

OCTOBER 2020

SUFFOLK PROHELP

BUSINESS IMPACT REPORT



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ABOUT SUFFOLK PROHELP

Suffolk ProHelp, part of Community Action Suffolk, is a countywide network of businesses who provide professional and strategic support free of charge to voluntary and community groups. This shared time, passion and commitment helps create thriving, resilient and sustainable communities.

Our network includes: solicitors, accountants, architects, engineers, surveyors, property consultants, marketing, HR and business professionals. Firms commit to undertake time-limited, specific projects which may include activities such as feasibility studies, structural surveys, property valuations, marketing strategies, legal, accountancy advice, business planning and more. We seek to target this free support at those most in need who would otherwise be unable to pay for such expertise.

AMBITIOUS FOR COMMUNITIES

Suffolk ProHelp has been providing this support since 2001 when we were established by Business in the Community as part of a network of schemes. In 2016 these schemes were discontinued. But Suffolk ProHelp members saw how vital and effective their support was and worked with Community Action Suffolk to secure funding to continue this work.

In 2017 we received two years funding from Transformation Challenge Award, made possible by Suffolk Public Leaders group, to deliver our service to the community. During this time we distributed 1,760 hours of expertise worth £176,000. We helped 68 organisations directly and 123 indirectly providing advice and guidance through our regular Learning Lunches.

In November 2019 we were awarded a further three year's funding from The National Lottery Community Fund. Our aim going forward is to distribute £100,000 per year of expertise and assist at least 50 organisations a year and increase these targets over the three years of our funding. We are ambitious because we know that Suffolk's charities and voluntary groups need this support and greatly benefit from it.

We want our community to thrive and prosper and we understand that professional expertise is a much needed resource that many voluntary groups cannot readily afford



MEASURING BUSINESS IMPACT

Since 2017, when Community Action Suffolk began managing Suffolk ProHelp, we gathered information about the wider social impact of our involvement in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. This information is presented as case studies on our website and in our quarterly reports. In this report, however, we asked our professional companies and firms to reflect on how being involved in Suffolk ProHelp brings positive impact to their business.

THANK YOU

The work of Suffolk ProHelp is a collaboration between the business and voluntary sector. There are mutual benefits to be gained in this partnership. This report aims to demonstrate at least a flavour of this two way process. We are very grateful to all the members of Suffolk ProHelp who generously give their time to helping their community.

Affect Community Architects, Andrew Laws Associates; Andrew Thompson Associates, Ashtons Legal, Barefoot & Gilles, Barker Gotelee, Birketts, Brooks Architects, Brix Brand & Creative, Burnett Barker, Castons, Conatus Financing Solutions, Constable VAT, EDI Surveys, EDRM, EJP, Ensors, Fenn Wright, Gotelee, Grammarlyers, Lorna Rose Training, Hestur, KLH Architects, KPMG, MHA Larking Gowen, Mackman Group, Mad HR, Marshall Hatchick, MLM, McTear Williams & Wood, Nick Barber Architects, Paul Weston Architects, Picasso Security, Plaice Architects, Playle & Partners, Prettys, Richard Bother Consultancy, Search Clarity, Superstructures, Search Clarity, Skybridge Recruitment, Studio Brand Up, Yellobelly, Whitworth Architects and Surveyors.



HOW DOES BELONGING TO SUFFOLK PROHELP ALIGN WITH YOUR FIRM'S VALUES?



It gives something back to the community.

We aim to make the web (and the world!) a better place, helping ProHelp members is a part of that mission.

It meets with the principles we hold regarding being a local business and contributing to the local community..

Our values align in that we like to make our services available for projects where our skills would be of benefit and are most needed.

We have a desire to support our community and recognise that smaller organisations may not have the funds or a budget to pay fees to professional service firms...

The firm is committed to providing pro bono legal assistance to worthy local causes as part of its corporate social responsibility policy, under which we give back in various ways to the local community. Suffolk Pro-Help offers the firm the opportunity to provide pro bono assistance to voluntary and community sector organisations that would otherwise be unable to access the legal advice that they need.

We're keen to help people, business and the community in general. Pro-help aids us in finding those parties to allow us to contribute back knowing we're helping parties who really need our help and support...

