



# Exeter Community Initiatives

Grant aided by



## Annual Review 2006/7

### VISION AND VALUES

#### Who are we?

Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) is a registered charity which aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the Exeter area.

#### What are we currently doing?

##### On-going work

- ✓ St Sidwell's Centre: a community centre offering a wide range of activities including a toddler group, snack bar, internet cafe, support groups and training events
- ✓ CARD (Closing A Revolving Door): a mentoring project to support offenders and help them back into the community
- ✓ Supporting Community Development in Exeter which supports community groups in particular areas of the city
- ✓ Ujima Project which supports Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Exeter
- ✓ PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing): a project offering support and accommodation to prolific and priority offenders
- ✓ Flying Start Children's Centre: co-ordinating services to families with children aged under 5 in the central wards of Exeter
- ✓ Partnership/Representation work to ensure the views of local people and groups are heard in local decision-making

##### Development/Facilitation work

- ✓ Homelessness Collaboration which helps organisations that provide front-line services to homeless people, to work more effectively together
- ✓ Housing Project which will provide affordable housing and support for disadvantaged people
- ✓ EATS (Exeter Accredited Tenants Scheme) which provides training for tenants in independent living skills
- ✓ Church Redevelopments for community use including Southernhay United Reform

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

*Over 60 local partner organisations attended the official PORCH launch event in July 2006*

*The Ujima Project supported 19 BME groups with over 400 people benefiting from the work*

*CARD supported 47 offenders, with the length of match increasing from 13 to 17 weeks*

*77 groups have provided nearly 1200 user group sessions at St Sidwell's*

*125 volunteers gave over 6,000 hours of time*

*CARD became an Approved Provider with the Mentor and Befriending Foundation*

*Over 130 groups were supported with issues such as business planning and funding advice*

*Supported Exeter City Council to allocate £72,500 for neighbourhood engagement work*

*Over 500 people attended the Exwick Youth and Community Festival in June 2006*

*'Open Hearts, Open Minds' has launched a website along with monthly e:newsletters*

*ECI won a bid to run Children's Centre services in central Exeter and the Flying Start Children's Centre staff started in May 2007*

*Heather Morgan took over from Neil Collings as the new Chair of ECI trustees*



**Launch of the PORCH project**

*Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities*

## DEVELOPMENT/FACILITATION WORK

Our Project Development work aims to identify unmet needs in the city and explore creative and practical solutions in partnership with others. The Project Development Team has grown this year with Laura Callaway joining ECI in April 2006 to work alongside Trevor Gardner in developing new projects for ECI.



**The Project Development Team**

### EATS

EATS provides tenancy skills training and support through group courses, delivered in partnership with Exeter Shilhay's Meaningful Occupation Project (MOP).

On completion of the Business Plan, funding applications were submitted to charitable trusts to enable a number of partner organisations to deliver tenancy training to clients across the city. A bid to Devon Community Foundation was successful in securing funds to deliver tenancy-training courses to 20 young people leaving care, over a period of 30 weeks.

*"We've learned loads of things, and it was good to hear from the guy who had been homeless himself." (A course participant)*

Unfortunately, further funding could not be secured, and so we are developing an exit strategy which identifies how the work of the project can be taken forward by other partners.

### Church Redevelopments

Initial work was carried out with two churches, and follow-up support provided to Southernhay United Reform Church. Our role has been to help the church ask questions about how the building can best be used, in the light of local community needs and opportunities. Two examples being considered are office space for local community groups and supported housing for disadvantaged local people.

## Homelessness Collaboration

This project aims to ensure a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to providing homelessness services in Exeter by helping the frontline organisations to work more collaboratively together.

*"It was great to see that all the agencies wanted to achieve the same goal.... I feel that ECI are best-placed to assist with this process as you have the experience in facilitating such groups and an excellent track-record in developing organisations." (A local homelessness organisation)*

In practice, as well as regular meetings between the agencies, the work has involved undertaking a number of audits, including looking at the resources of each organisation, and the services they provide. It includes a survey of homeless people themselves to find out what they think of existing services, and to enable them to make suggestions for future improvements.

### Flying Start Children's Centre

In October 2006, ECI successfully tendered to the County Council to manage the Central Exeter Children's Centre as part of their Phase 2 development of Children's Centres.

All centres aim to improve the outcomes for all children by giving them the best start in life based on the five outcomes of the Government's 'Every Child Matters' framework: be safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.

