



**South  
Derbyshire  
District Council**

# South Derbyshire District Council Environmental Health Service

## Case Study 4: Business growth through health and safety

In 2013 the D2N2 Chamber of Commerce carried out a survey of its members which indicated that a significant number found that business regulation was perceived by them to be a limiting factor on their economic growth. In particular, health and safety law was identified as one of the most significant burdens.

The Chamber shared these results with the regulatory community with a request that we see what could be done to minimise the perceived burden whilst maintaining workplace safety. In response, we developed a project to explore with our local businesses how we could maximise cost effective regulatory compliance and support business growth.



**Better  
Business  
Regulation**

Partnership • Support • Advice • Growth

By offering a free, confidential and client led health and safety advice service we hoped to build a close working relationship with a selection of businesses.

From us, they would get free and confidential expert help to let them deal with whatever health and safety problems they had.

From them, we wanted to get an in depth understanding and first hand evidence about why health and safety is seen to be preventing growth.

With this information we wanted to look at improving some of the ways in which we enforce health and safety laws to meet the objectives of the project.

We met with our first client in December 2013. Between then and July 2014 we dealt with 45 clients across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. We evaluated feedback from both the business clients and from the detailed evidence provided by the advisor who led the project.

The evidence from the project has provided a revealing insight into the main issues faced by our business community;

- Whilst most of our clients needed help with health and safety enquiries, many also needed help with enquiries about other forms of regulation. A quarter needed help with fire safety and food safety law, whilst others needed help with planning and pollution law.
- Over a quarter of clients already had good health and safety policies and practices in place, they just needed an expert eye to give them reassurance that they were doing things right. 12% were start-up businesses who wanted to get things right, but were struggling to devote the time to regulation whilst getting the business off the ground.
- Only 33% of clients used the service because they had been forced to do something to meet health and safety requirements. The remaining 67% used the service because they weren't sure exactly what to do. In other words, what the business clients thought was a burden was based on their own fears and uncertainty.
- On average, businesses reported that the service saved them £1,660 each. 80% of clients reported that the service directly led to improvements in health and safety and 80% reported that the service led to a reduction in their perception of the burden of regulation.
- The service was overwhelmingly used by small businesses. 98% of the clients employed fewer than 50 people.

In the words of one client "An open door assessment by a specialist H&S advisor adds knowledge and identifies weaknesses that can then be addressed. The subsequent open discussions permit a conscious willingness to improve. The cost of preventing an injury is morally, priceless, but from a business point of view, such issues can ruin any business.

**The success of the service has led to it being continued and the free, confidential service is available by contacting the Growth Hub Business Helpline on 0333 006 9178.**