Allows us to add some pro-bono community work into our portfolio with the support of other like minded businesses

I am keen to help individuals and organisations to realise their goals, by providing assistance where I can at reduced rates, or pro-bono where this can make a difference. I think generally we are in a privileged position, and should therefore use our time and skills to help others if we can.

We are focused on providing architectural support for community projects, Suffolk Pro Help is completely aligned with our core values



HOW DOES BELONGING TO SUFFOLK PROHELP ALIGN WITH YOUR FIRM'S VALUES?



One of our values is community-driven. We are passionate about working with and showcasing, the local community..

A major part of running a business is understanding the importance of the people involved and as part of that the community they live in. As a Director I have for many years volunteered with various organisations to share my skills and knowledge. In previous Company the team were actively encouraged to become involved with the Charity community as part of their learning and development as well as gaining the satisfaction of giving something back..

One of the drivers of our business is to make the web a better place, Suffolk ProHelp helps us reach people who are making the world a better place. The two missions are nicely symbiotic...

We are passionate about what we do, and we do this with integrity. We are involved significantly with the local community and it seemed a natural progression to reach out and partner with Suffolk ProHelp – an organisation also committed to supporting voluntary organisations

We are committed to supporting the wider community in which we reside..

The firm has a strong commitment to CSR and community engagement, so involvement in the pro-help scheme is complimentary to this.

We seek to support the business and wider community when possible particularly those who do not have the resources to obtain professional advice..

We are a local professional consultancy and contributing to the Pro Help programme aligns with our belief that our work has a community as well as a commercial value.



HOW DO YOU THINK INVOLVEMENT WITH SUFFOLK PROHELP INCREASES STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF YOUR BUSINESS AS AN ETHICAL ENTERPRISE?

"It aligns with the type of public sector clients I deal with in my project work

"Provides confirmation that we are concerned with the area in which we live and as a consequence hold in high value making a contribution to the local community, without which the local economy would not survive

"It is a good thing to help others and no bad thing to be seen helping others. We like that being allied with SPH helps to convey and reinforce our own values and others perceive this as a good thing.

"Reflects positively on our firm.

"Suffolk ProHelp enables the firm to fulfil its CSR commitments by providing suitable enquiries that we can undertake on a pro bono basis. Our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp therefore enables the firm to demonstrate both that we have a CSR policy and that we are committed to fulfilling the commitments set out in it.

"In the current climate there has become a greater awareness of "community" and its significance in our wellbeing, working with Suffolk Prohelp is therefore more likely to be recognised by stakeholders. It is seen as a tangible activity rather than a "tick box exercise"

"Our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp demonstrates to all our stakeholders that we are committed to being an ethical enterprise by the actions we have taken in the spirit of Making a Difference.

"Involvement in Pro-help is a tangible expression of the firm's commitment.

"We believe that Suffolk ProHelp, provides a vital link between local professionals and the community promoting an ethical element to practice and a supporting role for communities in need

"Our contribution to the Pro Help programme is recognised by the larger community as having value and our involvement with community issues demonstrates our commitment to the welfare of the community.



HOW HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH SUFFOLK PROHELP SUPPORTED STAFF SATISFACTION, RETENTION OR DEVELOPMENT?

"It engenders a feeling of satisfaction - we are doing something worthwhile

"We are small business and don't currently have any staff. In the past we have provided a young person with some work experience and he worked on a project that we were doing through SPH. The young person was socially motivated and he enjoyed working on a socially motivated project.

"Staff satisfaction is enhanced by the practice's awareness of larger issues beyond everyday commercial enterprise. Enhanced staff satisfaction results in a greater commitment to the practice which in turn encourages staff development.

"It's early days yet but our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp is a team effort. All our staff know that being part of our firm is also about being passionate about the work we do, and this includes supporting the VCSE community beyond making much needed donations. Everyone at is committed to providing their HR expertise should it be called upon.

"It provides satisfaction to those involved

"Some of the enquiries that we have received have offered the opportunity for more junior members of staff to undertake work for clients (under supervision), enabling their development as fee earners.

"Over the years, a wide range of colleagues have been involved and the relevant matters have given rise to a number of interesting instructions.

