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O'Dea, Mike (2015) Yorkshire Innovation Fund Project Report - Sue Overton Associates. Project Report. Yorkshire Innovation Fund.

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YORKSHIRE INNOVATION FUND CASE STUDY:

Sue Overton Applied Practice

Founders: Sue Overton, Brian Hardy
Location: Easingwold, York
Website: www.sueovertonappliedpractice.co.uk
Twitter: @SueOvertonAP

Partner: York St John University
Website: www.yorksj.ac.uk/business-development/business-development.aspx
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Sue Overton Applied Practice SOAP
Bringing Learning to Life

York St John University

EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in Your Future
European Regional Development Fund 2007-13

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The Business…

When business partners Sue Overton and Brian Hardy launched their specialist Early Years training consultancy they shared a clear mission: to tackle the divide between live training and on-line learning in a sector which, following rapid expansion in the 80s and 90s, had huge professional development needs.

Backed by extensive experience in Early Years consultancy, Sue Overton Applied Practice was launched to meet the challenging development needs of the UK's workforce of Early Years managers and practitioners.

> "Mike's technical expertise of learning through IT was invaluable but his academic background also brought a hefty dose of higher level thinking to the table."
>
> **SUE OVERTON**

The Need for Innovation…

Sue and Brian planned to develop a range of interactive, **entertainment-based learning tools** that would appeal to a workforce which favoured practical – rather than academic – personal development.

Having quickly identified a **need for technical expertise** in learning through IT, an on-line search led to the Yorkshire Innovation Fund (YIF) and the development of a working partnership with York St John University.

The Role of the Yorkshire Innovation Fund…

In September 2013, having successfully applied for a Small Innovation Project (SIP), Sue began working with Dr Mike O'Dea, a senior lecturer in computer science at York St John University.

Drawing on Mike's technical expertise of learning through IT and particular interest in computer science education, Sue developed the **concept of drama based film scenarios** which provided a practical learning application for managers in nurseries and other Early Years environments.

At the start of 2014 Sue and Brian were awarded a Research and Development Project – a more substantive, longer-term package of **innovation support**. This enabled the faculty of Education & Theology at York St John to test the effectiveness of the learning concepts Sue and Brian had developed.

"Mike has been a massive positive influence on our business", says Sue. "His technical expertise of learning through IT was invaluable but his academic background also brought a hefty dose of higher level thinking to the table. Working with Mike has boosted the level of expertise within our business."

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The Impact…

Since their first contact with the Yorkshire Innovation Fund, Sue and Brian have reported **impressive business developments** including:

- A **150% increase in turnover** from 2013 to 2014
- A forecast 60% increase in year-on-year turnover for 2015
- **Increasing profit levels**
- A move from home offices to rented business premises at Easingwold Business Park
- A **growing team** of eight part-time staff and two apprentices
- The launch of their drama-based training products tackling supervision and safeguarding
- **Recognition** for the company's commitment to research.

The Future…

Three additional training products tackling recruitment, whistle-blowing and child-minding are under development and the business is currently exploring opportunities to provide training to practitioners in youth offending and social care.

In 2015 the company will move to larger, purchased premises within Easingwold Business Park.

About The Yorkshire Innovation Fund…

The Yorkshire Innovation Fund brings together ten of the region's higher education institutions to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Yorkshire and Humber region to grow.

Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the fund helps small businesses to develop ideas for new products, services or processes by funding collaborative projects with the region's universities, drawing on their expertise, specialist equipment or facilities to develop ideas which result in business growth.

The project has attracted £3.06million of investment from the ERDF as part of Europe's support for local economic development through the Yorkshire and Humber ERDF Programme 2007-13. Partner universities contributed a further £1.87m, bringing the total investment to £4.93m. The project team are based at the University of Bradford.

The delivery partners are: The University of Bradford, The University of Huddersfield, The University of Hull, The University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds College of Music, Leeds Trinity University, Sheffield Hallam University, The University of York, York St John University. The University of Sheffield is a strategic partner.

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