



Exeter Community  
Initiatives

## Exeter Community Initiatives

### Newsletter SPRING 2010

#### Exciting Next 'STEPS'

#### Recent Highlights

Over £220,000 funding has been secured for the Harvest project

ECI won the contract to provide co-ordination of Parenting Support in Exeter

Planet Rainbow became an ECI project on 1st October 2009

ECI will provide support to community 'hubs' over three years as part of a Devon-wide partnership bid

#### **Exeter Community Initiatives**

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Despite the difficult financial climate and the impending public spending cuts, this has been one of the busiest and most exciting periods I can remember in my 9½ years at ECI (that long!).

Following our welcome to Planet Rainbow on 1<sup>st</sup> October, we now have news of three major new projects that are getting under way: Harvest, Exeter Parenting Co-ordination Project and Community Hubs (see inside for details on these exciting new developments). At the same time, there has also been a change to the way the STEPs project will operate in the future, with the three original partner organisations (ECI, Shilhay Community, and Chapter 1) to focus more directly on their specific areas of expertise.

All this work at ECI is central to a vision of a city of strong communities in which everyone can fulfil their potential, and the impacts of the recession remind us all too vividly that no society can contemplate a period of unrestricted economic growth. As the Quaker economist Kenneth Boulding said *'Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist!'*



In a series of recent reports, politicians of both right and left are beginning to consider that a better measure of a healthy society would not be based on Gross Domestic Product, but rather on taking a wider look at the nation's 'balance sheet', taking into account both our assets and liabilities in a holistic sense. This would include factors like quality of life, life expectancy, air quality, and whether children can play safely, to name but some: as well as the other side of the balance sheet, for example, how financially indebted we have become.

In the run up to the General Election, I would suggest that the real test of any political party that seeks our vote should be based on how it seeks to bring about a healthy society in its wider sense, and the challenge for both politicians and ourselves is to judge our progress on that basis, and not on narrow economic grounds.

*Alistair Macintosh, Executive Director*

*Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities*



## New Developments

### Exeter Parenting Co-ordination Project

This new project funded by Devon County Council, aims to increase the number of parents accessing parenting support by supporting other organisations to deliver parenting programmes across the city. Good parenting is vital to future generations and ECI is proud that we can help provide support to parents in one of the most difficult jobs in the world!

Contact Matt Bell on 01392 205801 or email [matt@eci.org.uk](mailto:matt@eci.org.uk) for further information.

### Harvest

We are delighted to have successfully secured over £220,000 for Harvest from the Lottery's Local Food Fund, which represents 80% of total project costs. We are applying for funds to cover the remainder and are recruiting two Project Workers to take Harvest forward over the next three years. We have already been progressing access to pieces of land for growing food on, and have secured an allotment for the project as well as permission to use the garden of our neighbours, the Oddfellows Friendly Society. Our next challenge is to find storage for tools and compost, so if anyone has storage space we could use, please get in touch with Laura on 01392 205801 or email [laura@eci.org.uk](mailto:laura@eci.org.uk).



### Community Hubs

We have been successful in our bid to help run the Community Hubs Project with Community Council of Devon as the lead partner. This project will provide support to community hubs (buildings run by community groups that act as a hub/focal point for community activity) across Devon over the next three years. This will complement the recently launched support network for Community and Residents' Associations which had its first meeting last October.

### Beacon Heath Community Project

A Wassail held on January 17th saw another 55 people attend the little orchard in Mincinglake Park. Fun was had by all as they sang and hung toast in the trees, following the traditional ceremony of blessing the orchard for the coming Harvest. Wren Music Trust's youth choir 'Roots' led the singing and Greg Towning led the ceremony.



*Felt purses made by the Wednesday Craft Group at Beacon Heath Church*

Over the Christmas period the new art and crafts group in Beacon Heath has really taken off. At least 9 people attend every week and a whole array of beautiful things have been made so far like purses and Christmas wreaths.

Eve is preparing for the new growing season for the Beacon Heath Growing Project. Anyone in the area can get involved and get their free kit of seeds, pots and compost. Also we would love to hear from anyone across Exeter that would like to give voluntary time to the allotment on Prince Charles Road, and learn skills from Pam Stevens, a highly experienced gardener. Contact Eve on 07910 264862 or email [eve@eci.org.uk](mailto:eve@eci.org.uk).

## Existing Projects

### Flying Start Children's Centre

In January Flying Start took part in an exciting project in partnership with Love Local Food, a social enterprise which aims to encourage the people of Exeter to think about local food, provide educational opportunities to reconnect people with where their food comes from and provide access to affordable locally grown organic produce.



