his friends, starts on a Life Skills course at a local college. This is a full-time programme, where he is part of a group of other young people with similar backgrounds. The college course is very structured and John learns practical skills like cooking and computing, and takes part in various PE activities. It’s quite like a school setting, although John’s group are also part of the wider college environment and take their breaks in the college canteen with all the other students, albeit normally sitting with their own group.

In John’s second year at college, things start to change and his group is encouraged to get out of college to do project work. A new phase is beginning and John’s tutors start to talk to him about what he wants to do after college. In January of his second year his group visit the Engine Shed to find out more about what we can offer. Two of the Engine Shed’s experienced trainees talk to the group about what they do and John is pleased to find that one of them is Mike, who had been a couple of years above him at school. Mike was the best football player in the school, and a great hero of John’s.
Mike explains that he works in the bakery and proudly displays a burn he has on his arm from taking the bread out of the oven. John is well impressed and thinks this is the life for him!

Like other teenagers, John can’t imagine life beyond the age of 24, by which time you are very old and past it. Mike at 21 is just the perfect age to be a role model for John, an experienced older friend who has not yet passed into decrepitude!

**THINKING OF THE FUTURE**

John collects some leaflets about the Engine Shed and shows them to his mum and dad. He tells them about meeting Mike and can’t stop talking about what Mike said and what Mike was wearing and what Mike does in the bakery. John’s parents want him to become as independent as possible but worry that he’s still very young to join the Engine Shed and take this step into the adult world.

Over the next few months, John’s tutors talk to him about what he might like to do after the course ends in June. He could stay on for another year, or he could apply for a place at the Engine Shed. His tutors organise meetings with him and his parents, and also with Careers staff, to discuss his next step. He decides that he would like to try the Engine Shed, so his tutor phones up Kath at the Engine Shed to take it to the next stage.

**THE INTERVIEW**

John’s tutor helps him fill in an application form and Kath follows up his references from College. He’s then formally invited to an interview, along with his mum. For the first part of the interview, Marian (the manager), Kath (the training officer) and Patrick (the bakery supervisor) talk to John without his mum being present. They ask him what he likes doing and why he would like to come to the Engine Shed. His mum is then invited in and John is offered a 4 week taster period working in the bakery, where he can be assessed. Practical arrangements are agreed and as the family is going on holiday at the end of June, a start date is set in July. It’s very important to have an uninterrupted period for the assessment.

Kath writes to John to confirm he has a place, gives him the start date and tells him he will be assigned to the bakery. She also sends a letter to the College to inform them. When the letter arrives, John’s mum reads it out to him and he’s really excited to be starting work after the holidays. He can’t stop talking about it.
First Impressions

On the first day of John’s placement he has to turn up at 9.30am. For this first morning only, he’s coming in half an hour later than the other trainees. The night before, his mum goes over with him again about the bus he’s to take in the morning, but he finds it difficult to settle. He’s excited at the prospect of joining Mike and the others at the bakery, but it’s also quite a daunting prospect. He’s growing up.

Kath meets John when he arrives and takes him through some induction. He gets a key to his locker and his uniform, then it’s straight down to the bakery. Patrick, the supervisor, pairs him off with Mike (to John’s delight) who will make sure he’s shown the ropes. Throughout the day John follows Mike and helps him with his jobs: making tray bakes, rolling out dough, doing some washing up and tidying and finding out where everything is stored. It’s a lot to take in on a first day.

However, it’s not all work. The bakery trainees have their morning tea break at 10.45am, which is taken in a small room next to the workshop. John has a cheese roll and a cup of tea, which he’s more than ready for after a busy morning. The other trainees immediately accept John as part of the group. They always like having a new person to get to know and are very supportive of one another; they just accept people for what they are.

After another stint in the bakery, helping Mike with his tasks, John and the other bakery trainees go for lunch in the café upstairs at 12.45pm. John joins his new friends in the queue for lunch and chooses a main meal, which costs him 50p. All those behind the counter say hello to John, ask him his name and make him feel welcome as a new trainee. The bakery trainees all sit round the same table where some of the trainees from other sections are also having lunch, so everyone is chatting away and John is getting to know them.

During the rest of the day, John pretty much follows the routine that will become familiar to him over the coming weeks and months. Marian and the other members of the office staff will all make a point of speaking to John to introduce themselves: everyone at The Engine Shed has a role to play in the trainee’s life at The Engine Shed.

Before the end of the first day, Kath meets with John again to check how he’s getting on and gives him a pack of information to take home to his parents, who will help him read it. This has all the information about The Engine Shed and a contract, setting out what will happen over the 4 week assessment.

By the end of the first day John is really tired and has to go to bed early. Next morning, he’s in at 9.00am with all the other trainees and is still tired! Mike tells him not to worry, that he was tired too at first, but that he’ll be used to it after the first week.
A BUSY FIRST WEEK
During the rest of his first week, John is gradually learning more about the different jobs in the bakery and following Mike’s lead. He will spend his 4 week assessment period in the bakery, which is a busy workplace as it makes a variety of different breads, tray bakes and oatcakes, all for sale. John is also learning about the routine at the Engine Shed, with its pattern of work, breaks and meetings.

Meetings are an important part of the Engine Shed routine, helping trainees to learn the rules and expectations, through constant repetition. At the end of his first week, John meets with Kath and Patrick for feedback.

John is really pleased when Friday afternoon comes along and is pretty tired at the weekend. He just wants to chill out for a few days!

GETTING INTO THE SWING
The next 3 weeks go by in a flash. The routine remains the same and, like Mike said, he’s not nearly so tired after the first week. John is making new friends, and loves talking about football to his new pals.

The Monday of his fourth week is the monthly trainee meeting, where all the staff and trainees get together briefly in the afternoon. This is a chance for John to be introduced formally to the whole of the Engine Shed team, staff and trainees. It’s an opportunity for trainees to bring up anything they want to discuss, and for Marian to make any important announcements.

There’s a lively discussion about the forthcoming trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park, and Marian makes sure everyone knows the date and time of the visit. There’s another item of great interest on the Agenda: a real live Baroness is going to be visiting the Engine Shed as part of her tour of social enterprises in Scotland. Everyone has an animated discussion on what is the proper way to address a Baroness.

REVIEW
At the end of the 4 weeks, John has a review meeting with Kath and Patrick. He is very keen to stay and he has proved himself reliable, getting to work in time every day. He’s got into the routine and is pleased that he managed to help make his first batch of cakes. For John, the review meeting is a big test, he has been told throughout his assessment period what is expected of him and he’s delighted to have passed with flying colours. Kath writes up his review and goes through it with him and gives him a copy to take home to his parents. When John starts on Monday morning, it will be as a fully fledged Engine Shed trainee.
PREPARING FOR THE NEXT STAGE

Now that John has passed his assessment and will be staying on, Kath starts making a more formal plan for his training. Firstly, she has to make sure she has all the information she needs about him, including any qualifications and a health form. This is the same as would be required for any young worker, in case there are medical conditions such as epilepsy that the Engine Shed needs to be aware of.

Kath also goes back over the material she covered as part of John’s induction, to make sure he understands all the rules and routines. It’s also time to do a risk assessment, looking at how John operates in the work environment, to make sure he’s safe. This is done alongside Patrick, and makes sure that John is aware of how to handle knives, how to treat hot utensils and ovens to avoid being burned, not leaving things on the floor in case people trip over them and making sure the floor isn’t slippy. There are a lot of potential hazards in a kitchen and Patrick will have been keeping an eye on John over the last 4 weeks to make sure he’s understood this. Kath and Patrick are satisfied that John has learned these lessons and can operate safely in the bakery.

TRAINING STARTS IN EARNEST

At the start of John’s second month at the Engine Shed, he meets with Denise, an outreach tutor from Edinburgh’s Telford College who is a key figure in the Engine Shed’s training. Denise has already met John informally in her regular trips to the bakery to work with other individual trainees, and has been building up a good idea of his capabilities. After speaking to Kath and Patrick, Denise decides that John is ready to proceed to more formal training, and enrols him on the Basic Food Preparation course. John is delighted that he’s getting this training; he’s seen Denise in the bakery a lot teaching some of the other trainees, and it’s his turn now.

