



# Exeter Community Initiatives

Grant aided by



## Newsletter

## December 2006

### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

The many religious festivals at this time of year highlight the significance and importance of the 'spiritual' in people's lives, and also the value of the relationships between different faith traditions. There has been much in the news over recent weeks about the relationships between the Muslim community and the rest of society. For example, news stories about whether women should be asked to remove their veils, which are gifts to those people who want to promote division and conflict rather than tolerance and understanding of another's spiritual path. Having talked with a number of local Muslim leaders and heard Baroness Udin speak recently at Exeter University, I continue to be struck by how counter-productive and potentially dangerous the climate created by the current debate is.

#### ECI ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING

This took place on November 6th at St Sidwell's Centre. The theme was 'Making a Difference' and the presentations focused on how ECI's projects help improve the lives of individuals and groups in the city. There was also a Question and Answer session, display boards, and the opportunity to chat over a buffet. The event was well-attended and had a very positive feel.

*'Rarely, if ever, have I been so struck by the positive approach of all concerned... it really was just so inspirational today'* (Lord Mayor)

Of course, there are major and significant questions facing Muslims across the world at the moment, as indeed there are major questions and issues facing people of other faiths and of no particular faith at all. If you talk to Muslims, they are all too aware of these questions and have been grappling with them, long before non-Muslims started raising them. But what Muslim leaders also say is that the way these issues are currently being debated, whether by politicians or church leaders, only makes it harder for the mainstream voice of 'moderate' Islam to be heard.

When people are on the defensive, as individuals in the Muslim community understandably feel at the moment, it is much harder for change and development to happen.

All of us who have a leadership role, whether locally, regionally or nationally, have a responsibility to carefully consider the implications of our words on these kind of issues. Not least, because, in the past when the level of debate has been raised in the way it has recently, the number of racist attacks on Muslims increases. In this climate, the work of the Ujima Project in supporting Black and Minority Ethnic communities continues to be absolutely vital.

With ECI's roots in the Christian churches, we wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful 2007. At the same time, we continue to celebrate the partnership of many different individuals, groups and organisations which makes ECI what it is: a partnership which includes people of all faiths and none: people who share our common commitment to creating the just and inclusive society that we strive for. *Alistair Macintosh, Director*

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

Over 70 people attended our Annual Review Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November

St Sidwell's Centre has hosted 328 group sessions/activities, 3172 individual sessions and 38 different user sessions

ECI organised a second training course in Managing Conflict through Mediation, which was attended by ten participants

30 referrals have been received by the PORCH project, and 13 of these have already been supported in finding accommodation

10 CARD mentors are currently being trained, which will bring the total to 29 active mentors

The new Community Centre in Exwick has been completed and will open in the New Year

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS

### **New Project Ideas**

Following input from staff, trustees and other interested parties, we have been exploring the possibility of developing new projects in the following areas:

- An alcohol free safe space for people to have a coffee, chat and support late at night
- A transport system for elderly people who are unable to use buses
- Continuation and expansion of Wonford's Time Banks project, which helps people in the community to help each other through giving and receiving time e.g. help with DIY or gardening
- A project for parents of children with language and literacy difficulties, helping them and their children to have an improved experience of education.

The next steps are to evaluate these ideas against our new priority system and to make recommendations to the Community and Project Development Group in January.

### **Homelessness Collaboration**

Since holding a meeting with all front-line homelessness organisations in September, where each project manager and a trustee were present, it was agreed that ECI will act as an honest broker to help find ways to bring the different projects involved with homelessness in the city together to work in a more co-ordinated way. This will benefit homeless people who use these services and enable more effective and efficient services to be delivered.

Our Project Development Manager, Trevor Gardner, is currently undertaking interviews with each organisation, to find out more about what they are doing, the services they provide, their plans for the future, their funding situation, and their ideas and concerns about working more closely together and possibly even sharing buildings and other resources.

From the data collected a report will be written which will form the basis of a further meeting with all of the organisations in January 2007.

### **EATS Project (Exeter Accredited Tenants' Scheme)**

We are pleased to report that the EATS project has developed significantly in the last six months. A first stage Business Plan has been written, and applications have been submitted to a number of grant-making trusts.

The Meaningful Occupation Project (MOP) is in the process of delivering another pilot course, which began within the Howell Road hostel, and is now running from the MOP centre in St David's Hill, having been expanded to include people from Exeter City Council temporary accommodation and other residences.

The EATS Steering Group held its inaugural meeting in early November, and had excellent attendance by representatives of a range of different agencies, and included a landlord who has helped us to identify the needs of housing providers. Feedback has also been gained from course participants as part of pilot evaluations, and we are aiming to seek the views of people who have not yet been on the course so far, either by choice or through lack of opportunity.

Steering group members' support will be crucial in the coming months in shaping the detailed project specification and to secure funding and partner relationships.

### **OFFICE SPACE TO LET**

***Available to rent to Voluntary and Community Sector groups or Organisations:***

***3<sup>rd</sup> Floor offices in central Exeter, two inter-connecting rooms of approx. 120 square foot each.***

***Sharing offices with Exeter Community Initiatives, and close neighbours to Devon Racial Equality Council and the Islamic Centre, the office space is close to the city centre.***

Rent and terms negotiable

***Contact Laura Callaway at Exeter Community Initiatives on 01392 205801 or [laura@eci.org.uk](mailto:laura@eci.org.uk)***

## EXISTING PROJECTS

### **CARD Project (Close a Revolving Door)**

The CARD Project has matched 94 offenders to mentors to date, of whom 30 have been supported since April 2006. We are now about to explore how CARD can work with women returning to Devon on release from Eastwood Park in Gloucestershire.