In Central Exeter, there will be a network of services rather than a dedicated centre. The focus is on the management and coordination of services through collaboration and integrated working, rather than on directly providing a range of services, which was what the first phase of Children's Centres work concentrated on.

We are delighted to have recruited Gentian Curle (Manager), Bilquis Memon (Community Development Worker), Helen Murphy (Administrator) and Sonia Worthington (Family Support Worker), who took up their posts in May 2007 with an exciting challenge for the year ahead.

## Housing Project

The Housing Project aims to provide housing with support to help move vulnerable people towards independent living.

By mutual agreement, a decision was made during the year not to pursue our partnership with Alabaré. Having evaluated the situation, we realised how important the 'local' aspect of the project is, and so a more local partner was sought. Negotiations then began with Exeter Shilhay Community, a local charity that provides accommodation and meaningful occupation for homeless people in Exeter, about the possibility of working together. So far, work carried out has included support from ECI with Shilhay's trustee development, clarifying roles and responsibilities in the new partnership, and looking at other models of operation across the country.

## Learning and Development Activities

In addition to all the other learning and development activities taking place within each of the projects, a number of training courses have been successfully run during the year.

### Conflict Management Courses

Two courses on Managing Conflict Through Mediation Skills for a total of 25 people were run in partnership with Derek Finch, a well-respected and experienced local trainer. These brought together a wide range of participants to learn new skills.

*"I learnt some common sense skills that can be used in all aspects of my work, life and relationships. Need more practice though!"*

*"I really enjoyed the training and it gave me a new set of tools in the toolbox to use in every area of my life." (Course participants)*

## Partnership/Representative Work

ECI staff have contributed to numerous other organisations, partnerships, networks and other initiatives during 2006/7. Within Exeter these include Exeter Drugs Implementation Group, The Urban Capacity Building Study, Exeter Council for Voluntary Service, and the Exeter City Council Neighbourhood Engagement Group.

At a Devon-wide level, these include the Devon Strategic Partnership, Safer Devon, Common Ground, the Devon Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy Group, the Devon Consortium, and the Devon Forum Steering Group to name but a few.

Examples of the impact of this work include the allocation of £72,500 by Exeter City Council towards community capacity-building work in the city, with the establishment of a neighbourhood engagement pilot for 4 areas of the city; and a greater recognition by local partners of the importance of community development in reducing crime.



*'Off to a Flying Start!'*

*The new Children's Centre Team*

### Baring Foundation Grant supports Partnership Working

A grant of £11,570 from the Baring Foundation towards reviewing and strengthening our partnership working with local partners from the voluntary and statutory sectors, has enabled us to formalise and develop partnerships with a range of organisations including Exeter City Council, Devon & Cornwall Probation Area, Devon County Council and Exeter Shilhay Community.

*"This has been an exciting time initiating a project jointly with other major players, co-ordinated professionally by ECI."*

*"Very pleased to work with ECI – of value to both organisations, but especially to the people of Exeter." (Local partners)*

Suggestions for improvement included the desire for ECI to be more pro-active, the wish to know more about ECI's wider work and how it fits with other organisations, the need for increased capacity of a small staff team, and the desire for greater co-working on new initiatives.

We are currently undertaking a follow-up survey to get partners' views about what progress has been made. The project is culminating in an event to share the learning gained, and to consult local partners about the development of ECI's new three year strategy from April 2008.

## EXISTING PROJECTS

### PORCH Project

PORCH supports prolific and priority offenders to find and maintain suitable accommodation through individual casework and support for accommodation providers. This promotes effective resettlement, thereby reducing both the likelihood and seriousness of further offending.

After an eighteen month development phase, PORCH was officially launched on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at a major event attended by representatives from over 60 local partner organisations, where local champions at senior level from probation, prison, police, health and the local authority declared their support.

Three new staff took up post in August 2006: Sarah Richards as the Co-ordinator, Michelle Swinburn as the Project Worker and Laura O'Connor (now replaced by Tanya Hall) as the Project Support Worker (seconded from Devon Partnership Trust), with Paul Douglas, the existing CARD Project Manager, taking on responsibility for PORCH's overall management as well.

In September 2006, the floating support service became fully operational and PORCH received its first referrals, and in March 2007 a Practical Support Fund was established. This helps clients to secure accommodation through paying for rent deposits and tenancy start-up equipment e.g. carpets, furniture, fridge, cooker, etc where state funding from Job Centre Plus is not available.