Denise has been tutoring trainees at the Engine Shed for 18 years, and has created her own workbook and training assessment record, where everything learned by an individual trainee is written down and is available to the trainee, college and employers. It’s an invaluable tool.

Over the next six months, Denise sees John regularly and starts going through the workbook. Although John started learning on the job from day one, Denise ensures that he’s learning all he needs, and to the right standard. John enjoys these sessions with Denise, and learns to weigh and measure foods, roll out and cut pastry, line a pastry flan tin and make cakes from start to finish. The workbook has pictures of all the equipment used in the bakery and Denise is constantly testing and assessing John to make sure he knows what everything is, what it’s called and what it’s used for, as well as building up his bakery skills. John is starting to get established.
THE FIRST THREE MONTHS FLY BY

Before he knows where he is, three months have flown by and John has his first major assessment. The first three months is really a settling down period, and now is the time to move things up a gear. The assessment meeting is with Marian, Kath and Patrick and is a chance for John to talk about what he likes doing, what he is good at and for the staff to give him feedback. Patrick says that John is good at following instructions, takes responsibility for his work and works well as part of the team. However, he does sometimes get carried away talking. He needs to concentrate more and talk less. One morning, after a particularly important football match the night before, John is so busy talking to Mike that they both forget about the scones. The scones get burned, so no scones for customers, disappointed regulars who look forward to their scone with a pot of tea and no money coming back into the kitty. This is an important lesson, because everything made at the Engine Shed has to be sold, so John needs to learn to keep the chat to break times.

John is very much the baby in his own family and is used to having a lot of things done for him. Before he came to the Engine Shed, he never did any dishes at home, and this is a task that he’s reluctant to do in the bakery. It’s important that John learns to read a work situation and knows what needs to be done without being told all the time: when he starts working for an employer, he needs to be capable of doing this.

These are just common issues, however, and everyone is very pleased with his progress. John is a chatty and good natured member of the team who is thoroughly enjoying learning. He’s asked what other tasks he would like to do and immediately says he wants a shot at taking the bread out of the oven. This is a job normally done by Patrick; it can be dangerous and needs quite a bit of strength. But, Mike has done it, with the burn marks to prove it, so John wants a go as well. As in any workplace, the trainees perceive a hierarchy of tasks, and want to progress up the chain. It’s an excellent sign that John aspires to do more difficult and demanding tasks, but maybe not just yet!

THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

John is now established at the Engine Shed. He’s had various assessment meetings, has attended several monthly trainee meetings and has started work on his Basic Food Preparation course with Denise.

In October, John has a weeks holiday with his parents and comes back full of life, with photographs of his trip to Disneyworld.

At the monthly trainee meeting at the start of December, there’s a discussion about the Christmas outing. This year it’s going to be to the Wizard of Oz at the Lyceum in Edinburgh, and Marian explains what will happen. Everyone
will get off at 4.00pm that day to go home and get changed for the show. They will each have their own ticket to bring with them and everyone will meet outside the theatre; it’s an important part of learning to be independent that the trainees make their own way there and are responsible for making sure they have their ticket with them. John is excited already.

Meanwhile, back in the bakery, things start gearing up for Christmas. John learns to make mincemeat pies and is delighted when his first batch turns out well. By the end of the first week though, John is starting to get a bit fed up of mincemeat pies, there just seems to be such a lot of them to make! John is learning an important lesson, a lot of the work is routine, but each item has to be made to the same high standard. John thinks he might be glad when mincemeat pie season is over.

However, pantomime time comes round at last and John has a great time. Everyone goes home after the show talking nineteen to the dozen, then it’s back in to work again the next morning as usual.

THE SIX MONTH MARK

After the Christmas break, it’s time for John’s six month assessment, which is a big landmark in a trainee’s time at the Engine Shed. Before this meeting, Kath gives John a self-assessment form to take home, which his parents will help him fill in. This is a chance for John to think about his progress and for his parents to see how he is getting on.

John is very chatty at this meeting. He knows all the staff well by now and is confident talking about what he is doing. It’s an exciting time for John. The staff tell him he’s doing really well and that it’s time for him to go out on a work placement.

Kath has already been planning the work placement, and has arranged a one day a week placement at a Scottish Government staff canteen in Edinburgh. This is at one of the smaller government offices, and is an ideal opportunity for John to start learning how to work in a mainstream work environment without the support of his peer group.

John is really pleased when Kath explains and tells him that she’s arranged to take him for a trial day the following week. John goes back to the bakery to tell his pals and they say how great it is going on placement – you get to have pie and chips for lunch for a change!
JOHN’S FIRST PLACEMENT

The following week as promised, Kath meets up with John at the Engine Shed at 9.00am and drives him round to the placement for his trial morning. In the car going down, Kath gives John a pep talk: tells him to remember to wash his hands and keep his hair tied back, and checks that he’s shaved and has a fresh tee-shirt on.

Kath takes him in and introduces him to the local unit manager, who she knows very well from many other successful Engine Shed placements. The manager whisks John off for the morning. Over the next few hours John gets a sample of all the jobs that need to be done in the canteen. Working alongside an experienced staff member he helps fill the salt and pepper pots, wipes down the tables, does a bit of washing up and sweeping.

Kath goes down towards the end of the morning and has a quick meeting with John and the manager to see how he got on. John really enjoyed the morning and is keen to go back. The manager is pleased with him and says she is happy for him to come back on placement, starting the following week, and that she’ll arrange to have his uniform ready. John will be working there one day a week for the next several months and already feels part of a new team.

A NEW ROUTINE

The following week, John does Monday and Tuesday in the Engine Shed bakery as usual, but on the Wednesday morning he starts his work placement properly. To help get him accustomed to the new routine, Kath has helped him work out what bus he needs to catch to the centre of town and arranges to meet him off the bus to walk him to his new workplace in time for the start of the shift. This time, they don’t walk in the front door as visitors, but use the back door as staff. Kath has already talked to the security guards to explain that John will be coming one day a week, and introduces him to the guard on duty. Kath shows John where to sign his name and takes him down to the canteen, then leaves him in the care of the supervisor.

John gets on well on his first day, and from now on will make his own way to his placement on a Wednesday morning. It’s up to him to make sure he gets there on time, neat and tidy. Growing up comes with its responsibilities.

The placement goes very smoothly, and after 4 weeks, Kath drops in to have a quick meeting with John and the canteen supervisor. Everything is fine and John will stay there for a least a few more months, building up his skills.

While all this is happening, John is continuing to see Denise regularly to progress through his Basic Food Preparation course, which is going very well. It’s time to step things up another gear.
I’M AT COLLEGE!

John has been an Engine Shed trainee now for nearly 8 months and has successfully completed his Basic Food Preparation course. Denise thinks he’s ready to start on the SVQ Level 1 Food Preparation and Cooking course. This is done through Edinburgh’s Telford College, and Denise handles all the paperwork to get him enrolled as a student. Although John won’t actually go to college, all the training will be done at the Engine Shed, he gets a student photocard, a much prized possession.

Getting his student card is a rite of passage for John and he’s very proud. All the other trainees in the bakery have their card and have told John that he can use it to get student discounts. John can’t wait for the weekend: his brother said he would take him to the pictures on Saturday and John will be able to get a discount like all the other students. Going to the pictures is something grown ups do at weekends, and John is beginning to join them.

It’s not all fun and games though. Life is more demanding for John at this point. He’s working hard at the bakery four days a week, going to his placement one day a week, and is expected to learn new skills for his SVQ. His job in the bakery is also stepping up a gear: Patrick is allowing him more responsibility, giving him his instructions first thing in the morning, and expecting him to get on with it. John now has responsibility for complete tasks, like putting the bread orders together, and is expected to do it thoroughly. It’s tiring work, but John is enjoying it.

THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR

Before he realises it, John has reached the end of his first year at the Engine Shed, and what a year! He’s done so much in the time, with so many changes.

The big rite of passage for John at the end is his First Year Review Meeting. Kath and Patrick meet first to go through a list of skills and aptitudes to check how he’s got on over the year. This covers everything from his attendance, timekeeping, ability to follow instructions, appearance, attitude, standard of work etc and provides an overall view of how John has performed. John then joins Kath and Patrick to discuss the past year. John is very familiar with this process now and loves participating, the focus is very much on him, which he enjoys.

Kath and Patrick give him their feedback, ask John how he feels about it, and discuss where he would like to go from here. John now feels very settled at the Engine Shed and he’s no longer the newest trainee. He’s expected to do more and take on more responsibility, including helping the newer trainees settle in.

On the whole, John has done really well, though Kath and Patrick have to remind him that he has to keep his concentration on his tasks; there’s lots of
banter in the bakery but it needs to be kept within limits otherwise the work
doesn't get done. John has the gift of the gab but needs to save his stories for
break time.

However, that is a minor point, and Kath thinks it will soon be time for John to
try a new work placement in a larger unit to develop his skills further.

GOODBYE AND HELLO

Over the next few months, while John continues with his existing placement,
Kath finds a new one and arranges for him to join the staff canteen at
Standard Life. They have taken a lot of Engine Shed trainees over the years
and have a stable staff group, which is a big advantage. This is a much bigger
canteen than John’s current placement and is very busy. What John doesn’t
know is that Kath has explained to the managers at Standard Life that she’s
really aiming for a job there for John once his training is complete. He’s a very
capable trainee and this could potentially be a very good match for his
abilities. This is kept under wraps though as it might not come off.

However, before he starts his new placement, John has to say goodbye to his
friends at the canteen in Charlotte Square. On his last day the staff make a big
fuss of him and give him a present. Catering staff don’t earn a great deal, but
they are always generous with trainees; helping John, and other Engine Shed
trainees, learn and get to grips with a job provides a big buzz for staff and
brings out the best in them. John, with his good nature and cheery banter
has returned their generosity in spades.

The process of starting John on his new placement is exactly the same as his
first. Kath takes him down, gets him settled, and checks his progress. There
are a lot of new things for John to learn: new routines, new equipment and
everything on a much bigger scale, but he copes with it all really well.

HALF-WAY THROUGH

John has settled in to his new placement one day a week, continues his work
in the bakery and is progressing through his SVQ with Denise. The Engine
Shed routine hums around John: work, placement, meetings, outings, Easter,
Summer, Christmas, all with their unique flavour and all providing a secure
and purposeful background for John to grow up.

And there is more growing up to do. John has reached his half-way point at
the Engine Shed and it’s time to start thinking of the future. The eighteen
month review is a big deal, and John’s parents are invited to attend. Like all
youngsters, time for John seems infinite, but of course it isn’t. It’s time to get
John, and his parents, thinking about the reality of finding a job.
Marian, Kath, Patrick, John and his parents all sit down to review the past and look to the future. John is very comfortable with this process, but his parents are a bit unsure at first, particularly as this is a time to discuss their expectations as much as John’s.

Marian explains that the Engine Shed will be looking to get John into a job that can offer 5 hours per day, Monday to Friday. John’s parents are a bit surprised as they assumed he would be aiming for a full-time job, but Marian explains that trainees find it much more tiring in an outside work environment than at the Engine Shed. They also get fewer holidays than at the Engine Shed, and it’s important to be realistic about what it will be like.

John’s mum says that when he comes home at night he says he’s had ‘a wonderful day’ and Marian says that it won’t necessarily be like that when he’s working in the outside world. The Engine Shed trainees love the peer environment; they are working and learning alongside their friends. It won’t be so easy when they leave this sheltered environment and they won’t make the same kind of pals as at the Engine Shed. It’s important to prepare parents for this. However, the Engine Shed will always be there in the background and many of the friends made here will be friends for life. It’s a bit like the experience of university for other young people; good memories, good friends, but something to make the transition from into adult life.

But, John is such a cheery and outgoing young man that he will make friends anywhere. He is getting on great at Standard Life and says he would love to work in a place like that. It’s lively and full of regulars who have got to know John and he can banter with them even when he’s cleaning the tables. He’s growing in confidence all the time. There are a lot of younger staff working in the canteen and John talks about the night he got invited out with the others for a staff ‘do’. He was really pleased to be included when they went bowling and then for a drink. He’s one of the team now, growing up and starting to get on in the outside world.

**GALLOPING TOWARDS THE END**

Time seems to gallop from this point. John is happy in his placement, and he’s contributing hugely towards the success of the bakery at the Engine Shed. Patrick has been branching out into new lines, making different kinds of bread, and the oatcakes are selling in Harvey Nichols. John now works to a very high standard and is an important member of the bakery team.

Then – miracle of miracles – a job comes up at Standard Life. John has now been at the Engine Shed for two and a half years and Standard Life say they would like him to start, five hours a day, Monday to Friday, in two months time. Everyone is delighted.
Now it is time to prepare John for moving on. Denise takes John through his Health and Hygiene Certificate. Denise has been teaching him the elements all the way through his time at the Engine Shed, but does a concentrated piece of work with trainees shortly before they leave so that the certificate is bang up to date. This saves employers the expense as all staff must have this qualification.

Kath organises John’s time so that he starts the transition to Standard Life. He works there one day the first week, two days the second week, three days the third week and four days the fourth week. On the fifth day of that week, there’s a farewell ‘do’ for him in the café at the Engine Shed. There’s tea and cake after the café has closed, a card from everyone, a present for John and speeches. John finds it no problem to stand up and tell everyone how much he’s enjoyed the Engine Shed. For him, it’s another point of transition. He’s been at a lot of these leaving do’s over his years at the Engine Shed and has learned from how other people have conducted themselves; now it’s his turn to be the centre of attention!

LIFE GOES ON

John is successfully launched. But for Kath, there is still a lot to do. There’s an enormous amount of paperwork to complete when a trainee moves on. It’s at these points of transition that things can go wrong, particularly with Benefits, so Kath looks after all this to make sure it goes smoothly. Even though John is one of the most able trainees the Engine Shed will ever have, he will only be working 25 hours per week; others will work less. However, all our trainees are better off in work than on Benefits. Thankfully, the system supports work for this group.

Kath continues to check on John’s progress. Three months after he starts his new job, she has a meeting with him and his manager. Everything is going well and Kath arranges to meet again in another three months. She’s always at the end of the phone though, for both John and his manager. John is launched on his way.
CASE STUDY TWO

Anne’s Engine Shed Journey

The main character in this short case study is Anne, who is only 17 years old when she joins the Engine Shed. This is unusually young and Anne’s journey is not nearly as straightforward as John’s, particularly as Anne is in foster care.

ANNE’S BACKGROUND
Anne has been in care since she was nine years old. Her parents divorced when she was five, shortly after her mother had twins. After the break-up, Anne’s father moved down south and lost touch with the family, leaving her mother to cope on her own with the twins and Anne. Her mother felt she couldn’t give Anne the time she needed and found it particularly difficult to come to terms with her learning disability. In the end, Anne was placed in foster care.

Luckily, Anne is placed with very experienced foster carers who have provided a stable and loving home for her all through her school days.

LIFE AFTER SCHOOL
Like John, Anne attends a Special School in Edinburgh. Unlike John, however, as a young person in care, her transition from school is not as straightforward. At Anne’s ‘Future Planning’ meeting, where all the agencies involved work out what is the best next step, everyone agrees that Anne would find a College environment too difficult. She is quiet and doesn’t like participating in big groups. The feeling is that the Engine Shed, with its smaller groups and supportive environment, would suit her better.