### **More CARD Mentors in Training**

The sixth CARD training course is currently taking place on which there are ten prospective volunteers with a wide range of skills and experience. This is the first time we have run the course quite so intensively as it is being held over three weeks instead of ten. The intention is that we will have even more volunteer mentors to work with clients over the Christmas period, a time when most vulnerable people need even more support to get them through what is often a very emotional time.

### **Farm Hill and Kinnerton Way Project**

In Exwick, the long awaited new centre has been finished and Exwick Community Association will have held their first open day on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December by the time you read this newsletter. The aim of this day is to give members of the local community a chance to see the new centre, and to discuss what they would like to see happening in future.

### **PORCH Project (Prolific Offenders' Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing)**

The PORCH project has been fully operational since the middle of September. Since this time the project has received 30 referrals from the Prolific and Priority Offenders Unit, for offenders with accommodation problems. Of these, 12 have already been supported in finding and maintaining accommodation, with the remaining 18 due for release from Prison over the next 3 months.

The offenders in the community have been placed in a range of accommodation types; 4 are renting from private sector landlords, 4 are staying with family, 2 are living in Housing Association flats and 2 are staying with friends. PORCH staff are offering a floating support service to these clients, including: applying for benefits, opening a bank account and registering with a GP.

*"Thank you for coming to see me, I found it most helpful and very interesting, in fact, making me even more determined to get it right, this time....I really do appreciate your help in helping me to achieve this."*  
(Feedback from a PORCH client)

With the acute shortage of available accommodation in mind, PORCH has been discussing with housing providers, the possibility of developing specific accommodation for prolific and priority offenders. However, we are still eager to work with private sector landlords who would be willing to offer tenancies to our clients. *If you are a landlord and would like to work with PORCH please contact us on 01392 205850.*

### **Supporting Community Development in Exeter (SCDE)**

We held the bi-annual joint outreach meeting of St David's network in September at the YMCA. The meeting was well attended by the projects in the area and the link people from St David's Church. Olive George from Devon Community Foundation gave a talk to the group on Fundraising followed by a Question and Answer session, which was greatly enjoyed by all. The next meeting of the network will be in April 2007.

At the beginning of October we held a meeting in Beacon Heath involving all the agencies that work in the area and the groups and Churches from the area. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the needs of the area and to explore whether there was any interest in re-starting the Beacon Heath Working Together Network. The meeting was very well attended and it was agreed to re-start the Network with another meeting due in February 2007.

### **Managing Conflict Training**

ECI jointly organised a two-day training course with Derek Finch Associates, as a result of the same course being very successfully run earlier in the summer. This training dealt with different aspects of managing conflict, using mediation skills. It went very well, and the 10 participants commented favourably about the course.

*"The training was well presented, and it gave me a new set of tools to use in every area of my life"* - a participant

## **'Ujima' Project (supports Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Exeter)**

Ricky has spent the last quarter consolidating work already done with various groups. The following example of the effect that Ujima funding has had on one particular group, highlights the wider impact of the project's work.

### **Ujima Fund enables Mobile Youth Bus Pilot Project**

Many young people from the Traveller communities do not access mainstream youth services. Following a meeting between Devon Racial Equality Council (DREC), Devon Youth Service (Exeter) and Traveller Education in January 2006 to look at ways of facilitating access, DREC applied to ECI for £250 from their Ujima Fund for a pilot project. The funding paid for Devon Youth Service to take their mobile youth bus to Sowton Traveller Site in Exeter for seven weeks.

The project was a great success. There was an average of 11 participants each week from the 19 and under age group, plus 6 adults. None of the participants had had contact with Devon Youth Service before. The youth work team, led by Steff Holwill, gained the trust of the participants and their families and were welcomed on site. An Ofsted inspector was present at one session and the feedback was excellent.

Because of the success of the pilot project, and the importance of continuing the service in the long term, mainstream youth service funding has been agreed. The team will continue to work on site for one session every week. It is also hoped that a link will be made with the Family Learning teacher who visits the site regularly and works with some of the adults.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

St Sidwell's Centre	01392 666222
CARD Project	01392 256246
Farm Hill/Kinnerton Way	01392 410709
SCDE/Ujima Project	01392 205807
PORCH Project	01392 205850
New Developments	01392 205801
General Enquiries	01392 205800

## **St Sidwell's Centre**

St Sidwell's has had some important visitors recently; firstly we had a visit from the Queen's Deputy Lord-Lieutenant. Anna Robertson came on behalf of the Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service for a site visit as Andi Tobe (Development Worker) had nominated our Café volunteers. The award is a prestigious one which we are proud to be a part of. The winners will not be announced until July 2007, so we will update you then on the outcome.

We also had a visit from the Big Lottery's Chief Executive, Stephen Dunmore, and Mark Cotton, Head of South West region, who were impressed at the success of the team at attracting new and diverse users.



*ECI Annual Review Meeting at St Sids*

In other news we have had our CCTV equipment upgraded with many thanks to Matt Lawler and Michael Miller from the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and Exeter Community Safety Partnership respectively. Their help in gaining funding for the CCTV has enabled us to much improve the security at St Sidwell's.

Our volunteer numbers remain high with 27 active volunteers, and another two in the pipeline. Most help out in the café, but we also have three on our project committee and another volunteer who takes an active part in our recruitment process.

Since the last issue Marguerite Clarke and Steve Castle have left St Sidwell's for pastures new and we wish them all the best. We would like to thank Darrell Stripp (volunteer) who has kindly helped with Caretaker/cleaner duties during the interim period.

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