

TOP TIPS FROM DENBIGHSHIRE

Citizens Advice Denbighshire have worked with Denbighshire Council, a growing number of schools across the area and people in the community to set up a school recycling scheme which provides recycled uniforms through community pop-up shops.

They receive donations but also offer the opportunity for parents/carers to buy a new blazer for £15, and swap it for a bigger size or have their £15 reimbursed if they return the blazer in good condition when it is no longer needed. This is made possible by applying for grants which are then used to help go towards the cost and reduce the price that parents/carers need to pay.

Whilst going to the pop up shop parents, carers and family members also have the chance to get information and help from the Citizen's Advice Bureau or book an appointment if they'd like to.

These Top Tips were kindly created by Citizens Advice Denbighshire to share their learning and help support other schemes grow.

Setting up a scheme and getting support

- ✓ Research your community. Ensure everyone, especially parents/carers are engaged and understand clearly how their children will benefit from the scheme.
- ✓ Remove the stigma by selling the recycling element of the scheme to your local council, schools and families.
- ✓ The scheme has to be sold on:
Recycling - Community Cohesion — Anti-Poverty
- ✓ Contact schools explain to them what you would like to do, what you were hoping they could do and then agree expectations.
- ✓ Ask to be allowed to attend school cluster meetings; this will ensure you reach all head teachers in the area.
- ✓ When presenting to head teachers and others, take recycled uniforms which have been washed, pressed, bagged and sized to enable them to see the quality of uniforms which will be on offer.
- ✓ Identify and contact sponsors, give them a mission statement and ask them for sponsorship.
- ✓ Contact both your Town and County council, the anti-poverty councillor should have an interest in the scheme.

- ✓ Town Councils may be able to provide an annual grant to help top-up stock, enable you to hand out small grants and/or provide some shoe vouchers.

Running the scheme

- ✓ Many schools have lost property that often lays around unused and dirty and for this reason they actually want to get rid of it. Asking for these items is often a better way of securing uniforms than relying on donations from parents and the community alone.
- ✓ Source an empty shop initially and ask the landlord to allow a free week. One successful scheme sourced a shop that had been empty for five years; it sold after their second selling event — a fact which may be useful in a sales pitch for the landlord.
- ✓ Make sure uniforms are clean and presented nicely. Parents and children have said that this is important. Think about the buying experience of a parent/carer and the child or young person that might be going with them. You may also want to think about environmentally friendly packaging.
- ✓ Make sure you can recruit like-minded volunteers who can help to wash and iron clothes.
- ✓ Run an event as soon as possible after the children break up for summer holidays. This means parents can avoid worrying through the summer about affording new uniforms; they can instead enjoy the holidays with their children.
- ✓ Encourage parents to take more than one uniform to ensure they are able to keep them in a good condition and the child has a clean uniform.
- ✓ Give schools extra uniforms after a selling event to keep in school for emergencies and for new intakes — again, this has been a very successful model.
- ✓ Summer dresses and shorts might be donated throughout the year. If your scheme is running in the summer, think about how these items can be shared before the start of the summer months and don't go to waste. For example we take summer uniforms to schools in April, which are washed, pressed, bagged and sized. This works well in our experience.
- ✓ You could think about how your scheme could also provide advice and assistance to parents and carers. This could include support to apply for free school meals, which for many families can be a barrier. Our scheme charges all parents £1, takes personal details, ask them to sign a GDPR form and carry out a quick benefit check. In addition to identifying any shortfall in benefit it also allows the scheme to collate statistics to provide to funders in an end of year report.
- ✓ Remember there are educational grants available to some families. Parents/carers on low income do not have access to some of these grants. However, if your fund raising is successful you could offer small grants.
- ✓ It may take two years before your scheme becomes established. Be patient because it takes time, our scheme is now well-established and proving extremely popular with parents and schools alike.