Anne’s social worker approaches the Engine Shed to discuss a referral, and the usual process of meetings and assessment kicks in. Marian and Kath meet with Anne and her foster parents, and although she is quite young, it is agreed that she is a suitable trainee. Her foster parents are keen for her to work at the Engine Shed and have extended her placement with them until she is 19.
PROBLEMS ARISE
Anne is placed in the café at the Engine Shed, and things go very well for the first few months. However, when she starts on her first work placement her behaviour starts to give cause for concern. Small things keep going wrong. Anne says she finds the uniform she has to wear at her placement uncomfortable and ill-fitting, so Kath spends time with her finding one that she finds comfortable. She starts getting to her placement late, saying she got on the wrong bus, or it was held up by traffic. Several times she doesn’t go at all, saying she feels ill. Taken by themselves, these might be reasonable excuses, but Kath is alerted by the pattern emerging, and spends a lot of time with Anne at her placement trying to get her settled.

Things don’t really improve, and eventually, the manager at Anne's placement phones Kath up to say she feels it is just not working. Kath ends the placement.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM
Marian, Kath, Anne and her foster parents sit down to discuss what is going wrong and realise that Anne has actually been under a lot of emotional strain. As a young person in care, the process of growing up is complicated. A lot of different agencies have responsibility for helping her think about her future, and this is causing her confusion and upset. Several times she has asked for time off from the Engine Shed to meet with, and be counselled by, staff from a number of different agencies. With the best will in the world, they are presenting her with too many options, not all of which are realistic. At one session, Anne is asked if she would like to work at a large, prestigious retail outlet, which Anne thinks sounds very glamorous. However, it turns out that this is a one week placement only, and wouldn’t lead to a job. All of this going on in the background is unsettling Anne who can’t cope with the choices she is being faced with.

TOO MUCH, TOO YOUNG
Although the Engine Shed’s trainees are young adults in terms of years, in terms of their emotional development most are experiencing early adolescence. At an emotional age of around 14, Anne is being asked to make big decisions about her future, and like young people of that age under strain, she begins to act up.

Anne’s foster parents realise this, and recognise that the Engine Shed is not offering instant results but a realistic opportunity for Anne to achieve a job that she can base her future around. They lay down the law to Anne, saying
life is not easy and that she has to work hard and learn if she wants to progress. Anne can leave the Engine Shed if she wants, but they ask her to think about what she would do all day if she left.

Anne decides she wants to stay, so Marian discusses the problems with the other agencies and agrees boundaries. They are asked to only meet with Anne outside work hours and not to muddy the waters for her in terms of work and training. The Engine Shed has to be seen as the core of Anne’s life for a few years, providing the stability she needs in order to grow up.

**POSITIVE RESULTS**

Once the pressure is off, Anne very quickly settles down again and is an excellent trainee. Her attendance is perfect and there are no more quibbles about uniforms being uncomfortable. Although Anne is quiet, she has a good sense of humour and has a group of friends among the trainees who she loves going out with for pizza and ten pin bowling.

Life for Anne is tough and will become even more demanding once she has to leave care and set up home. The Engine Shed offers a stable place in this difficult world and knows from experience that the friends Anne makes during her time here, her peer group, will be a hugely important part of her support in the future.
CASE STUDY THREE

Andrew’s Engine Shed Journey

The main character in this very brief case study is Andrew. He is a quiet and gentle young man with autism. Andrew is keen and comes to work every day, but presents particular challenges for the Engine Shed.

A SLOW DEVELOPER

Andrew works in the bakery and although quiet, is very much part of the team. He watches everything that is going on but doesn’t join in conversations. He replies to questions, but his answers are always brief, and he never makes eye contact. Andrew works very slowly and methodically and needs the routine to be exactly the same each day. One day he comes in late because of a dentist’s appointment and finds it very upsetting that the daily routine has started without him. He can’t just slot in, and wants everyone to go back to the beginning.

Kath tries him with a few placements to see if that will help bring him on, but he finds the demands too much and can’t cope with the speed or variety of the work.

Andrew has been with the Engine Shed for two years, and at a review meeting with his parents, they agree that he is very fixed in his ways and that he may never be able to work in open employment.

A BREAKTHROUGH

Everyone around Andrew speaks to him all the time. Staff say hello when they see him, and he is always included in discussions. However, everyone is used to Andrew never making eye contact, or starting a conversation. One day, Marian is walking through the bakery when she passes Andrew and forgets to say hello. He looks up indignantly, makes eye contact, and says hello. Marian is surprised, and very pleased at this development.

A few days later, Patrick, Marian and Kath are in the bakery talking, when Andrew starts telling them about a Christmas cake he has just made. This is the first time he has ever spontaneously started a conversation in his two years at the Engine Shed; answers have always had to be dragged out of him! It’s a huge breakthrough.
...BUT STILL A LONG WAY FROM EMPLOYMENT

Andrew has made huge strides and is starting to understand social situations. By watching other trainees he has learned to join in conversations, albeit in a limited way. He is starting to adapt to different work situations. At the Engine Shed, Andrew can spend ages chopping onions up really small for the cashew nut pies but when he’s asked just to chop them up roughly for soup, he hasn’t been able to do it. But, just recently, Kath put him out on a work placement where he had to chop onions at speed, and roughly. The kitchen manager showed him what she wanted and Andrew did as he was asked.

We don’t yet know if Andrew will ever be able to work at the pace demanded by an employer. However, he has made huge strides in his work and developed socially. We may need to find him a more supported work environment in the future, but then again, it is often only at the end of the training period that things come together. We’ll have to wait and see.
CASE STUDY FOUR

Gillian’s Engine Shed Journey

Gillian is one of the Engine Shed’s most popular ever trainees, always organising the others to go out for social events and always the first to speak up at monthly meetings.

When Gillian was a baby, the doctors told her family that they would be better to leave her in hospital as she would never walk or talk. Her family refused to accept this diagnosis and worked incredibly hard to prove the doctors wrong. Not only did Gillian learn to walk, and talk, but to enjoy loads of sports, including horse riding and sailing.

Gillian has just come to the end of her three years training with the Engine Shed and is about to start working twenty hours per week in a hotel in Edinburgh. This is an environment she loves, with lots of different people, but in a family-like setting.

Although Gillian’s speech can be hard for strangers to follow, once you get to know her, you know exactly what she is saying. Similarly, although her movements can be ungainly, she is adept at her work and gets around as quickly as anyone else.

Everyone rises, or sinks, to the level of expectations placed on them. Gillian was treated as special by her family and rose to meet their expectations. The Engine Shed treated her like every other trainee. All our faith has been amply rewarded.
Diary of a Changing Business
A Guide to the Engine Shed
Introduction

BY NOW, IT WILL be clear to readers that the Engine Shed has many different facets, and to keep it all running smoothly requires a huge amount of care and effort. In many ways, it feels like a big family. However, at the start of 2005, we knew we had to start looking at ourselves in a more businesslike way in order to survive into the future. This was a huge challenge, not least because everyone was already working at full-stretch just to keep things going.

Fortunately, at the time we were thinking about our future, Communities Scotland launched their ‘Seedcorn’ Fund. This provided funding for exactly what we wanted – to review our operation, look at where we could become more business like, and develop a long-term plan.

When ESF funding came to an end in June 2007 we had a new five year business plan in place, with new sales targets, and a five year funding package from the Big Lottery to help us achieve them. In November 2007, Dharmandri Kanani, head of the Big Lottery in Scotland, was guest of honour at a party to mark this new stage in our development.

However, getting to this stage has not been without its share of blood, sweat and tears, and is very much an ongoing process. This next section attempts to provide a diary of the changes the Engine Shed went through, lessons learned, and where the business is now.
Diary of a Changing Business

**FEBRUARY 2005**

The funding applications to undertake the review and development work were submitted in the early part of 2005. The idea was to split the work up into a number of different elements (business review, staffing review, IT review etc) and appoint different people, if necessary, to undertake them. Part of the package included an external adviser to help plan and manage the work, and pull all the findings into a final business plan.

