



Derry port gives Business in the Community a boost

A mentoring programme aimed at helping local businesses benefit from the experience of larger firms is of "huge benefit to the North West", said Stephen Gillespie of Derry's Port and Harbour Commission.

Mr. Gillespie, financial controller at the Port, said: "The more businesses that succeed in the area, the better the region will do. It makes good business sense to help each other out and if the Port can help out in any way, we will."

Derry's Port and Harbour Commission has been acting as a mentor for smaller companies through their links with Business in the Community.

Stephen said: "We take our responsibility to the local business community seriously. Derry is a smashing city for children to grow-up in. Whatever interests children have, they can be accommodated locally - whether it's horse-riding, music, football, drama or whatever.

"The difficulties start in keeping people here once they are that bit older and have finished college or university. That's what we are hoping to achieve - through our work with Business in the Community we want to try and make Derry an attractive option for those people thinking of leaving to work elsewhere.

"It's going to be very difficult, but that's no reason not to try."

Stephen has been involved at the Port for 10 years. He moved to Derry from Belfast to study accounting at Magee and made the move permanent a few years later.

Through his links with Business in the Community, Stephen used his accountancy skills to mentor a playgroup and help it plan for the future.

"We were able to help them by helping them draw up a professional business plan, that's where my accounting skills came in useful. Business in the Community are very good at matching skill sets to where they are most needed.

"Playgroups are crucial to the local economy. They provide vital childcare and after-school care, which allows people to get back to work. As a father of young children, I realise how hard it is to get help and childcare. It's to everyone's benefit to help out these groups in any way we can."

Stephen said: "The Port has become a little bit divorced from the city since it moved three miles down the river. We are hoping to reconnect with the city and the local community as much as possible because there are benefits to be had on both sides."

Through Business in the Community, the Port undertook a Cares Challenge for Praxis and painted their Health centre at Rosemount.

The Port has also been involved with Think BIG Strabane. Think BIG Limavady as well as hosting a Natural Balance seminar on Workplace Motivation.

For more information, visit: www.bitcni.org.uk