#### **Feedback from a PORCH client**

*"PORCH is run by wonderful people who really care about you. I have now got a lovely room and been clean for three and a half months. The support from PORCH is there whenever I want, which really helps."*  
(Plymouth University Evaluation Report)

During its first 6 months, PORCH provided support to 38 clients to find and sustain suitable accommodation, which is a constant challenge for an offender leaving prison. However, thanks to the co-operation of landlords, we have succeeded in placing 7 clients in private sector accommodation. They have all maintained their tenancies and this has had a significant effect on their ability to stay crime and drug free.



**Anniversary celebrations at the St Sidwell's Café**

### St Sidwell's Centre

St Sidwell's Centre is a community centre which supports local individuals and groups in central Exeter to improve their physical health, emotional well-being and quality of life.

*"I've appreciated very much the internet as I'm presently unemployed and searching for work and reply to e-mails and enquiries."* (A centre user)

It has been a busy and exciting year with over 50 new groups using the Centre bringing the total to 77 different groups. These have provided nearly 1200 user activity sessions with over 15,000 individual user sessions.

These activities include groups such as the Hikmat project, a social contact and lunch group for Muslim and Chinese elders, a Women's Sewing Group, music sessions by the Wren Trust and 'Cook & Eat' sessions in partnership with Exeter City Council and Entry 2 Employment. Another key development is the greater evening and weekend activity with centre use nearly doubling at these times.

As ever, crucial to the Centre's achievements has been the continued commitment of 49 volunteers who have given 3100 hours of their time with tasks ranging from welcoming people at reception to cooking in the community café. The volunteer-run snack bar has continued to be a vital hub of activity in the centre's life with over 100 café users per week.

*"It works really well and the food is good."*

*"You're doing very well with café ambience and food. Lovely."* (Café users)

Plans are already well under way toward becoming independent from ECI on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. A recent Needs Analysis report carried out with support from Plymouth University students will help us be clearer about areas of unmet need when developing our new three-year strategy, which we will use as the basis for future funding bids when our current funding expires on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

### Supporting Community Development in Exeter (SCDE)

SCDE supports community groups in disadvantaged areas of the city; promotes co-ordinated planning and working amongst public, voluntary and community sector workers; and promotes an understanding of social exclusion in Exeter.

Through the work of our Community Development Manager, Carole Pilley, SCDE has provided support to 41 existing voluntary and community groups during the year, with issues ranging from help in applying for funding, to providing training on the role of the treasurer and guidance on how to keep accounts. For example, the project worked with the Copplestone Drive Residents Association to help them hold their AGM, and EX4 Positive Play (a Parent and Toddler Group in Central Exeter) were supported to make a second application to the Local Network Fund: the grant they received enabled them to continue for another year.

*"We were able to find out about Exeter Positive Steps Fund and apply for funding to provide essential core workshops for our members for a whole year. This has also enabled us to increase our membership to include many new people and resulted in further projects in the community." (A local community organisation)*

It is important for us to work at a strategic level to promote the value of community development, and to address social exclusion and create stronger communities. We have been working with Exeter City Council and Exeter Council for Voluntary Service (Exeter CVS) to develop and promote a strategy for supporting neighbourhood-based community development and capacity-building in Exeter, focused on the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

*Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities*

We have also been part of the City Council's Neighbourhood Engagement Group to promote the importance of community development with local communities. After a tender process, the City Council awarded an 18 month contract to ECI and Exeter CVS to support community involvement in four areas of the city: Newtown/Polsloe, St David's, Exwick and Clyst Heath.

### 'Open Hearts Open Minds' Goes Electronic

Thanks to funding from the Learning and Skills Council, our popular 'Open Hearts Open Minds' handbook (a self-assessment tool to help front-line staff work more effectively with socially-excluded groups) is now accessible via the internet, on the website [www.openheartsopenminds.org.uk](http://www.openheartsopenminds.org.uk). The development of the website is being overseen by one of the original authors, Sam Magne. This will make resources available more widely, as well as focusing on current learning and news in this area, and sharing good practice to reduce social exclusion.

At County level we have worked to support the development of a county-wide Neighbourhood Area Support Programme (NASP) to promote and share learning about tackling social exclusion, using the experience and practice of different projects within the County.

### Ujima Project

Ujima supports Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the city. Ujima is a Swahili word which means: 'to build and maintain our communities together and to make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and solve them together.'

Through our community development worker, Ricky Croal, support has been provided to 7 existing and 12 new groups/activities. This has included help with issues ranging from promotion and publicity to developing a constitution and business planning. Over 400 people have benefited as a result.