**AUGUST 2005**

By summer 2005 all the development funding was in place and an outside adviser appointed to help co-ordinate the process, prepare briefs for the various bits of research, and pull the business plan together at the end. The key elements of the research were:

### Business Review

- The business review was the core of the whole process and would look at how to maximise sales and maintain (and improve) quality while retaining the relaxed and supportive environment which trainees and customers like.

- It would examine the bakery, café, shop, outside catering, meeting facilities and tofu production and ask if they were providing the right mix for customers, suggest how this could be improved, how to improve marketing, and how to keep increasing the quality of what was on offer.

- The intention was to commission someone with a good knowledge of the food sector to do this.

### ‘Labour Market’ Review:

- This was aimed at finding out why trainee numbers had dropped off in recent years and ask: what had changed, what do the professionals working with the target group expect, want and can pay for?
The intention was to commission someone with a strong social policy background to do this.

**Staffing Review**

- Individual jobs had changed a lot over the years since the Engine Shed set up, but there had been no comprehensive review of the staffing structure and salary scales over that time.

- It was decided that the manager would do this part of the work, with some input from an outside HR expert.

**Review of Premises, Equipment & Resources**

- The aim was to look at all the resources the Engine Shed had and prepare a replacement/renewal plan with costings, to enable planning for future investment.

- This included looking at options for the one spare room in the building, for example, could it be used as extra meeting space, or to expand the production of tofu?

- The idea was for this to be undertaken by staff.

- A valuation would be sought for the Engine Shed building, to assess whether it may be possible to buy it at some point from the City of Edinburgh Council.

**IT Review**

- The plan was to have all the research completed before Christmas 2005, after which a financial plan and business plan would be drafted, based on all this research. At that point the IT system would be looked at to examine what changes could be made to our (very rudimentary) system to support planned developments.

Staff knew there were big changes planned and there was a wariness about what it might involve. It was important that they, and the board of directors, were kept up to date as the process developed. The Engine Shed is a very tight-knit organisation, with a long-standing staff team, so to keep things as neutral as possible, our external adviser Anne-Marie McGeoch provided a briefing session for staff and directors to talk through the process and timetable.
Change is always tricky, but through keeping things calm and practical, giving timescales and explanations and providing regular updates, nerves were kept to a minimum throughout the process.

**SEPTEMBER 2005**

Once briefs were prepared for all the research, the next task was to find the right people.

**Business Review**

The business review was really the core and it was important to find someone who understood the catering industry. At first, this proved quite difficult. All those recommended by various support agencies were general business consultants, with no specific expertise in catering. The consultants chosen in the end came via a recommendation from one of the Engine Shed’s network of employers, who said this particular firm had ‘turned our catering operation around’. This was Merritt Harrison, a private sector consultancy who usually worked with large organisations, including the Scottish Executive and Historic Scotland.

At the interview, they really impressed, not only with their knowledge but also their enthusiasm and down to earth approach. After they were appointed, they also offered to include the review of equipment and resources as part of the business review. They price equipment all the time for clients so were happy to assess the condition and lifespan of the Engine Shed’s equipment and estimate replacement costs, as part of reviewing the business operation.

Sandra Reid, from Merritt Harrison was a tremendous find who was able to see things we couldn’t and show how things could be improved in very practical ways. She is still in the background now whenever advice is needed.

It may seem a simple, and obvious point, but an important lesson for other social enterprises contemplating development is to find an expert in your specific trade.

A completely unexpected by-product of this process was that the employer who recommended Merritt Harrison, Austin Whyte from the Scottish Executive’s catering operation, became so interested in what the Engine Shed was trying to achieve that he joined the board. Some things you just can’t plan for.
Labour Market Review

Finding people for the labour market review proved trickier. We saw this as a relatively straightforward piece of work to provide an overview of current and projected policy in relation to training and employment support for people with learning disabilities. It would also provide an insight into the priorities of the various professional groups involved in placing trainees, and the funding streams available for paying for these services.

The consultants would be asked to visit a number of key agencies including: Social Work, Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus, Community health (Learning and Disability Team), Stevenson College, Jewel & Esk College, Education Department etc. They would also be asked to make recommendations about extending the Engine Shed’s services to people with mental health problems.

However, all those approached said that policy was in too much of a state of flux to make much sense and recommended instead that they should seek the views of trainees and parents. This had already been done as part of the 2004 evaluation, though and what was needed was a more analytical approach.

In the end, no-one was appointed. Instead, Marian undertook to speak to all the main contacts herself, to clarify their remits, priorities, and funding options. Although it was difficult for her to find the time this turned out really well: she was best placed to make the contacts, and it had the added bonus of providing a platform to explain and promote the changes the Engine Shed was planning. Anne-Marie was asked to take on the background research, particularly looking at the draft Employability Framework for Scotland, and summarise the key findings for the business plan.

As with the business review, some things seemed obvious after they had happened. In Marian we had our own expert in this area and the face to face meetings proved a great opportunity for her to update on what stakeholders wanted. Although it was hard for Marian to find the time, it was well worth it.

Staffing Review

The staffing review was a relatively short piece of work, to help assess the current staffing structure, job descriptions, skills, salary levels and career ambitions of the existing staff and offer recommendations for the future.

Finding the right person proved very easy. Both Garvald Centre in Edinburgh, and Garvald West Linton, a Steiner community in the Borders, had used a consultant called Alison Coates to undertake major reviews of their administrative sections. These had been successful, so Marian approached Alison to take on the staffing review for the Engine Shed.
Alison agreed but recommended that the work should be split into two phases, the first to interview all the staff to gain a quick overview, and then to wait until the initial findings of the business review were ready before making any firm recommendations.

This worked out well, and shows it pays to work with people you have a good relationship with. The Engine Shed ended up saving money on this part of the work as the second phase needed less time than originally anticipated (more on this later).

**SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2005**

**Findings from the Business Review**

The business review started in September 2005 and involved a detailed analysis of all the commercial activities: tofu production, bakery, café, outside catering service and shop. Sandra observed and analysed each process and created a detailed report in December.

The report examined: product range and quality; merchandising and display; facilities and equipment; health and safety and food hygiene, and made a number of very practical operational recommendations. In addition, she examined charges and calculated gross margins; looked at productivity (dependent largely on the capabilities of the trainees); examined opening hours; purchase of materials; management and staffing and areas of training required. The report also included a financial analysis, looking at where money could be saved, where profit margins could be improved, where sales could be increased and higher quality delivered.

Without going into too much detail, the main elements were:

- **Streamlining Production**
  
  Each of the workshops had tended to be looked at in isolation and not as part of an overall business. So for example, the café made scones and cakes, because the trainees enjoyed it, but this duplicated the work of the bakery. Similarly, the outside catering unit made hot food for those using the conference centre, because it saw itself as quite separate from the café kitchen. The report recommended gradually moving towards all hot food being made in the café kitchen, all bakery products made in the bakery and that the outside catering unit should concentrate on making salads and filled rolls for use by themselves and the café.

- **Planning Production**
  
  Each unit was asked to take responsibility for developing a weekly production schedule, outlining their requirements and allocating tasks to
staff and trainees for the week. For the café this meant planning a weekly menu and using seasonal ingredients as far as possible. For the bakery, this meant reducing the variety of breads on offer. It had a tradition of making breads to order for individual customers and this would have to change. This would all help reduce costs and improve efficiency.

- **Menu and Presentation**
  The Engine Shed hadn’t really updated its ‘offer’ for a long time but tastes had changed. Sandra suggested experimenting with lighter breads, lighter meals and snacks, and improving how food was presented, including having better portion control. Presentation was not just about the food though; the conference service had to be smartened up and all the marketing materials updated.

- **Costings**
  Each unit had to calculate accurate costs for each portion or line and set new costs in order to achieve a minimum 60% gross margin.

- **Health and Safety**
  Some things needed to be tightened up, such as no wearing of jewellery, disposable towels made available at hand wash basins, window ledges to be kept clear etc.

