

ABC Trust

In 2016, ABC Trust were gifted a 0.6 acre site by the Flax trust. Formerly the old St Gemma's Girls school, the abandoned site physically connects the Sacred Heart and Holy Cross Parish (Ardoyne & Bone) communities. The long term aim of ABC Trust is to transform the site into a community based social enterprise project that will provide much needed health and leisure facilities. The project will also support the delivery of training or educational programmes which will enable local people to learn new or develop existing skills and progress into part or full time employment. ABC Trust also aims to lease out small units on the site to local businesses or community groups who require space to deliver services predominantly around the general theme of health and wellbeing.



What support has NBEI provided?

ABC Trust first engaged with the North Belfast social enterprise hub in search of technical assistance and support to help restore the old Gemma's site. Operated as a social enterprise ABC Trust wanted to explore how they could make the project more financially sustainable and not 100% reliant on grant aid

NBEI provided ABC Trust with investment which allowed the project to recruit a full time business development manager for a period of **14 months**. It also covered some other overheads linked to building administration, management as well as the wider marketing of the project to the wider community

The revenue support provided by NBEI was then matched by a small amount of capital funding from ABC Trust. This allowed the project to cover costs linked to building maintenance and the redevelopment of the site so that it was fit for purpose as a leasable asset to local users and projects

How has NBEI support helped and who has benefited so far?

- Since the physical restoration of the new site ((which is still ongoing) the old St Gemma's building now houses a local Gym operator called Flex Fitness, a local amateur boxing club, and a weightlifting collective who have struggled to find an affordable local venue for the last 5 years.
- Part of the site is also being leased out to a youth organisation called YEHA who deal with a various issues linked to mental health, drugs and teen suicide, a local homeless charity as well as three other local operators who provide other local services linked to health and wellbeing.
- The site has also been made available on an ad-hoc basis to a Belfast based production company who have used the old school and surrounding site as a film set location.
- Since NBEI investment commenced in March 2017, ABC Trust has generated £30,640.83 in rental sales and has leveraged an additional £58,000 in small grants from local government agencies, including Belfast City Council. The delivery of an on-site retail training programme has also supported six local people who were previously unemployed move into full or part time employment in Belfast's retail sector.