



# Animal Bedding – Cardboard Collection Scheme Case Study

## OVERVIEW

Based in Merthyr Tydfil, ELITE Paper Solutions is a not-for-profit Social Enterprise trying to combat waste and offer employment opportunities.

**ALL** waste products that are collected from ELITE's services are shredded, re-purposed into new products or further recycled; nothing is sent to landfills.

**VALUES** Elite Paper Solutions empowers local communities by providing employment opportunities and prospects to individuals with disabilities and those facing disadvantages. Working on case-to-case bases, they offer training and equip these individuals with new work, life and social skills whilst assisting organisations in reducing their carbon footprint. ELITE are Disability Confident, a government initiative to prompt employers to reshape their perceptions of disabilities and proactively enhance their approaches to recruiting, retaining, and nurturing disabled individuals.



## APPROACH



Waste is collected by large trucks, where it is taken to the warehouse in Merthyr Tydfil. Employees work hard to ensure the cardboard is correctly sorted and free of impurities such as staples, toxins and other objects. The cardboard is then shredded by machines into animal bedding and packed ready for purchase. If cardboard is not suitable for shredding, it is bundled and sent off to be recycled in North Wales. Employee jobs range from prepping the cardboard on site, driving the waste trucks, admin services and managing the machines which shred and sort the waste products.

Currently, ELITE collect cardboard from 3 separate NHS Wales locations. Collections at the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) are often five times a week, and collections at Cardiff Royal Infirmary (CRI) and Woodland House (WH) are 2-3 times a week.

## 7 Well-being Goals:

- Reducing Wales' Carbon footprint. Providing service in a range of different areas in Wales, increasing exposure, meaning less waste going into the environment as 0% is sent to landfills.
- Providing the information in Welsh on the website and working with Welsh businesses.
- Providing a community for the long time unemployed and creating diverse and inclusive workforces. Providing specialized disability awareness training promoting inclusivity in communities and relaxing employee environments.



- Producing innovative products from carboard waste whilst maintaining low carbon production through applying and teaching new skills to employees/volunteers.
- Turning waste products into animal bedding the amount going into landfills in decreased. The new products are biodegradable so there is less harm to the environment.
- Increased mental health of the workers who may not have been able to work anywhere else, providing a sense of belonging. Less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions polluting the air causing health problems as ELITE is carbon friendly.
- Aspiring to break societal misconceptions and presenting job opportunities to ensure that everyone, irrespective of disabilities or disadvantages, gains equal access to professional growth and work skill enhancement.

## RESULTS

**ANIMAL BEDDING** The animal bedding is fully biodegradable with a breakdown time of < 8 weeks, has low dust content, which provides a healthier environment for animals to breathe easier, can absorb up to 3x its weight in water, which minimises odour and the corrugated cardboard traps warm air produced by the animal. Overall, this creates a comfortable, warm and clean bed.

Depending on the season, demand for animal bedding can differ. In the summer, when temperatures increase, sales can decrease, creating a surplus in unsold products. This takes up valuable space in the warehouses, reduces the number of individuals needed to work and means less waste is collected from the NHS. On the contrary, animal bedding is in higher demand in colder months, and business starts to get back on track.

Between UHW, CRI and WH per annum, approximately:



**CARDIFF AND VALE HEALTH BOARD ANNUAL SAVINGS** As all cardboard collections made by ELITE are free of charge, the annual cardboard collection charge paid on the previous contract, will count as cash releasing.

Utilizing ELITE paper solutions to handle the shared services' cardboard waste, money goes into the local economy, retaining money in Wales. This helps ensure stable employment levels and can create more opportunities for work. Since 2015, Elite has engaged with over 300 people with disabilities and those at a disadvantage, with over 140 people successfully progressing to further opportunities.

Being a social enterprise, ELITE Paper Solutions promotes and supports a healthier Wales. It significantly alleviates strain on the NHS and social care services by generating prospects for disadvantaged individuals. Their work contributes to circular practices in Wales by diminishing waste and repurposing it to create innovative products with newfound value.