- **Increase Tofu Production**
  The review demonstrated that the tofu production unit was capable of generating considerable extra income, particularly as its profit margins were already quite high and demand was outstripping supply. Sandra was asked to do a bit more research, looking at whether/how the process could be adapted to accommodate a two shift system and to investigate in more detail how much extra tofu our existing customers would take.

- **Increase shop sales**
  There seemed to be a real potential to increase sales in the shop through extending opening hours to 7.00pm to get passing evening trade, extend the take-away service and perhaps introduce a food delivery service.

**Findings From The Staffing Review**
Alison interviewed all staff individually, talking to them about their roles and ambitions for the future. In the end, this exercise was more about allowing people let off steam than directly gathering information for the business review. Most of the staff had been with the Engine Shed for a long time and change was threatening; they were being asked to move out of their comfort
zones. This gave them a chance to express these feelings.

All managers will recognise that this is a tricky situation; how do you allow staff to blow off steam without it becoming destructive and personal? It worked out fine in the end, but with hindsight it was a risky strategy and a better approach might have been to have more group information sessions rather than one-to-one interviews at that point in the process.

Findings From The Labour Market Review

Marian took on the job of meeting face to face with people from the key agencies responsible for the education and support of young people with learning disabilities. She found these meetings really helpful and felt she had made a good impression on the people interviewed. The bulk of these meetings took place before Christmas 2005, with most of the other research taking place early in the new year.

What made things much simpler in terms of preparing the business plan was the response from senior staff at City of Edinburgh Social Work Department. Social Work, the main source of income outside ESF, was clear that they would continue supporting the Engine Shed after the ESF programme ended, through continuing to contract for training places. While they couldn’t make up the £140,000 a year which would be lost with the ending of ESF, they wanted to be kept in touch as the business plan developed and would offer what help they could. This gave a big confidence boost.

The meeting with social work also laid to rest the notion that the Engine Shed might have to broaden the base of trainees to include people with other disabilities. They urged Marian to stick with the existing target group and suggested that the only real problem with finding trainees was that young people were often never advised about the Engine Shed’s service. This came down to an issue of communication and was one that would be addressed in the business plan.

In the desk based research early in the new year, it also become clear that the Engine Shed had something important to communicate to a much broader audience. Over 18 years it had consistently helped 80% of its trainees to achieve employment. The Executive’s own research pointed out that of all types of employability interventions it had examined, none had achieved 50+% of its clients moving into employment.

Marian realised that the Engine Shed’s success, working with a group that has the lowest economic activity levels of all those with a disability, was something to be shared with others. This was a bit of a eureka moment, to see the Engine Shed not just as a successful project locally, but nationally. Communicating this to a wider audience, and ensuring the manager was able
to take a more outward looking role, were elements that were taken forward into the business plan.

**EARLY JANUARY 2006**

**Business Review**

When the report was produced in December it was clear that it not only provided the basis for building the business plan, but that some immediate improvements could be introduced. While many of the recommendations would need time to put in place, and in some cases require new equipment, others could be introduced quickly.

It was really important to get going with this. Although no-one had anticipated how quickly change would kick in, the process wasn’t a theoretical exercise to research a new service but a review of an enterprise already in existence. As soon as Sandra started going into each unit and talking to staff, a momentum built up for change, but also a concern about what this meant for staff. So, communication, and implementing step by step change was crucial.

The key things introduced from early January were:

- **Choice**
  The main changes were found in the café where the menu was changed slightly to give people a wider choice with a number of lighter dishes. They started making one main course every day, instead of two, introduced baked potatoes and quiche every day. New snacks were introduced, including individual tofu/cashew nut pies and samosas. Customers said they appreciated the choice, and sales went up slightly right away.

- **Change**
  A drinks cabinet for cold drinks was purchased, which cut down time queuing, and the bakery started selling its bread from the café. The bakery has a lot of regular customers who had always collected their orders direct from the bakery. This caused a lot of interruptions, so selling it from the café was more efficient.

- **Costs**
  Menu planning started immediately, and right away costs and wastage was reduced. In the past people would be running out for odds and ends from the supermarket; this was stopped and profit margins went up.
To help implement these changes, Marian asked Sandra to do some follow up work, including helping staff develop templates and processes for production schedules, menu planning, product development and costing. Sandra also did a bit of training for the staff in these approaches. It felt right to try and keep the momentum going and having a catering expert who could respond quickly and flexibly was crucial. Staff respected Sandra’s expertise and responded positively.

The business review had reported that there was potential to increase the production of tofu, and anecdotally it seemed that demand was outstripping supply. Marian asked Sandra to look in more detail at how the tofu unit could be re-organised to allow increased production, essentially to do a ‘time and motion’ study. Sandra was also asked to speak to the main customers to estimate how much extra they really wanted.

**MID-JANUARY 2006**

**Do the Numbers Add Up?**

By the middle of January some changes were being introduced and Sandra had put together various financial scenarios, based on the increased sales and increased profit margins that she thought were attainable. Marian, Sandra and Anne-Marie met to discuss them.

The working assumption was that the Engine Shed would need some grant funding to replace the ESF funding, but realistically this had to be considerably less than the £140,000 per year that would be lost. However, the scenarios that Sandra came up with all seemed to require too much money.

**Something had to Go**

The team started looking more critically at each unit of the Engine Shed and it quickly became clear that the shop covered much less of its costs than the rest of the Engine Shed and its profit margins were very low. This was hidden to an extent by the sheer amount of cash going through the shop.

The business review had recommended several ways of increasing shop sales but profit margins would remain low unless or until the Engine Shed itself could produce more of the stock sold in the shop rather than buying stock from wholesalers. In the long-term the Engine Shed could probably produce more bakery products, ready meals and tofu products for sale in the shop and so keep profit margins high, but this was a long way off.

Into this mix was the fact that the lease for the shop was up in October 2006 and if the Engine Shed wanted to renew, it would be for a further 10 years.
Closing the shop was almost unthinkable. It was a popular and well run venture and had an excellent manager, who had just been interviewed by a well known food writer. The trainees enjoyed working there and it had a loyal band of customers.

However, this option had to be considered and the more it was looked at, the more inevitable it became. The fact that the Engine Shed would have to take a further 10 year lease, without ESF funding to pay the rent, was a major risk given the uncertain financial situation.

Finally, it was recognised that while the shop allowed the Engine Shed to directly provide experience in a shop environment for trainees, it didn’t actually increase the overall number of training places, and therefore training income. It was felt that alternative retail work placements could be organised for those trainees who wanted it.

This was a very hard decision. The shop was a well known part of the Engine Shed ‘brand’. However, closing it meant removing a big item of uncertainty and helped keep the focus on the core business.

**FEBRUARY 2006**

**A New Staffing Structure**

By early February the project team was working on the assumption that the shop would close and there would be at least two staff redundancies; the shop manager and part-time member of staff who assisted in the shop. Sandra had produced revised figures based on this scenario and the redundancy considerations.

Alison, the employment consultant came back into the picture at this point and met with the Marian, Sandra and Anne-Marie to help examine the staffing implications of the business review. Most of this was achieved at a single meeting, and Alison went off to draft new job descriptions.

**Creating A New Organisation**

For 16 years the Engine Shed operated with a manager who was directly responsible for all the other staff. In the office was an employment worker, who worked four days per week, an administrator and part-time book-keeper. Apart from a part-time delivery van driver, the remaining members of staff were all ‘group workers’ who were responsible for all the food produced in the Engine Shed, and trainee support.

Apart from the van driver, all the jobs in the Engine Shed would change in some way as a result of the review.
**A New Management Team**

The biggest change was to create more specialist posts, and a management team. The manager would become Chief Executive, leading a management team, and with more responsibility for promoting the Engine Shed externally. A new Finance & Administration Manager post was created and a new Catering Manager post introduced, with overall responsibility for everything that was produced in the café, bakery, tofu unit and conference catering unit. These three positions would work together to ensure the targets within the business plan were met.