"Our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp has contributed to our decision to become a social enterprise and to focus more fully on the ethical and social measures, Suffolk ProHelp along with Community Action Suffolk, have enabled us to focus more fully on the work we care about, which is architecture



As a firm we do a lot of work in the Third Sector and have a nationwide client base; however, supporting projects and organisations closer to home is rewarding.

HOW DO YOU REFERENCE YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH SUFFOLK PROHELP IN YOUR RECRUITMENT?

"Our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp is included within the information about the firm's CSR activities, which is featured both on our website and in our internal policies.



"WE REFERENCE IT AND DISCUSS IT AT INTERVIEW"



"WE ADD IT TO OUR WEBSITE"



"AT THE INTERVIEW STAGE WHERE WE DESCRIBE THE WORK OF THE PRACTICE AND ITS ETHOS."



"WE INCLUDE IT AS PART OF OUR COMPANY ETHOS AND ETHICS"

"It is important that anyone working for us is part of a team that supports the Company's values. Anyone seeking employment with us would be asked how they felt about providing HR support to the local community and in particular Suffolk ProHelp.

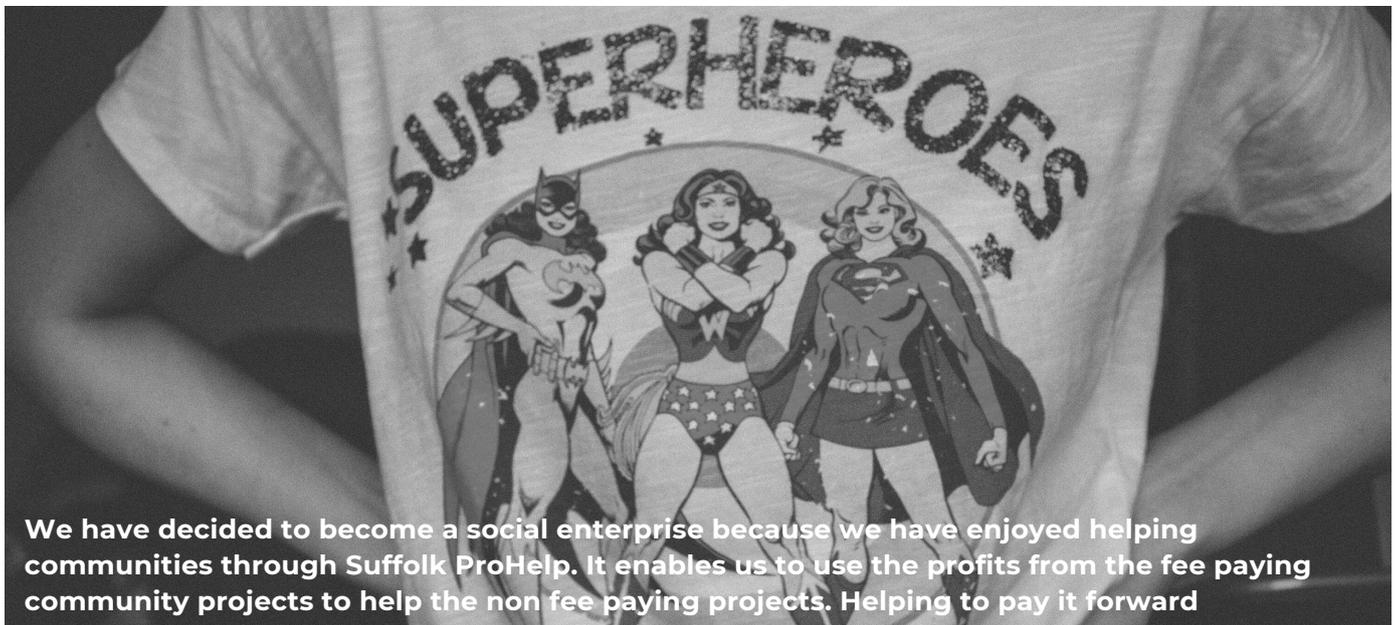
HOW HAS INVOLVEMENT WITH SUFFOLK PROHELP HAD POSITIVE EFFECTS ON YOUR FIRM'S STRATEGIC PLANNING OR POLICY?

"It has helped us see a wider picture of what is happening locally

"It's a feel good action, we do it because we feel it's right.

