

## Coventry University Enterprise Category ReFreshed UnLtd: From Counterfeit to Classroom

### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

ReFreshed is a collaborative social enterprise project between Coventry Trading Standards, Coventry Cyrenians, a charity for the homeless and Coventry University. The project aims to upcycle counterfeit goods seized by trading standards into exciting original products to be sold to raise funds and awareness of the charity. The project also aims to support Coventry Cyrenians clients, engaging them through workshops and events, with the intention of creating opportunities for them to gain the confidence to undertake employment or further education.

#### Project partners

Coventry Cyrenians/Coventry Trading Standards

### Section 2 The results

#### The problem

The project faced three initial problems:

- Coventry Cyrenians project staff lacked relevant skills necessary in upcycling the donated counterfeit goods.
- There was a lack of opportunities to sell products designed and made by the University.
- The scale (and potential scale) of the project and the time/resource constraints to deliver it.

#### The approach

Coventry Cyrenians approached the University for help and an initial project was undertaken with Coventry University Fashion students. The project was a huge success, with many of the products sold to raise funds for the Charity. The project subsequently was awarded a Highly Commended at the Lord Stafford Awards in November 2010. In 2012 the Charity was able to secure premises to develop a concept store creating an outlet for the upcycled products to be sold. This opened in November 2012.

The Fashion team at Coventry University applied for and were successful in gaining HEFCE UnLtd funding to develop a training school to offer clients of the charity the opportunity to learn the skills necessary in upcycling counterfeit products so that they could take a more active role in the project and help with the workload. The team also developed University modules to engage students more formally with the project.



Coventry  
University

#### Profile

- HEI
- 25,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2,500 staff
- Urban

# Finalist's case study

## Our goals

Our current goal is to continue to develop and support the social enterprise locally, establishing the training school and workshops to engage a wider participation with the project making it more sustainable.

Our ultimate goal is to disseminate the practice to colleagues at other institutions both in the UK and internationally.

A paper 'Counterfeit to Counter' was published in the Fashion and Textile Association Journal in January 2014. A follow up paper, 'Counterfeit to Classroom' is currently being drafted with the intention of presenting it at the next Fashion and Textile Association Conference in 2015.

The Fashion Course has now developed a sister course at ZUMC in Hangzhou, China, offering the opportunity to introduce the issues surrounding counterfeiting to a completely new audience with a different cultural perspective.

## Performance and results

- 50 clients of the Coventry Cyrenians Charity have engaged with the project
- 5 cohorts of Coventry University Students (approx. 200), and 10 staff have been involved in the project, making products, organising fashion shows and events, selling products and volunteering at the ReFreshed store.
- 40 students and 4 staff from Haute Ecole, HELMo, Liege, Belgium have worked on the project the result of which was exhibited at Made in Liege, a celebration of Belgian Fashion.
- The project was awarded a 'Highly Commended' at the Lord Stafford Awards in November 2010.
- The Windsors and ReFreshed concept charity store opened in November 2011.
- The project was featured on BBC World Service in October 2012.
- £200 was raised at the Clothes Show Live at the NEC, Birmingham in December 2012.
- The project was featured on BBC Midlands today in December 2012.
- 'Counterfeit to Counter', a paper on the project, was presented at the Fashion and Textile Conference at Sheffield Hallam University, January 2013
- The project was awarded £5,000 HEFCE UnLtd funding in July 2013.
- The project was highlighted as a Coventry University Enterprise Case Study at the Vice Chancellors event in July 2013.
- 'Counterfeit to Counter' paper published in the Fashion and Textile Association Journal in January 2014.
- £120 was raised at the ReRefreshed Fashion Show in May 2014.
- Two Coventry University ADD+Vantage modules 'ReRefreshed Fashion' and 'ReRefreshed Fashion-Social Enterprise' written and validated for delivery in October 2014.
- The project was accepted as an HEA academy case study to be published in November 2014.
- ReRefreshed UnLtd training unit, installed and ready for use in November 2014.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

The key lesson we have learned from the project is the potential for growth

### Sharing our project

We have shared the project at many events including; Clothes Show Live, Coventry Lifestyle event, Severn Trent Water Aid event, BBC Midlands today, BBC World Service, Haute Ecole, HELMo, Belgium, the Lord Stafford Awards, the Fashion and Textile Association Conference, Coventry University Social Enterprise event, the Coventry University Graduate Fashion Show and information about the project has been published in the Fashion and Textile Association Journal and is featured as an HEA case study.

These events have helped raise awareness of the project, the issues surrounding and the impact of counterfeiting, the problems encountered by homelessness and the valuable work that the charity does to address them to a broad audience both nationally and internationally. It has raised the awareness of the importance of social enterprise to a generation of Coventry University students, engaging them at all levels of the project and encouraging them to become involved with other sustainable projects.

Our intention has been to inform and inspire others and to share how in our experience that just being involved on a small scale with a sustainable social enterprise project, can have such a great impact.

### What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

It is a great honour to be selected as a Green Gown finalist. Sustainability is embedded in the University's corporate plan and it is happy to be recognised for its initiatives which contribute to this.

The Refreshed project has been running for several years now with many individuals giving their time and creativity to the project. Being selected as a finalist for the competition is a huge achievement for the Coventry University Fashion Team, Coventry Cyrenians and Coventry Trading Standards, acknowledging all of those individuals who have engaged with the project, inspiring others to become involved.

### Further information

Coventry University website: [www.coventry.ac.uk](http://www.coventry.ac.uk)

Twitter: @covcampus