**Marketing Support**

The office was to be re-organised, with a new post of Marketing Assistant who would help market the Engine Shed’s products and services, including an upgraded conference service.

**Trainee Support**

The Employment Worker would move to a full-time post, as Training Officer, taking on an enhanced role to free the Chief Executive of some of the more routine work relating to trainee support and placements.

**A New Role for Group Workers**

The number of group workers was to be reduced and they would become Supervisors, responsible for the day to day running of each unit: the café, conference catering, bakery and tofu production. They would still have responsibility for the trainees assigned to their unit, and would take on responsibility for supervising a new type of staff, the catering workers.

**Catering Staff**

A new role of catering worker would be introduced to allow the Engine Shed to meet the increased production targets without compromising on the training. This would include two part-time catering assistants who would work in the café on Saturdays. The plan was to introduce weekend opening as one way of increasing sales while not affecting training. It would also include assistants to work in the bakery and the tofu unit to help increase production.
The Development of a Social Enterprise

The proposed new structure looked like this:

![Diagram of the new structure]

Towards the end of February, these proposals were put before the board, together with the latest financial projections, including a recommendation to close the shop. All these changes were accepted and it was agreed that the new staffing structure should come into effect from 1st May. This meant a lot of work in a short space of time.
Planning The Organisational Change

As soon as it became clear there would be redundancy implications, Marian checked out the best way to handle this process with ACAS. They were extremely helpful, giving straightforward advice about how to do this in the best possible way.

By 5th April all new job descriptions had been drawn up and plans prepared for the changeover. The staff re-organisation went very smoothly, and is perhaps worth recounting how this happened in detail for anyone contemplating a similar change.

Preparing the Ground

The Engine Shed was due to close for the Easter holidays on Friday 7th April and Marian decided to use this break as an opportunity for staff to consider the proposed changes. Marian and the Chair of the board of directors, Rosie Barclay, met each staff member individually on the morning of the 7th to explain the changes and why they were happening. The two shop staff were seen first as it was recognised that the closure of the shop would come as a big shock.

In the afternoon there was a second meeting, this time with the whole staff group, to go over the changes and give out job descriptions for the new posts. Everyone went off on holiday, but were asked to inform Marian over the holiday which, if any, of the posts in the new structure they wanted to apply for and to submit a short statement.

Interviewing for New Posts

Instead of the Engine Shed opening after the holidays on Monday 16th, interviews were arranged for the Tuesday and Wednesday, letting everyone know the results immediately. The Catering Manager post was filled by one of the existing group workers, the existing employment worker moved up to a full-time post, one part-time catering group worker accepted redundancy and the remaining three catering group workers were confirmed as Supervisors. The two existing shop workers and two office workers all accepted redundancy.

Big Sigh of Relief

This was a huge challenge because the Engine Shed in many ways was like a big family, but despite all the fears, it went extremely smoothly and everyone was very accepting. Good planning was essential and by being straightforward, honest and unemotional (i.e. not saying sorry for things that
had to be done, but being honest about the reasons) staff were able to absorb the changes and make their own decisions about what was best for them. Several members of staff, even those taking redundancy, said they really appreciated the way it was handled.

**APRIL 2006**

**Creating The Business Plan**

While Marian was introducing the immediate changes recommended in the business review and sorting out the new staffing arrangements, Anne-Marie was working in the background to prepare the business plan. The recommendations of the business review provided the core of this, in particular the operational side and the financial projections. Anne-Marie’s role was to work with Marian and Sandra, put what information existed into a business plan format, see what the gaps were and do whatever background research was necessary to fill them. This included background on the various markets the Engine Shed operated in, the training market as well as its various catering markets.

This was the first business plan the Engine Shed had ever produced and has since been used for successful funding applications.

**A New Strategy For The Engine Shed**

The key changes within the business plan were:

- **Operational Changes**
  Major efficiencies, and higher profit margins would be gained by controlling costs and better planning. This would include: better planning of menus, more accurate costing of dishes, better portion control and weekly production scheduling (for café, conference/catering, tofu and bakery).

- **Business Changes**
  Increased sales would be achieved in a number of ways, including: introducing new, lighter meals, snacks, breads etc to appeal to different tastes; upgrading the conference service and charging more realistic prices; increasing tofu production by up to 60% to meet the additional demand from existing customers; introducing a range of ready made meals and snacks for sale in the café; introducing Saturday opening for the café.

- **Staffing Changes**
  In order to gain efficiencies and increase sales, staff had to become more specialised, with a senior management team, marketing assistant,
supervisors for each of the units and a new role of catering assistant. The latter would help deliver the increased output required without compromising training.

- **Leading the Field in Employability Services**
  It was recognised that the Engine Shed had developed a unique and effective training programme. It seemed likely it would fit well into the proposed new Employability Framework for Scotland. However, with new local strategic partnerships being proposed, it would be important to get the Engine Shed’s voice heard. This meant taking an active role in any local partnership as well as raising its profile with policy makers, funders and referral agencies.

**Financial Projections**
The plan showed that the Engine Shed could replace a considerable part of the ESF income through increased sales and increased profit margins. The financial projections showed a deficit each year following the end of ESF funding, but these were relatively small amounts and there was time to develop other sources of funds to meet these gaps. The figures showed a steadily rising share of total income coming from sales, reaching just over 60% by 2012.

- **Longer Term Capital Investment**
  Some capital investment was needed in both the short-term and the long-term, if the Engine Shed was going to meet the new sales projections. Sandra had prepared a replacement/renewal plan for existing equipment as well as costing new equipment and upgrade work required. This was the first time the Engine Shed had a long-term investment plan and included everything from a new bread oven to new furnishings and some upgrading work to the toilets.

- **Short-Term Capital Investment**
  In the short-term (2006/2007) some investment was needed for new equipment and resources. This included new furniture and equipment for the conference service, a new coffee machine etc.

Some of these costs could be met from existing budgets and reserves, but most would have to be found from one-off grant funding.

- **Investing in Property**
  As part of the review process, the Engine Shed has also looked at the option of purchasing the building from the City of Edinburgh Council. The
rental costs are considerable, at £55,000 per year, and it would help provide the organisation with long-term sustainability if we could convert this to a mortgage and eventually own the property.

An initial valuation of £750,000 has been made on the Engine Shed building. To meet these costs would require a 20% deposit of £150,000 being found, but a mortgage of £600,000 would cost less than the current annual rental.

If the Futurebuilders Fund, or similar fund is available, the Engine Shed would seriously consider applying for the costs of the deposit and approach City of Edinburgh Council to see if they were amenable to selling.

JUNE 2006 TO JUNE 2007

A Year Of Transition

By May 2006 the business plan had been prepared and agreed, the staff changes made and the Engine Shed’s ‘transition year’ started. The key date had always been June 2007 when the ESF funding ended, so during the upcoming year the re-organisation had to be completed, funding secured for elements of the capital investment programme, and funding secured to meet the projected funding gap in the operational budget.

Successful Funding Applications

The two main priorities were to get some capital funding to help invest in the new equipment needed to upgrade the service, particularly for the new conference service, and to get some longer-term funding to help meet the gap left by ESF. Marian asked Anne-Marie to work with her to put funding applications together, with Sandra providing updated figures where necessary.

One application went in to Lloyds TSB for around £6,000 to help upgrade the conference facilities and this was approved in October 2006. This was a big boost and allowed the conference service to be revamped, with new delegate rates and a whole new ‘offer’, to achieve sales targets within the business plan.

The other application was to the Big Lottery. The outline was approved in June, the full application was completed in November, and was successful in February 2007. The was excellent news as the award had a mixture of revenue funding, to meet the costs of some of the new posts, and capital funding, to help invest in equipment. There was a huge sigh of relief at this news as without it, the Engine Shed would have had to spend all its effort trying to secure bits and pieces of funding to keep going.
Not all Plain Sailing

Life at the Engine Shed was very hectic by the middle of 2006. The organisation had been turned inside out, Marian was flat out putting together funding applications and trying to implement improvements in day to day operations. At the same time, there were the trainees to deal with and customers to serve. With all these plates spinning, a few were bound to fall and not surprisingly, some of these were related to staffing.

