

Would-be social entrepreneurs enter dragons' den

By Helen Warrell, Third Sector, 30 May 2007

Wellingborough Council is to run a Dragons' Den-style competition that will challenge local 15-year-olds to come up with the best ideas for a social enterprise.

The scheme was masterminded by Edith Galliers, partnerships coordinator at the Northamptonshire council, who came up with the plan after hearing how business experts on the BBC's Dragons' Den show had rejected a social enterprise as a "dangerous mix" of charity and business.

Last year, the council ran a similar competition based on traditional business but will now change its focus to social enterprise. The competition will be open to teenagers in five local schools, and the final will be held in Enterprise Week, which takes place in November. A panel of business leaders will judge the ideas.

"I really wanted the kids to understand the citizenship side of business as well as the entrepreneurial aspect," said Galliers.

"Kids will come up with ideas for the competition as before, but they will also consider the social impact of what they're doing and hopefully understand that you can make money while helping the community that you live in."

Galliers was optimistic that students would grasp the concept of social enterprise, although only one in four people in the UK has heard of it. "There might be misunderstandings along the way, but that's partly why we are doing it," she said. "The more we can get people to hear about social enterprise, the better."