

Barnsley has suffered from post industrial economic decline, and in order to provide economic growth it was identified that the borough needed **more and better jobs and businesses** and this has been the basis for our Jobs and Business Plan. Enterprising Barnsley and the building of the Digital Media Centre were two elements of this growth plan.

Enterprising Barnsley (then a programme, now the name of the) attracted significant ERDF investment over two programmes of support from 2009 to 2016 which focused on addressing barriers to SME growth by brokering private sector support into local companies. This support included HR, Finance, process improvement and introduction of digital amongst other areas. Through ERDF cofinanced investment and direct investment of municipality budgets in a relationship management team, over 1000 jobs a year have been created in the private sector over the last 5 years in SME and large businesses. This significant achievement has helped to reinforce the need for the Enterprising Barnsley service which is now structured across four pillars of business support – support to start ups; growth businesses; inward investors and incubation and a fifth pillar of programme management. The programme was much commended by the Managing Authority and won the Business Growth award at the LGC awards in 2016.

Enterprising Barnsley services worked alongside the Digital Media Centre which was opened in 2007 but the building was managed by an external company and despite best efforts, by 2015 the centre was only 54% occupied and wasn't delivering the outcomes intended. In 2015 this supply contract ended and the management of the centre was brought into the Enterprising Barnsley team.

Since 2015 Enterprising Barnsley has been able to more closely connect the 'soft' infrastructure of business support with the 'hard' infrastructure of the Digital Media Centre, a landmark hub for digital businesses. A bold plan to establish the DMC as a lively hub for digital and creative business was co created with private sector support. We identified that we needed to focus on an **open door approach**; relevant and interesting **activity**; focused **business support** and community building.

This blended offer has seen significant transformation over the last 2 years:

- Increased occupancy from 54% to 96% (March 2017)
- Built strategic partnerships to benefit businesses (Enterprise Nation – national support organization – video here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0b8RPFyH9I>)
- Secured EU investment for the TechTown URBACT Action Planning Network
- Secured sponsor and partnership investment for Connected Healthcare programme –<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtvdUtLBnvo>
- €70k funding from National Government for Click Together supporting women to build new ecommerce businesses; supported a further 13 female-led businesses to grow. See round up video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKmT5VKb8AM>
- Recruited a Launchpad Start Up support team delivering a €4.7 pan city region project, part of the Enterprising Barnsley support and the DMC
- Over last 12 months have helped over 120 businesses to set up

Our approach of delivering relevant support through Enterprising Barnsley is now augmented through adopting more innovative and 'softer' approaches within the 'hard' infrastructure of the DMC. We ensure the centre is available for businesses and people who want to run **activities to benefit the creative and digital sector** at low or no cost; we have an **open working approach** which means we run activities and events and evenings and weekends to better accommodate customer needs; we have pingpong and touch video screens usable by anyone; we've worked with a start up barista to deliver a new coffee offer in the DMC and a start up caterer to provide food services; we keep continuous conversation with the people in the digital sector through slack.com and an open door policy for the delivery team; we curate activities and programmes that collide digital and non digital people and businesses to encourage innovation and disruption. By creating a positive, open environment we have encouraged more business into not just a building but a community which has increased revenues and delivered job and business outcomes for the Enterprising Barnsley programme.

We feel this fluid, responsive and sector focused approach is replicable by other cities and that the impact of our own good practice will provide the assurance that this can work and encourage other cities to take risks. Our multi-pillared structure can be used to inform localized approaches based in local context and our evidence base demonstrates that ERDF investment as well as creating direct outputs can, when invested in the right projects, create indirect outputs and encourage direct and local investment in sustainability.

We also acknowledge that there is always room for improvement and will continue to evolve our approach and would welcome the peer environment to do this that URBACT affords.