



darlington **cares**

BRINGING BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Re-thinking Parks Darlington: engaging businesses in the community



www.darlingtoncares.co.uk

Who are we



- Darlington Cares is a not for profit, corporate social responsibility and employee supported volunteering partnership, of over 20 local employers
- Established in 2012, to meet the growing need from local employers who wanted a coordinated approach to corporate social responsibility, to maximise their impact on the local community
- Hosted by The Forge, Teesside University, Darlington, County Durham



What we do



- We match the skills, expertise and volunteering resources of local employers and their employees to community projects where they have the most impact
- We work with the local strategic partnership, public services, local authority and the third sector to identify and understand the social, environmental and economic issues within Darlington
- Projects are devised on three key strategic areas:
 - Getting the best start in life
 - Caring for the environment
 - Help for people when needed

What we do...



Previous projects have included the following:

- **Ready for Work** – supports year 10 pupils with the development of their employability skills and CVs. It culminates with the pupils taking part in mock interviews.
- **Employability Mentoring** – supports second year students at a local sixth form college with their job applications, CVs, interview techniques and develops their awareness of the range of career options available.
- **Skills Hub** – an online platform where employees are encouraged to enter their skills and expertise. We unite their skills with third sector organisations and community groups who are in need of skills development in a particular area.

We have matched employee volunteers to provide HR support to Darlington Credit Union and marketing advice for Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau.



Who we work with



Darlington Cares is funded through membership contributions and grant funding from the following private and public organisations:



Key achievements

- Over 8,500 hours of employee supported volunteering
- Over 70 successful projects
- Helped 50 voluntary and charitable organisations and schools
- Over 20 members
- 1,000 young people have benefited from employability skills support
- Over 3,000 school children have benefited from the additional volunteer support of a children's reading scheme
- 85 volunteers trained and DBS checked as part of the children's reading scheme





Re-thinking Parks Darlington

Re-thinking Parks is a £1m fund to find and support, organisations and partnerships who develop and implement resourceful ideas to sustaining and making the most of UK public parks.

- Darlington was one of 11 successful applications, out of 200
- We are working in partnership with Groundwork North East and Cumbria, who were awarded £80,000 to engage local businesses in the sustainability of three of Darlington's public parks
- The project offers outdoor volunteering activities and skills led opportunities



Re-thinking Parks Darlington

- Focusing on three public parks/green spaces including: North Park, South Park and The Denes
- These parks were selected based on their popularity amongst the local community and the existence of 'friends groups'
- Over 800 hours of outdoor volunteering completed since January 2015
- 30 days of employee volunteering have been dedicated to the project
- Work has included:
 - Resurfacing of a bike track
 - Pin kerb edging
 - Sanded and repainted benches
 - Revamped a boardwalk
 - Repaired a slide
 - Removal and installation of play equipment



Re-thinking Parks Darlington

- Local employers engaged in the project were already existing members of Darlington Cares
- Volunteering opportunities and dates planned in advance
- Activity ideas based on the need of individual parks and the desire and interests of employers and their employees
- Cost savings per park
 - North Park - £4,500
 - South Park - £22,125
 - The Denes - £5,860



"Our time spent in South Park was cold, damp and windy but by the time we left, the sense of achievement and self-worth made the dreary weather conditions totally worth it!
I would thoroughly recommend it to any organisation."

Dave Holt - Incident Manager, EE

Total = £32, 485



Re-thinking Parks Darlington: the future

- Darlington Cares and Groundwork North East and Cumbria are hoping to obtain funding to continue the project
- Funding will support the expertise of staff who will develop and deliver volunteering activities
- We hope to continue building relationships with local businesses and encourage them to get involved