Ricky has also supported 17 individuals directly on issues ranging from accessing learning opportunities to support in meetings to get their views heard. The project also supported 11 BME volunteers to make presentations to both police and school children to increase understanding of issues affecting BME communities.

*"Ricky Crael has been excellent. He is always available and willing to support in very practical ways. A refreshing change!"* (A local community organisation)

The project worked with the Hebrew congregation of Exeter Synagogue through supporting the organisation of the Holocaust Memorial Day e.g. finding contributors to the panel discussion from the Traveller community. The synagogue was full with over 70 people attending the discussion. Friday visits to the Islamic Centre have continued, and these act as an important opportunity to build and develop relationships with the 200+ people who regularly attend afternoon prayers.

The Ujima small grants fund has made 7 grants during the year including assistance with childcare costs for meeting/events for United Women (a group to support BME women), providing a small grant to an Exeter-based youth facility for travellers, and helping the Planet Rainbow Project (which supports families of mixed heritage) to employ a second play worker.



***The Exeter Malayalee Association celebrate the Festival of Onam***

ECI has also chaired and serviced the Devon-wide BME Steering Group, set up to ensure a co-ordinated approach to supporting BME communities across Devon. Over the course of the next few months, the project will hope to work through this group to develop a new three-year strategy to take its work forward after the end of current funding in June 2008.

*Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities*

## **Exwick Neighbourhood Project (formerly Farm Hill & Kinnerton Way Community Project)**

This is a project which actively involves the community in the issues that affect their lives, and aims to improve the quality of life of people living and working in Exwick.

The early part of the year was focussed on organising the Exwick Youth and Community Festival on 1<sup>st</sup> June. Over 500 people attended the day which included a wide range of activities such as a 'battle of the bands', a fun fair, a children's art zone, a football match, archery, and a networking event for funders and local organisations. Crucial to the festival's success was the involvement of volunteers. Our thanks to Devon Community Foundation for funding this event through the Local Network Fund.



***Graffiti art at the Exwick Festival***

Another key focus of the project's work has been support for the development of Exwick Community Association (ECA) as they took on responsibility for the management of the long-awaited new community centre which finally opened in December 2006. Support included help with the development of a business plan, policies and procedures, and help with practical tasks at the centre. ECA is still very much in its infancy and more trustees are needed for the centre to run effectively.

A new three year strategy for the project was developed as a result of a strategic planning day involving local people, community groups and statutory organisations held in June 2006. This event highlighted the importance of continuing the project's work but expanding the focus from the Farm Hill and Kinnerton Way area to cover the whole of Exwick, and this change was reflected in the new name 'Exwick Neighbourhood Project'.

The strategy was used as part of ECI's wider funding bid to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme to support neighbourhood-based community development and capacity-building across the city. Sadly this was unsuccessful, and Tor Hodgson's post finishes in August 2007. In the meantime, ECI and the City Council are working with ECA to discuss what further support they can provide.

### **CARD Project**

The CARD (Closing A Revolving Door) Project aims to close the door on repeat offending by providing a case management and mentoring service for prisoners to promote their integration back into local communities.

#### **CARD Achieves Recognised Standard**

We were delighted to receive the news in March 2007 that CARD has achieved the nationally recognised Approved Provider Standard conferred by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

It has been our busiest period to date with 47 prisoners (mentees) supported by 35 active volunteers, of whom 18 were newly trained in two courses organised during the year. The average length of the support period (match) for each mentee has risen during the year from 13 weeks to 17, thereby increasing the potential impact of the mentoring relationship.

*"When thinking about the word 'mentor' I imagined a person who could assist, yes, but there was more. This was a person who you could not only confide in but was a friend. Friends are in very short supply.. I applaud her honesty.. I have found the mentor scheme to be very beneficial." (A mentee)*



**CARD and PORCH host a BBQ for their clients, volunteers and supporters**

*Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities*

Our next major external evaluation report by Dr Gillian Squirell is due in August 2007. This will look at a range of areas including lifestyle changes, recidivism (re-offending) data and case studies. The first random trawl of mentees suggests a significant reduction in re-offending rates during and after mentoring, compared to the period before mentoring.

*"The training I undertook was friendly, supportive and realistic as to what could be achieved, so I felt prepared when I met my mentee. There was instant rapport and I felt no qualms about meeting with him so long as he felt it helpful... I became aware in graphic detail of the difficulties facing a repeat offender with little or no support on the outside. This only increased my respect for him as he struggled to maintain a positive outlook." (A mentor)*

The close connection between CARD and PORCH has led to the combining of the Management Committees from both projects into one, and the issuing of joint newsletters. There is a steady flow of service users who are involved with both, and benefit from the distinct but complementary nature of the two sources of support.