Delays with Recruitment

The big staffing re-organisation had gone smoothly, but no-one had reckoned on it being quite such a difficult process to recruit new staff. From May, when the previous administrator left to take up a new post, through to September when a new Marketing Assistant was finally appointed, there was a succession of temps covering the office. Similarly, there were problems recruiting the right person for the Finance Manager post, with this not filled on a permanent basis until February 2007. This put enormous strain on Marian who got bogged down in trying to keep the administration going while trying to implement the operational changes.

Some of this was just bad luck; for example, someone accepted one of these positions then pulled out just before they were due to start. With hindsight it may have been better to have gone to an agency to put in place a temporary finance person and marketing assistant to allow time to recruit the right staff. It would have cost a bit more but would have saved a lot of stress and allowed some of the operational changes to get going quicker.

Delays with Implementing Change

From 1st May 2006 with the Catering Manager and Supervisors in their new posts, the changes in the business plan could start to get implemented more fully. However, some things took longer than had been hoped.

Although the café opened on Saturdays from November 2006, it took almost another year to develop a new menu for both the weekday and the weekend café, including an all-day breakfast menu for the weekend café.

Improving portion control was one of the targets within the business plan, and some attractive new salad bowls and dishes for serving individual portions of salad, macaroni cheese etc were bought. However, because the menu took time to be adapted, they have hardly been used yet.

A blast chiller was bought to help process additional batches of tofu, and eventually, to introduce ready meals for sale in the café. Tofu production, however, while a bit higher than before, is not yet reaching the levels anticipated.
The Development of a Social Enterprise

The successful application to Lloyds TSB allowed a partial upgrade of the conference facilities, including buying new crockery to serve 100 people, new cupboards to store all the equipment neatly in the conference room, and a dishwasher for the conference kitchen to make it more efficient. A group of staff from Lloyds TSB even came in on an ‘away day’ and re-painted the conference room. However, it took to November 2007 before there was a new brochure, with new delegate rates and menus for the conference service.

These delays were not surprising, particularly as there was no functioning senior management team until February 2007, and Marian had a huge amount to try and juggle. With hindsight it would have been really helpful to have arranged for Sandra to come in for a few hours each week to support the catering staff make changes to the menus etc.

The Successes

These problems should not overshadow the huge amount that has been achieved.

- **Café**

  The café menu is broader than before, there is a chill cabinet where customers can buy soft drinks and tofu, the café is open every Saturday and has a brand new breakfast menu. The new catering assistants are working well. Sales for the weekday café have exceeded targets and sales for the Saturday café are almost at their target level, even before much additional promotion.

- **Bakery**

  Edinburgh’s Telford College staff came in to help bakery staff develop new lines, including focaccia and a couple of lighter breads, as well as oatcakes. These have all been very successful and much appreciated in the café. In fact, the bakery is now selling much more produce through the café than before, so is doing very well in terms of its sales targets.

  On top of that, early in 2007 the Engine Shed was approached by a firm to make oat biscuits. It was felt these were too complicated for the trainees, but it sparked the idea that the Engine Shed’s own oatcakes could be sold to other retailers. To cut a long story short, Marian approached Harvey Nichols in Edinburgh, their food-court staff were very interested, checked out the Engine Shed’s processes and worked closely with staff to launch the oatcakes in their St Andrew Square shop in May 2007. We get a fair price for these hand-made, organic oatcakes and everyone is very pleased with this development.
The bakery is also selling more tray bakes to other cafés in the city and could do more.

All of these lines could be developed further, including selling bread to restaurants in the city. One of the Engine Shed’s advantages is that the bread is made later in the day, because trainees only start at 9.00am, so is very fresh for evening meals.

- **Conference Centre**
  Although it proceeded in fits and starts, the conference centre is now fully upgraded, with a smart new brochure promoting the facilities. This has always been a popular service, but the aim now is to generate more sales, and higher profit margins, through upgrading and charging more realistic prices.

- **Tofu Production Unit**
  The one area that remains a bit disappointing is the tofu production. The Engine Shed has very loyal customers for its tofu, including well known vegetarian restaurants in the city, and it is very highly regarded. It has a very high profit margin and, in theory, production should have been able to increase considerably. It remains a bit of a mystery why production levels haven’t reached the level anticipated. One reason is that making tofu is an involved process and some trainees cope with it better than others. However, staff are continuing to work on this and expect it will improve over time.

- **Marketing**
  The grant from Big Lottery has allowed the Engine Shed to forge ahead with developing new marketing materials. There’s much more to do in promoting The Engine Shed to new customers, but staff are steadily working through the marketing plan to achieve this.

- **External Relations**
  Part of the marketing plan involves managing relationships with the wide network of agencies and organisations connected in one way or another to the Engine Shed. This involves everything from organising structured visits from potential trainees who are still at school or college, hosting visits from other local training providers, and attending school careers evenings and exhibitions.

  More recently, the Engine Shed has participated in social enterprise events, such as an exhibition hosted by the local Chamber of Commerce to promote links between social enterprises and other businesses in Edinburgh, as well as S2S, the Social Enterprise Trade Fair.
The Engine Shed is an increasingly popular destination for groups on study visits. The majority of these are training providers, from Scotland, UK, Ireland, Europe, and Japan – in fact, all over the world. In some instances they are seeking to transform an existing day service resource into a commercially run enterprise to link their training into ‘the world of work’. Some groups visit solely to learn about the development of the commercial aspects of the Engine Shed. Investing time in producing this Guide should help give all our visitors a comprehensive insight into the work of the Engine Shed.
Afterword

THE LAST FEW YEARS have been a roller coaster ride. Had we not tried to change, the Engine Shed could well have wound up by this time, instead we have achieved a huge amount and are in a new phase of development. However, it has not been easy.

It is difficult to convey just how much the Engine Shed has had to change, with the psychological changes the most difficult ones of all. We didn’t really see ourselves as a business before and this is still a challenge for us; after all, our core purpose remains the training and personal development of a large number of young people with learning disabilities. The Engine Shed is a special place, thanks to these young people, and this is something we never want to lose. It is always a difficult balancing act, and for other organisations thinking of similar changes, here are some final thoughts.

THINGS TAKE TIME
The Engine Shed may have changed, but running it is always challenging. The day-to-day demands can make it difficult to implement changes and it takes time to bed in each new change. We also have to be mindful of how much our trainees can cope with.

RETREAT TO THE COMFORT ZONE
People find it easier to change in a crisis. When the crisis is over they often revert back to their comfort zone and forget why they are being asked to change. This can be true of both staff and directors. As manager, I have the big picture but not everyone can share it.

THE SUPERFICIAL THINGS ARE EASIER
We found that it is much easier to do the superficial stuff. For example, people are happy to buy new bits of equipment, but more reluctant to change the way they work. Even developing menus has been difficult to achieve.

TOO MANY PLATES SPINNING
As manager, I’m always pulled in so many different directions that it can be very difficult to keep pushing everyone along.
REVERTING TO TYPE
For 18 years, we had a flat structure, with all the staff reporting directly to me. On paper, re-allocating some of these duties to other senior staff looked easy. However, it is difficult to change these habits and many responsibilities have drifted back to me. Of course, this is partly about how I behave too, so I have to keep reminding myself of the changes I need to make to my role. In some ways this is much easier to achieve with new staff as they don’t share the history. Just don’t underestimate how hard this is.

EVENTS, EVENTS
It is often the practical, unforeseen things that throw everyone – the dishwasher breaking down or problems with the van – all the things that come out of the blue.

KEEP IT SIMPLE
I’ve certainly learned that it’s important to keep focussing on the practical, and have a timeline to follow. You get there eventually!

Marian MacDonald

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The Development of a Social Enterprise