



Action Housing & Support

Training Rooms a Priority in quest for space_

A housing association may not be the most likely candidate to take up residence on a business park, but Action Housing & Support (AHS) did just that when, in December 2003, the organisation moved into the Genesis Business Park on the western outskirts of Rotherham.

AHS is a registered charity that supports vulnerable and socially excluded people across the East Midlands and Yorkshire. The activities of the organisation have expanded in recent years and now there are 11 project offices stretching from Barnsley down to Derby, as well as a central services or head office, with a total workforce of 170.

It was this expansion, coupled with the need to provide its own training facilities, that prompted AHS's head office to relocate, having previously shared premises in central Rotherham with one of the regional offices.

Priority Sites' hybrid units on the edge of Rotherham appealed to the housing association because they offered the blank canvas that the organisation was looking for to tailor the interior specifically to its requirements, together with an easily accessible location just minutes from the M1.

Completed in 2003, the 8-unit development was the first hybrid scheme to be developed by Priority Sites in the UK. Specifically designed to boost the flexibility of premises for evolving businesses, the units combine high specification office space on the first floor with assembly space on the ground floor that can be easily converted for other uses.

When AHS moved into two of the hybrid units, the 9,200 sq ft of space afforded the organisation the capacity to incorporate the much-needed training rooms and office space.

The ground floor was occupied by the reception area, open plan office space and a meeting room, while the first floor was divided to provide a meeting room holding up to 10 people, a larger training room with a maximum capacity of 50 people, and a boardroom.

Just recently, with the central office staff numbers growing to 18, the internal layout has been altered so that the ground floor now houses training rooms while the first floor has reverted back to office space.

Prior to the move, AHS had to hunt out suitable venues for the numerous training sessions and meetings that it held, and with up to three courses now taking place on-site each week, the facilities have proved invaluable for the association, particularly with the added bonus of hiring out the rooms to external companies.

As Martin Knights, finance director for AHS comments: **"We now have the benefit of modern offices with fully-equipped facilities that are ideal for our training sessions and are proving to be a real asset for our staff."**

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