

Exeter Community Initiatives

Newsletter SUMMER 2009

Recent Highlights

- Beacon Heath Community Project held its Launch Event at St James' School on 25th April
- The STEPs Project presented an evening of jazz at the Cathedral on 22nd May to raise funds for the project
- We said a sad farewell to CARD PORCH Manager Paul Douglas who retired on his 60th birthday on 30th April
- We welcome Sarah Richards to her new role as Manager of CARD PORCH and to new Housing Worker Oliver Grace, who starts in post on 26th May
- Flying Start celebrated its 2nd birthday along with the news that we have achieved a 'good' performance rating against our service plan
- CARD PORCH now joins with Homemaker South-West and St Petrock's in delivering the 'Inside Out' project following a successful funding bid

Exeter Community Initiatives

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Farewell to Ricky

Change comes whether we want it or not and with the Spring came time to say good-bye to one of our valued colleagues, Ricky Croal. Ricky joined ECI in July 2005, working on the Ujima Project and sadly, we were unable to secure sufficient on-going funding to enable the project to continue.

The purpose of the Ujima Project was to provide support for the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities of Exeter by supporting existing groups and the development of new groups. This work brought Ricky and ECI into contact with people who originated from a wide variety of places around the world, but primarily from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

When we had the project externally evaluated, the groups were very appreciative of the support that they had been given. The following is just one example of comments that a group made about the project:

"We are ever grateful to Mr. Ricky Croal and Exeter Community Initiatives for having:-

- Been part of all our endeavours,*
- Given us the able guidance and advice upon analysing our activities and working*
- And also helped us with necessary financial support when we most needed them"*

In addition to the work with groups there were many other partnerships, both Exeter and Devon-wide, that Ricky became involved with. For example, he supported the development of wider networks such as the Exeter Interfaith Group and Ricky helped them to identify their aims and objectives and to organise specific events, such as the Holocaust Memorial Day which commemorates both the Holocaust and other genocides past and present. Ricky was also part of the Migrant Workers' Task Group which looked at migrant worker issues across the county.

Whilst the ending of this project means that we will no longer be doing any dedicated work with the BME community we will continue to provide support to any VCS groups in Exeter. We have also continued to work with Planet Rainbow Project who support mixed heritage families. We are working with them to try and secure longer-term funding and to develop a more sustainable future. If this is achieved they will become a project of ECI whilst they are then supported to develop the necessary organisational strength and structure to become an independent charity.

Matt Bell, our Project Development Manager, will also continue to link with the Inter-faith work within Exeter as we explore opportunities for new areas of work to develop.

It feels impossible to do justice to the contribution that Ricky has made to ECI and to the communities of Exeter and we wish him well in his new job with Fata He. He will be warmly remembered by his colleagues for amongst other things, his uncanny ability to get other people to make him tea!

Carole Pillely, Community Development Manager



**Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals
and developing communities**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

New Developments



Mentoring – 'Transitions'

We reported in the last newsletter that we were developing a wider mentoring project, likely to be called Transitions, and this has progressed with various funding applications being submitted. This new project will take all the learning from CARD PORCH and, as well as benefiting ex-offenders, will also support three other groups of people: unemployed, people in supported accommodation, and specifically women in supported accommodation. We are very hopeful we can develop this into a successful project that helps us keep volunteer mentoring alive and continues to bring great advantages to both existing and new service users.

Social enterprise

We held an initial meeting with partners across the city about how social enterprises could bring real benefits to increasing the employment chances and self-esteem of vulnerable people including those who are homeless. We focussed on what the organisations require to develop their ideas and continue to provide useful services. We aim to continue this work and invite any other organisations in the city to be part of it. For further information, contact Matt Bell on 01392 205801 or email matt@eci.org.uk.

Supporting ECI

ECI has been developing and running successful projects, helping some of the most vulnerable people in our community for over 15 years. Times are always difficult for the most vulnerable, but during economically hard times our services are needed more than ever. We would like to thank you for your ongoing support and remind you of the following ways you can support our work:

Become a Share Scheme member – our valued Share Scheme supporters give regular financial support which provides us with funds for development work. To find out more, visit our website, http://www.eci.org.uk/ECI/share_scheme.htm or contact Louise Porter, Administrator on 01392 205800.

Volunteer for one of our projects – giving of your time, skills and experience is of great value to us and we can provide you with training and support as well as covering any expenses you incur. We have a range of volunteering opportunities within our organisation. To find out more, contact us on 01392 205800. All of our projects would benefit from your input.