In terms of its operational development, CARD is on a buoyant plateau. However, the coming year will be a challenging one in terms of future funding, as the new commissioning framework within criminal justice takes off.

The abandonment of part of 'Custody Plus' (the Criminal Justice Act 2003) means that statutory licences are not being extended to short-term prisoners serving sentences of less than 12 months, thereby reducing the potential funding available for such support. Wider pressures on Home Office funding has also meant the end of our three-year funding via the Safer Devon Partnership, a major set-back meaning that CARD is only being sustained during 2007/8 through the use of reserves built up over previous years.

Whilst CARD is also working with prisoners serving longer-term sentences and those on remand, it remains crucial to its 'raison-d'etre' of breaking the cycle of repeat offending to work with short-term offenders before they become 'longer-term' ones!

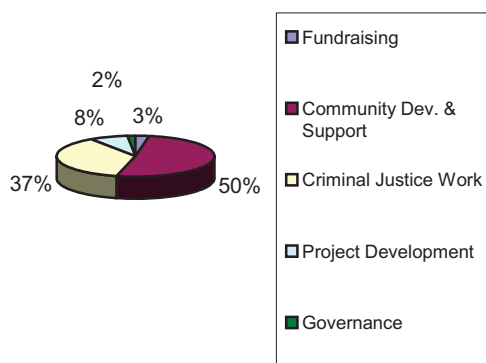
## TRUSTEES

The following people served as trustees and company directors (members of the ECI Council) during the year:

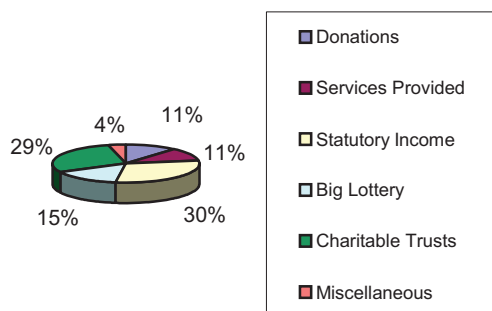
Neil Collings (Chair to 26<sup>th</sup> June 2006)  
 Heather Morgan (Chair from 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007)  
 John Thorndyke (Secretary and Acting Chair)  
 Jane Allen (Treasurer)  
 Margaret Barnes (CARD Project)  
 Stewart Barr (SCDE)  
 Steve Barriball (St Sidwell's Centre)  
 Martyn Goss (St Sidwell's Centre)  
 Pat Murphy (Exwick)  
 Ruth Saltmarsh (CARD Project)  
 Wilson Wong (Ujima Project)

## FINANCES

Where does our money go?  
 Total expenditure of £549,131



Where does our money come from?  
 Total income of £594,108



£40,000 of the surplus of £44,977 is money received in 2006/7 but committed for work in 2007/8

A copy of our annual report and audited accounts is available from the ECI office

## THANK YOU

Our funders during 2006/7 included:

- Anderton Foundation
- Baring Foundation
- Big Lottery Fund
- Capacity Builders (Home Office)
- Church Urban Fund
- Dept. of Communities and Local Govn't
- Dean & Chapter of Exeter Cathedral
- Devon Community Foundation (Local Network and Positive Steps)
- Devon and Cornwall Probation Area
- Devon County Council
- Devon Partnership Trust
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Execution Trust
- Exeter City Council
- Exeter Community Safety Partnership
- KPMG Foundation
- Lankelly/Chase Foundation
- Learning and Skills Council
- Lloyds TSB Foundation
- National Council for Social Concern
- Opportunities for Volunteering
- Safer Devon Partnership (Home Office)
- Tudor Trust
- Weavers Company

The many local people, churches and other organisations who support the Share Scheme or other aspects of our work.

### In-Kind Support

The Dean & Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, Michelmores and Westcountry Payroll.

### Our Staff and Volunteers

The 125 volunteers and 29 paid staff without whom our work would not be possible.

### Local Groups and Organisations

The many local organisations with whom we have worked throughout the year.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

St Sidwell's Centre	01392 666222
CARD Project	01392 256246
Flying Start Children's Centre	01392 666224
PORCH Project	01392 205850
SCDE/Ujima Project	01392 205807
New Developments	01392 205801
Other Projects/General	01392 205800

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