



Support for community & voluntary groups

CCVS

Case study

Penningtons Manches working creatively with Kings Hedges Family Support Project

BACKGROUND



Penningtons Manches is a commercial and private law firm with offices in the UK and in San Francisco. The firm set up a registered charity Penningtons Manches Charitable Foundation (“the Foundation”) in 2017 which funds donations, volunteering and pro bono work. The Cambridge office has 25 staff with their own branch

committee of the Foundation and an allocation of Foundation funds to support local charitable giving and volunteering. The Foundation encourages each member of staff to undertake 21 hours of voluntary work every year during office hours. www.penningtons.co.uk



Kings Hedges Family Support Project (KHFS) is a small registered charity that runs drop-in sessions for local families with children up to 3 years old in North and East Cambridge. They provide a safe space for families to enjoy creative activities and share experiences, whilst support workers are on hand to talk about anything from general parenting to family relationships, wellbeing or financial difficulties.

PENNINGTONS MANCHES’ APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sarah Coates, a Partner at Penningtons Manches and the Chair of the Cambridge branch of the Foundation, explains that the staff submit suggestions of charities they would like to support. The Foundation then asks for a shortlist of charities to outline the help they would like to receive. In the past they have supported two or more charities, but since 2018 they have focussed on supporting KHFS. www.khfs.org.uk

Key to the Foundation’s commitment to community support are:

- A focus on helping the vulnerable in society with initiatives in which staff can take an active role, with a focus on grass roots groups.
- Supporting staff well-being through volunteering.
- Building interdisciplinary teams creating social interaction between colleagues from different disciplines.
- Meeting their key performance indicators for delivering community benefit, a requirement for some of their business tenders.

HOW THE RELATIONSHIP WITH KHFSF EVOLVED



Penningtons Manches staff fundraising bake sale for KHFSF

A Penningtons Manches staff member became a champion for the charity, she knew about the work they do from a family member who is a long-term volunteer and she grew up in the area the charity works in. Jo Hunt Manager at KHFSF invited members of the firm to come along to a family drop-in and see what they do.

'Staff have no idea what is going on in this community, so discussions with Jo to find out what would benefit the families, to hear about the challenges and the impact they can have was key.' Sarah Coates

As a result of their visit, the staff came up with a list of ways that they thought they could be of help and asked the charity to advise. The ideas included funding vouchers to provide fresh food to supplement food bank parcels, funding a play worker and creating an allotment area where families could learn to grow fresh food.

'Employees get a buzz from helping people and some relate to the charity as parents. It gives them perspective and links them more closely to the local community.' Jo Hunt

At KHFSF's request the firm have funded the food vouchers and the play worker post and they have decided they can do more to support the charity, so are extending their support for at least another year.

'Jo and her team are so passionate about what they do, it's infectious.' Sarah Coates

KEY LEARNING POINTS

Sarah believes that charities need to do more to leverage their personal connections to create initial links with business. Charities also need to think laterally, for example, law firms don't just employ lawyers, they could offer other skills such as branding and marketing. Businesses need to respect the expertise of their partner charities and work with them to deliver meaningful solutions.

The Foundation and KHFSF have worked in partnership to find ideas to best help the charities beneficiaries. KHFSF have been clear about what they need and responsive to contact from the Foundation. Sarah Coates recalls that other charities they have tried to support in the past have not always been good at keeping in touch and providing updates, and this has curtailed the development of a longer-term relationship. One year into their relationship with KHFSF, Sarah says her staff have

'a real sense of personal wellbeing, a sense of a difference being made and of a team being brought together.'