



LONDON REMADE

The business of recycling

Chris Carey's Collections

From the Deptford arches to a self-contained building in Beckenham, Chris Carey is successfully recycling 11,000 tonnes of textiles every year.

“I had very good, rounded support from London Remade, especially with the application for EDIB funding. I couldn't have got through this without them.”

Christine Carey, Managing Director, Chris Carey's Collections

Background

Chris Carey's Collections was founded 25 years ago, starting out on a market stall in Deptford, selling used textiles.

Christine Carey has grown the business into a thriving textile reuse and reprocessing company – one of the largest in the south east.

The company outgrew its premises, owing to the volume of material being collected. They have been sourcing materials from local authority collections, charity shops and commercial organisations in Greater London. The materials are sorted and reused for various purposes, from local reuse in schools and universities, to export markets. A vintage boutique provides clothing for art and drama colleges and for film productions. Chris Carey also reprocesses rubber, from Wellington boots, into flooring material.



A collection of clothing ready to be sorted

What happened

The aim was to expand the capacity of the core business and diversify the business operations over the course of five years.

The facility in Deptford was operating at maximum capacity. Relocating would provide greater efficiency and expand the amount of material the business could handle through textile reuse and reprocessing.

London Remade started support in December 2004. Ongoing project management continued, including bid writing and preparation for the funding presentation. Chris Carey's Collections benefited from a £185,000 capital grant to assist with the

relocation of premises and purchase of new machinery.

The funding was awarded in June 2005 from the London Development Agency's Economic Development Infrastructure Building (EDIB) project – managed by London Waste Action, through the London Recycling Fund, in partnership with London Remade.

London Remade continued operational, strategic and technical support and advice throughout the project. Assistance was also given to source new supply contracts.

Achievements

With EDIB funding, business mentoring from London Remade, £2.5 million of private sector investment, and personal investment from Chris Carey, the company relocated to a 14,878 square foot self-contained site in Beckenham, London Borough of Bromley.

The new site houses the factory area, crèche and canteen facilities. The company now employs 169 staff. Training is provided in partnership with Lewisham and Ruskin College and includes, on the job training, literacy, numeracy, IT, and Health and Safety.

Since expansion and relocation there has been a 15% increase in productivity, per staff member, in the processing of materials.

Chris Carey won the Business Woman of the Year award at the East London and Essex Business Awards, 2004.

Chris Carey Collections now has over 2,000 regular clients from the private sector, community groups and local authorities, and operates a fleet of 30 vehicles.

Textiles diverted from landfill (tonnes)	Investment (£m)
500,000 per year	2.5
Training opportunities	Jobs created
70	64

Future

The relocation has given Chris Carey Collections a higher and cleaner profile.

Major contracts with Sainsbury's Group have been secured to recycle all staff uniforms and Chris accredits this directly to the new professional look of the facility.

The company operates Work Twice: the collection and recycling of old uniforms from companies like Argos, Sainsbury's Homebase and British Gas. Ebay trading has begun and there are plans to create an online shop.

More contracts are being secured with smaller charity associations. One major success is New Life – the collection and recycling of clothes collected from a charity, which takes care of new babies born with deficiencies.



Modelling of clothing from Chris Carey's Collections, at the launch in September 2006.

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