'Food Families and Farming' visited 8 parent and toddler groups, introducing the families to seasonal vegetables from a local farm. The children were encouraged to look, smell, taste and cut up the vegetables, which were then cooked into lovely carrot soup, which the children all ate together. As well as the soup making, the children made their own carrots with paper, paint and sticks, and were treated to a story about why carrots are orange.

It is hoped that we can take this work forward by extending the relationship between the Children's Centre, Love Local Food and West Town Farm and developing a programme of farm visits for our families together with an outreach programme from Love Local Food.

"Brilliant. Loved the soup making and the children loved eating it. Lovely carrot story."

*Bec, Milkshake Toddler Group.*

We'd like to encourage the families to see the farm at different times of the year and get a real feel for the yearly growing cycle, to build an understanding of what food is and where it comes from, as well as providing much needed opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity.

### Homelessness Collaboration

This winter has seen particularly severe weather conditions and Exeter has received praise from the Government for the way its agencies have worked collaboratively together in this challenging period. Some innovative work is being done through a number of initiatives such as the Individualised Budgets pilot where funds can be used creatively to help people with more complex needs to secure suitable accommodation. Carr Gomm and Young Devon will also be piloting a single assessment system devised by Supporting People, which can be expanded across the homelessness sector if found to be useful.

Now the Collaboration group are planning a public event in the Spring for individuals and agencies to find out more about homelessness in Exeter and services available in the city.

### Planet Rainbow



*Candle-making at the Winter Lights event*

As mentioned in the Autumn Newsletter from the 1<sup>st</sup> October last year Planet Rainbow became a project of ECI. Since that time we have employed a new member of staff, Ruth Flanagan to join the existing staff member, Parminder Southcott.

In January the project ran a very successful Winter Lights event which provided an opportunity for a Mixed Heritage and BME families to come together to share food, to talk and to try different craft activities from different cultures. We look forward to participating in other events later in the year including the Respect Festival in early June.

## PORCH Project (Persistent Offenders Resettlement Through Co-ordinated Housing)

The project has continued with its work with 33 persistent offenders last quarter, 18 of which have been found or supported in accommodation.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Beverly, a local landlord, who has provided us with three permanent units of accommodation. Accommodation is always difficult to access and it is through the generosity of landlords such as Beverly that we are able to provide offenders with somewhere to call home and access to intensive support.

Sadly, we will be saying goodbye to Sarah Richards, our PORCH Project Manager, who will be leaving ECI at the end of March and going to work for Exeter City Council. Sarah has been with PORCH since it started in 2006, as Project Coordinator and more recently as Manager. We thank her for her contribution and wish her all the best in her new role.



### STEPS

There has been a change to the way that STEPs will operate in the future, with ECI focusing on developing a volunteering/mentoring project ('Transitions') that will complement and provide support for anyone in supported accommodation, and will no longer be directly involved in the formal partnership to build, buy or renovate houses in Exeter. Shilhay Community and Chapter 1 will continue to seek capital funds for the development of new and existing housing for disadvantaged groups in the city.

In practice, this means the partners will be able to work more autonomously, ensuring the three aspects of STEPs (Funding, Capital Build, Volunteering/Mentoring) are carried out both in keeping with the original partnership aims, and also in line with the current activities and work carried out by each individual organisation.

## Supporting Community Development in Exeter (SCDE)

Since last June we have been part of group of people who have come together to explore developing an Arts Centre for people with Learning Disabilities. The centre will reduce social isolation by creating a space where groups can run a range of creative activities and provide opportunities for informal socialising through developing a café.

The group carried out some research to find out what activities are currently being provided and we are now at the stage of testing out the idea. The project is now called "D'Arts" and an initial constitution has been drawn up which will be ratified at an inaugural meeting to be held in March. The next steps will be to get a grant to enable us to initially rent a space and to then bring in groups to run their activities. If you would like to get involved with this project please contact Carole on 01392 2058207 or email [carole@eci.org.uk](mailto:carole@eci.org.uk)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

<b>Beacon Heath Community Project</b>	<b>07910 264862</b>
<b>Community Hubs</b>	<b>01392 205807</b>
<b>Exeter Parenting Co-ordination</b>	<b>01392 205801</b>
<b>Flying Start Children's Centre</b>	<b>01392 666224</b>
<b>Harvest Project</b>	<b>01392 205801</b>
<b>Homelessness Collaboration</b>	<b>01392 205801</b>
<b>Planet Rainbow</b>	<b>01392 217452</b>
<b>PORCH Project</b>	<b>01392 205850</b>
<b>SCDE</b>	<b>01392 205807</b>
<b>New Developments</b>	<b>01392 205801</b>
<b>General Enquiries</b>	<b>01392 205800</b>



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