

Finalist's case study

Newcastle University Social Responsibility The Big Clear Out!



Section 1 About the project

Summary

Over the last four years Accommodation & Hospitality Services within Newcastle University have developed links with charities within the local community which has resulted in an accommodation wide campaign known as **THE BIG CLEAR OUT!** Focusing primarily on the end of tenancy for each of the University owned accommodation sites, the project encourages students to actively participate in donating items they no longer want to locally based charities.

Profile

- HEI
- 22,874 students (includes full and part time students)
- 5,429 staff
- Urban

Project partners

St Oswald's Hospice, Changing Lives (formerly The Cyrenians) and the West End Foodbank, part of the Trussell Trust Group.

Section 2 The results

The problem

We felt strongly that unwanted items from student accommodation at the end of tenancies should not be going to landfill and wanted to encourage students to become involved to see how items they no longer required could benefit the local community.

The approach

We contacted a number of charities who would take some items and not others but we wanted to find partners who would take everything that was to be cleared out. When we contacted our three chosen partner charities they were more than happy to collect everything and make use of all students' donations.

Our goals

Our aim is to make a difference to the lives of people in our community and to reduce landfill. By working with our three preferred charities all unwanted items can be recycled, re-used, sold or help to feed those in need.

Obstacles and solutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection points 	Find accessible and appropriately sized collections points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a charity or charities who would take all donations and sort them at their own premises 	Our three partner charities were happy to collect all donations and either recycle, sell or distribute the items they have collected.

Finalist's case study

Performance and results

The unique part of **THE BIG CLEAR OUT!** and Foodbank campaign is the staff and student participation. Staff are vital in the education and encouragement of student participation and strongly believe that items should not be going to landfill and can be seen to benefit our local community. The enthusiasm of the student residents has exceeded all expectations each year. In the Tyneside area, we are able to assist a cancer hospice, a homeless charity and a food bank. The working relationships we have developed enable us to further enhance our contribution and we are constantly looking for ways in which to expand this initiative, and we aim to make it an all year round scheme particularly in support of the Foodbank.

As a result of our partnership with Changing Lives we are also looking at the possibility of opening up a student volunteering scheme. The charity has music rooms, gardens and a radio station and would like to involve our students to help people in their community to learn and acquire new skills.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Both staff and students alike have learned that what may be rubbish to some is a vital resource to another and that these donations can make such a difference to the lives of others.

Sharing our project

The project has been shared by staff talking to students, internal emails, posters around the accommodation sites and Facebook. We are currently in talks with private landlords who may wish to become part of the scheme. We are also finding that organisations are now contacting us for advice on recycling partnerships. In one such instance we were able to put student accommodation organisation Unite Students in contact with Changing Lives. We feel this is an excellent example of how **THE BIG CLEAR OUT!** is far more than a donation of a no longer wanted duvet, it has established great community links.

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

THE BIG CLEAR OUT! strengthens the University's aspirations to forge strong links with the community, demonstrating our commitments as a civic university. Being a Green Gown Award Finalist celebrates the enthusiasm and support shown by staff and students that has driven the continued growth of the initiative.

Further information

Margaret Hunter, Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services Margaret.hunter@ncl.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/>