"Being involved with SPH has caused us to recognise that we share many of the same values as those of our SPH clients. This in turn has motivated us to restructure our company as a social enterprise.

"Strategic planning is facilitated by a stable and committed staff which is resultant upon recognition of the practice's values.



"To achieve Lexcel accreditation, an important quality mark in the legal sector, solicitors are expected to have a CSR policy that includes the undertaking of pro bono work. Suffolk ProHelp enables the firm to fulfil the pro bono commitments set out in its CSR policy. Suffolk ProHelp enquiries can also provide an opportunity for the firm to make its name known more broadly in the local community, leading, directly or indirectly, to further instructions on a fee-paying basis.

"Working with CEO's on strategy helped me to better define my business offering, and helped me gain a much better understanding of the issues faced by the Suffolk Prohelp community

"We are a values-led business and being involved with Suffolk ProHelp endorses what we are doing and how we are achieving this.

"It's part of our culture

HOW DO YOU USE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN SUFFOLK PROHELP FOR MARKETING PURPOSES?

" I publish it on my website which is seen by all my contacts

" I will be writing a blog post and posting to social media

"In discussion with clients when demonstrating we care about those to who we provide a service and can be of benefit.



We we have mentioned it when talking about our business operations.

We need to use it more! Previously we have posted on our social channels (LinkedIn and Insta)..

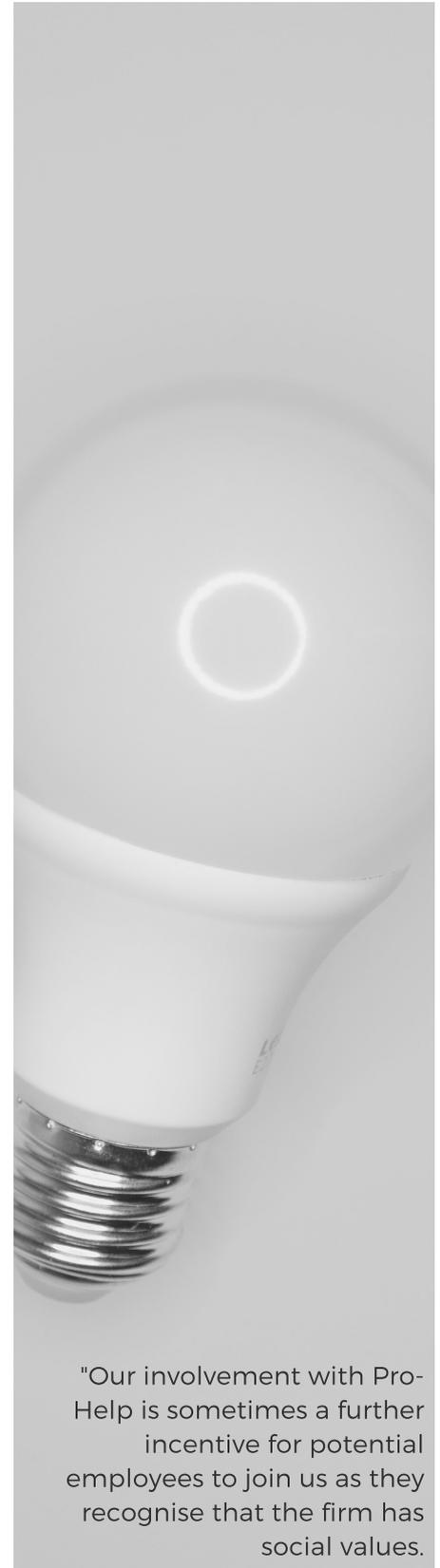
It has been very helpful, I have obtained coverage in Suffolk Director as a result and have used this to promote the work through Linked In. As my website evolves I will be adding this work

It is an integral part of your company ethics and ethos.



"Our involvement in Suffolk ProHelp features in our CSR newsletter and also in some of our press and social media releases (concerning the extent to which we provide pro bono advice). Our involvement in Suffolk ProHelp is also relevant in more specific, targeted marketing exercises. For example, some invitations to tender ask law firms about their CSR policies and how they propose to achieve the objectives set out in these policies. We can cite our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp as evidence that we are fulfilling the objectives set out in our CSR policies.