Online donations – you can give directly by going to this website <https://www.charitychoice.co.uk/donation.asp?ref=6363>

Use Everyclick as your online Search Engine - if you list ECI as your chosen charity we get 1p for every search you make. It all adds up! Visit www.everyclick.com.

'I give to the Share Scheme because ECI does things I can't do myself to reduce social problems. This benefits everyone living in Exeter.' A current Share Scheme supporter

Promote us to your friends – another way you can help us is by making sure your friends and family know about us. Let us know if you would like promotional material or extra newsletters to pass onto others.

Leaving a gift in your will – giving in this way is a generous gesture that enables your legacy to benefit local people. If you have any questions about how to make a will or how to write us into your will in the best way possible, it is best to speak to us beforehand. Contact Matt Bell on 01392 205801.

Harvest

Work continues on our application to the Lottery's Local Food Fund for three-year funding for Harvest. We aim to employ two workers who will co-ordinate the training and support given to growers and volunteers across the city.

We have carried out a consultation amongst potential participants in the form of a short survey, undertaken with a range of different groups of people, including parents/carers and people who live in social housing. Responses were generally positive, with most of the respondents saying they would be interested in getting involved in growing, either in containers or on shared land. Lack of time was commonly cited as a factor in preventing people from growing their own food, so we will be aiming to address this in how we approach the work.

We are grateful to have gained support from partner organisations including Exeter Wild City (a partnership of Exeter City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust), Exeter CVS and Exeter City Council. Individual expressions of interest and support have also been received via contacts made during the consultation and through Channel 4's Landshare website, which matches those with land with people who want to grow. ECI has posted a listing as an organisation that wishes to help this process. If you wish to express your support for the Harvest project, or to find out more, please contact Laura Callaway on 01392 205801 or email laura@eci.org.uk



A family working on their allotment at the Guys & Hylton site

Existing Projects

Beacon Heath Community Project



Mandi Wall, Street Dance teacher, demonstrates a 'freeze' at the Beacon Heath Launch event

On Saturday 25th April ECI hosted a day at St James' school to celebrate the people and place of Beacon Heath and to launch the Beacon Heath Community Project. It was a fun filled day with a really good atmosphere, which was created with an eclectic mix of food supplied by the Beacon Heath Church and music from the wonderful Beacon Heath Community choir, and musicians such as 'Scrabble Bag' and Harry on guitar. Lots of different local organisations contributed to the day including the Children's Centre, the Youth Service, Exeter City Council play rangers, Mandi Wall (a street dance teacher), Isca Church and Police Community Support Officer, Richard Shelton. Thanks also go to Janet, a community member who provided free jewellery-making workshops. In the afternoon we all tramped up to the top of the land at St James' School and saw the planting of an apple tree to mark the occasion by local Councillors Saxon Spence and Ian Martin.

One of the activities on offer in the area is the Beacon Heath Growing Project, which aims to help people to grow their own food whether they have a garden or not, by providing free starter-kits and the support of a 'Street Rep'. In partnership with Exeter College we are able to provide free training to Beacon Heath residents who wish to become 'Street Reps' and help support their neighbours to 'grow their own'. Street Rep training will start in May 2009. For more information about the training or Beacon Heath Growing Project in general please contact Eve Malster, Community Worker for Beacon Heath at Exeter Community Initiatives on eve@eci.org.uk or 07910 264862.

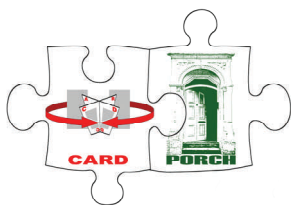
STEPS - More than Just Homes

STEPS is progressing extremely well. Recently Chapter 1 (formerly Christian Alliance Housing) has been given 'specialist status' by the Homes and Community Agency which means we can now apply directly to the government for funding, cutting out an extra step and speeding everything up. This is great news and we aim to have our first homes up and running early next year. Another piece of good news for STEPs is the progress made with the community-build activity. This part of the STEPs project aims to engage the community and STEPs tenants in building an environmentally friendly home. We are very excited by this prospect and have an architect willing to help us in this. Our next goal is to find a suitable site and form the 'community build team' to carry it forwards. We need your help to find volunteers that want to become part of the community build team.

Our ambition is for financial independence for STEPs so ongoing fundraising will be of growing importance. Indeed by the time this newsletter is printed, we will have held a Jazz Concert in Exeter Cathedral and will plan even more events in the future - let us know of your ideas!



Exeter Cathedral Night Church helps STEPs to raise valuable funds



CARD PORCH (Closing a Revolving Door and Prolific Offenders Resettlement Through Co-ordinated Housing) Project

CARD PORCH have significant staffing changes to report. We bade Paul Douglas farewell with best wishes for his retirement at a party held at St Sidwell's Centre on 30th April.

