



July 2022



Putting hospitality into hospitals

Focus on Waffle Seaton

When Seaton community interest company (CIC) RE:STORE was offered an unused former kitchen in the local community hospital, the CIC directors knew who to call to start a new venture for the benefit of local people.

RE:STORE was already keeping some of the grounds at Seaton Community Hospital in good shape as part of a gardening project to tackle loneliness. Director, and minister of Seaton Baptist Church, Rev Ben Tucker could see the potential inside. He said: "We put in a proposal for a wellbeing hub/café to create a space to welcome people in, to build relationships and for group work. We realised we needed to join up with other like-minded people who had experience of running a café."

RE:STORE approached another CIC, Waffle, which runs a very successful non-profit café and community space in Axminster. Waffle will run the café, allowing the team from RE:STORE to support people's wellbeing.

Waffle director Matt Smith jumped at the chance and says working together feels a bit like a marriage. "We're bridging worlds in Seaton, putting hospitality back into hospitals and bringing the community back into our community hospital."

The café opens this month, with specific community groups two days a week, such as tech support for local residents and groups tackling loneliness. It will be open more generally from Wednesdays to Saturdays. The café has doors opening to outside as well as into the hospital and it's hoped it will draw in a mix of local people, patients and staff. The café will also signpost people to other support groups and services that can help with issues such as loneliness and the cost of living crisis.

Seaton Community Hospital is maintained by NHS Property Services, who offered the kitchen to RE:STORE. Regional Partnership Director James Page said: "We have been supporting a number of social prescribing initiatives in East Devon over the past couple of years. The RE:STORE and Waffle project at Seaton makes use of a former kitchen that has not been used for a number of years and it's now really encouraging to see how it's being re-purposed as a community use."