"We already promote our activities with the local community, financial and otherwise. We have advertised the work we will be providing as members of Suffolk ProHelp through our website and our social media channels. As we are followed by a number of VCSE organisations, it may also alert them to the broad support that Suffolk Pro-Help can offer.



"Our involvement with Pro-Help is sometimes a further incentive for potential employees to join us as they recognise that the firm has social values.

HOW HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN SUFFOLK PROHELP GENERATED ANY NEW BUSINESS?

"It may have helped us when people find out we are a part the network.

"Yes, through connections made on SPH projects.

"We have presented at seminars and given advice we have not been paid for which has led to chargeable work.

"In some instances we have completed the scope of our pro bono advice and have then been instructed on a fee-paying basis by the client on further work.

"While we have yet to generate any new business through our involvement with Suffolk ProHelp, it is great that our philanthropic endeavours are being promoted to all interested parties.

"Occasionally the recipients of the pro bono work have additional paid services although this is usually discounted so at a lower margin

"Certain matters dealt with initially under the pro-help scheme have lead to further instructions on a fee-paying basis.

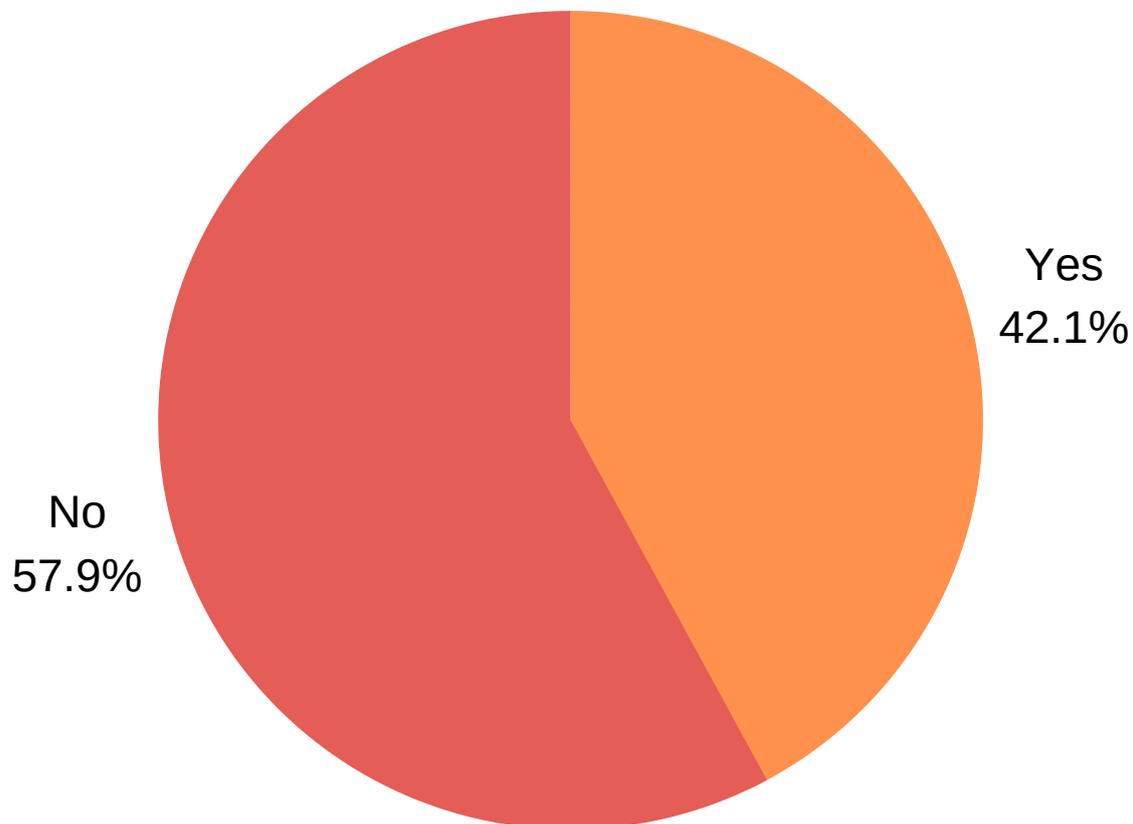
"So far there as been no work directly generated through our work with Suffolk ProHelp, but there are more and more communities out there who we have had the privilege of helping progress their proposals, so obviously our hope is that over time this will convert to new opportunities.