Colleagues from ECI and Devon and Cornwall Probation Area attended to give him a good send off on what was also his 60th birthday. Sarah Richards has taken over, temporarily, as Project Manager. We have recruited a new Housing Worker, Oliver Grace, who begins at the end of May. All this represents a good deal of change in the team, and has been managed with the minimum of disruption to service delivery. During the first quarter of 2009, a total of 23 people have been supported with housing. The mentoring side of the project has been picking up in recent times and we have nine current matches.

Exeter University are undertaking an evaluation of the project and the interim report has provided broadly positive feedback, with some constructive themes for future service development.

We are pleased to announce that our funding application to Tudor Lankelly Chase was successful. This has provided the opportunity for a joint venture with St Petrock's Centre and Homemaker South West, called 'Inside Out'. Our client group will be men leaving Exeter prison without Probation supervision, and CARD PORCH will be providing the mentoring element of what will be an integrated resettlement and support service. We are excited to be part of this new partnership arrangement. We have also received £50,000 from the Safer Devon Partnership, and other donations from the Jamieson Bystock Trust and an anonymous donation.

Plans for the future include seeking additional landlords to work with our clients and exploring widening the scope of the mentoring client group to attract broader interest from funders.

"...the Action Plan was useful because it got me thinking about how I can utilise some of the service...what I can do, what the options are and what we can look at"

A CARD PORCH client

Homelessness Collaboration Project

The frontline organisations that work with homeless or vulnerably-housed people in Exeter have continued to work together in a collaborative way for the benefit of their clients. These activities include improving the information about services available in Exeter, through keeping websites updated and taking a co-ordinated approach to working with the media. Work is progressing on providing a quicker response to requests for help, with organisations trialling a new 'initial trigger form' which aims to identify more quickly the most appropriate service for a client.

The church groups that provide soup evenings or night churches continue to meet and support each other, and have been exploring ways of involving the people who use their services more in how those services are provided.

Flying Start Children's Centre



At the beginning of the financial year each Children's Centre creates a Service Plan which sets out the services it will deliver within the year ahead. At the end of that year the centres are evaluated within a meeting called an Annual Conversation. The progress against each section of the Service Plan is given a rating (similar to those of Ofsted) of inadequate, satisfactory, good, or outstanding. We were pleased to receive a 'good' rating this year. The Service Plan for 2009/10 has now been written with contributions from our Parents Forum, Core Offer Monitoring Group (COMG), staff and partner agencies. Throughout the year we are identifying gaps in service, planning new activities and monitoring our current provision. Your ideas, feedback and contribution to planning are most welcome. Please get in touch to have your say by calling Gentian Curle, Manager on 01392 666224.

Alongside our usual sessions and groups, we have several new initiatives developing in the Central Exeter wards. We are now working with Play Therapist, Bernie Davis. Children who have experienced trauma can access play therapy through the centre. Within the play therapy environment a child may be able to safely express feelings and thoughts they have not been able to communicate in other settings. We are also offering baby massage classes to our families with babies aged from 6 weeks up to just before they start to crawl.

In partnership with Exeter Prison we offer the families of prisoners an opportunity to develop their family time. Recently, at a family day, we helped children make Easter bunnies with their Dads (see picture left). A good time was had by all.



Congratulations to our temporary Family Support Work Manager, Clare Edmonds, who has been awarded the post on a permanent basis. She will continue to lead our dedicated team in this crucial aspect of our work.



Grant Aided by



Supporting Community Development in Exeter (SCDE)

As reported in the last edition, Carole is working with the Community and Residents Associations in Exeter to discuss their needs for support, to explore forming a network of Associations and to develop closer working relationships or links. It is interesting to see how different the Associations are, with some managing Community Centres or halls, whilst others have been established to provide a voice for residents on issues that affect their area. Some are very new groups whilst others, like the Countess Wear Village Hall group, date back to the 1920's (the organisation dates back that far, not the Committee members!). It is impressive to see the depth of commitment shown by these groups to their communities in giving so generously of their time.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead, anthropologist

If you are part of a Community or Residents Association and would like to link up with other Associations then please contact Carole on 01392 2058207 or email carole@eci.org.uk.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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|---|---------------------|
| Beacon Heath Community Project | 07910 264862 |
| CARD PORCH Project (Mentoring) | 01392 256246 |
| CARD PORCH Project (Housing Support) | 01392 205850 |
| Flying Start Children's Centre | 01392 666224 |
| SCDE | 01392 205807 |
| New Developments | 01392 205801 |
| General Enquiries | 01392 205800 |