"Improved and enhanced contacts

"Very occasionally we have been appointed as a result of pro-bono work but new business is not our motivation in working with Pro Help.



HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY ADDITIONAL INCOME FROM THOSE YOU HAVE SUPPORTED PROBONO THROUGH SUFFOLK PROHELP WHO HAVE THEN GONE ON TO PAY FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT?



"If any voluntary organisation requires work beyond the scope of their pro bono remit, then we would be happy to provide them with a quotation commensurate with their circumstances.

"A very small amount from one, but we tend to try to continue to help people on a pro bono basis if we can.

"Certain matters dealt with initially under the pro-help scheme have led to further instructions on a fee-paying basis.

"To a very limited degree

"The majority of our projects worked on through SPH have led to fee paying work.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER POSITIVE BUSINESS BENEFITS YOU FEEL HAS COME OUT OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN SUFFOLK PROHELP?

"It enables me to be in contact with fellow professionals

"Working and collaborating with likeminded people and businesses.

"We have had an opportunity to reach organisations that we perhaps would not have been able to and who would not have been aware of the firm.

"Being a small firm there is no great benefit other than providing the significant satisfaction in meeting the the mantra that we all should appreciate and contribute to the social well being of the local area in which we live and work.

"Great to discuss issues with other likeminded businesses.



General engagement with other professional consultancies on pro bono work brings its own rewards as we are engaged in our professional capacity but without commercial pressure. There is a social element to this type of work which promotes friendly interaction.

Meeting some of the other volunteers for Suffolk Prohelp has helped to widen my network

Being involved in the Suffolk ProHelp network has introduced me to several local businesses and senior level staff who I would have otherwise probably not have met.

There is nothing like the feel-good factor. The team all feel positive about their involvement with Suffolk ProHelp and this has an impact not just as a business but on a personal level.

Supports a positive feeling that we are also providing services to the community

Experience of and involvement with organisations and individuals who we might not otherwise encounter

Contacts with other professionals, and a general sense of well-being.

We believe that architecture is linked to the society that it works with and for, Suffolk Pro Help has helped us to strengthen those links and to help more communities in need of professional support..



BECOMING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Two architect firms inspired to become Social Enterprise through work with Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk Pro Help

As a chartered architect, architectural technologist and designer, my approach to buildings is infused with my enthusiasm for modernism, love of life and a strong sense of social justice. I strongly believe that architecture is inseparable from the social and economic values of the individuals who practice it and the society which sustains it.

I have had the great fortune to work with Community Action Suffolk as part of Suffolk Pro help, where I have been able to work with communities to enable them and empower them to co-create sustainable, resilient solutions.

Architecture is inescapably social and political. So it seemed inevitable and appropriate for my practice to become a Social Enterprise, where we are able to ensure that our core values are interwoven within all aspects of our company and all the projects we work on.

Since starting our work with Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk Pro Help, we have been inspired to make the change to becoming a Social Enterprise, which means we can Pay it Forward.

Profits from fee paying projects enable us to work with communities who cannot afford professional architectural services at that stage, this currently includes working with organisations such as Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk Pro Help and the Paris Foundation in Sierra Leone.

Being a chartered architect and CEO of a Social Enterprise specialising in co-creating community buildings, I am excited by the new challenges and opportunities that I believe well designed and socially just community can offer.



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@MMUNITY
.ORG
Architects of change

BECOMING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

EDRM

architecture

EDRM are an architecture design studio based in Ipswich. We became members of Suffolk ProHelp in 2014 and have worked on a number of projects providing pro bono services to not-for-profit organisations that do interesting and socially motivated work for the benefit of the larger community.

By being involved with these types of organisations, we have reflected on our own company's values and this inspired us to want to re-frame the way that we operate and run our own business in the future. As a result of the opportunities created through Suffolk ProHelp projects, and the exposure to different models of working where social values are placed ahead of profit, EDRM have recently become a social enterprise and is now a certified member of SEUK.



SUFFOLKPROHELP.ORG.UK



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