

Exeter Community Initiatives

Annual Review 2007/8

Grant Aided by



Exeter City Council

Vision and Values

What is Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI)?

ECI is a registered charity which aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the Exeter area. We seek to increase people's self-esteem, confidence and skills, particularly those who are disadvantaged, socially excluded, or experiencing conditions such as homelessness or poverty. We develop, facilitate, support and manage a range of community projects that provide practical and emotional support, using a community development approach to enable local people to take responsibility for the work being done.

ECI's Project Work in 2007/8

- St Sidwell's Centre - a community centre offering a wide range of activities including a toddler group, IT facilities and training events
- CARD (Closing A Revolving Door) - an initiative to support short-term offenders from local prisons and help them resettle in the community
- PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing) - offers support and accommodation to prolific and priority offenders
- Supporting Community Development in Exeter - supports community groups in disadvantaged areas of the city
- Ujima Project - supports Black and Minority Ethnic community groups in Exeter
- Flying Start Children's Centre - co-ordinates services to families with children aged under 5 in the central wards of Exeter
- Exwick Neighbourhood Project (until August 2007) - aims to improve the quality of life of people living and working in this part of Exeter

ECI's Development/Facilitation/Other Partnership Work in 2007/8

- Homelessness Collaboration Project - helps organisations working with homeless people in Exeter to work together more effectively
- STEPS Housing Project - aims to provide housing with support to assist vulnerable people in living independently
- Redevelopment of Southernhay United Reformed Church
- EATS (Exeter Accredited Tenants Scheme) - provides training for tenants in independent living skills
- Beacon Heath Community Project - aims to support local people and community groups in this part of Exeter
- Partnership/representation work to ensure the views of local people and groups are heard in local decision-making



Highlights of the Year

- Flying Start Children's Centre became operational in May 2007, and 175 families have registered
- The newly merged CARD PORCH projects have supported 80 offenders with mentoring, and 64 with housing issues
- The Homelessness Collaboration Project surveyed 200 homeless people to get their views about local services. Exeter University's analysis and recommendations are informing the shape of future services
- St Sidwell's Centre became a new charity as part of preparing to become independent of ECI on 1st April 2008
- Work in partnership with Exeter CVS and Exeter City Council on the 'My Neighbourhood' Project started in June 2007
- Trustees approved a new outline strategy for 2008-2011
- Ujima and SCDE supported 33 community groups with issues such as making funding applications and developing their organisational structure
- 16 small grants were made totaling £10,750 to community groups to support their activities, and 126 grants totaling £4,850 to individuals to help them resettle
- An 'Open Hearts, Open Minds' website was set up and an e-newsletter developed with over 350 subscribers
- 102 volunteers have given over 4,000 hours of time

Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities

Development/Facilitation Work

Our project development work aims to identify un-met needs in the city and explore creative and practical solutions in partnership with others. Projects are either developed and managed within ECI and supported to become independent at a later date, or established within another appropriate organisation. During 2007/8, the majority of this work has been carried out by our Project Development team of Trevor Gardner and Laura Callaway.

Trevor left ECI at the end of May 2008, after nearly 17 years, to concentrate more on freelance facilitation and consultancy work. He has been the vision and inspiration behind so much of our work, and we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for all that he has brought to the organisation. His skills as an 'honest-broker', his ability to inspire others, and the high regard in which he is held by local partners, are amongst his many gifts. We wish Trevor all our very best for the next stage of his journey.

Steps Housing Project

The Housing Project, now given the working name of STEPS, aims to provide housing with support to move vulnerable people towards independent living.

A great deal of progress has been made this year in bringing together a new partnership and developing a workable and sustainable business plan. The project will provide a different model of housing to increase the stock available for those on low incomes and in housing need. The project aims to raise significant amounts of money locally from individuals, organisations and businesses in order to buy, build and lease properties. A local fundraising campaign will be established in which people will be asked to make one off and regular donations, as well as loans and other investments to the project, and bequests of property. ECI are co-ordinating the project in partnership with Exeter Shilhay Community and Christian Alliance Housing.

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

EATS

EATS (Exeter Accredited Tenancy Scheme) is a partnership project offering a package of training courses and support to disadvantaged people, to help them access and sustain accommodation. Courses include a number of practical units including budgeting, cooking on a low income, utilities and independent living.

The tenancy skills training courses provided to Care Leavers in partnership with the Meaningful Occupation Project (MOP) ended in July 2007, with 15 people benefiting from the training. Laura Callaway, our Project Development and Resource Worker, produced a review of the training in September, which, together with the evaluations of previous pilot courses, was disseminated to local partners to inform future training provision.

With the agreement of partners to the EATS Project, tenancy skills training is now being taken forward by the Amber Foundation and its partners in Exeter and other parts of Devon, thanks to funding from Supporting People.



Southernhay Church Development

ECI have provided support and expertise to Southernhay United Reformed Church throughout the year regarding their redevelopment plans for the church building. In particular, through helping their members and development group to consider what unmet community needs could be addressed as part of their future plans. By April 2008 a feasibility study had been completed by the architects that set out a number of options, which the church will use as the basis for making decisions about the future. One of the most exciting of these options includes the potential for voluntary sector offices and other space for social and community activities.

Beacon Heath Community Project

We are in the early stages of planning a new community development project in Beacon Heath, which we hope will be launched later in the year. This project has arisen out of earlier consultation work carried out by our Community Development Manager Carole Pilley, supported by the Beacon Heath Working Together Network, which has highlighted the need for on-going community development support. The project aims to build a stronger and more active community through supporting the development of local groups and activities that benefit people of all ages. Starting with one part-time worker, whose role will be to work with local people, community groups and statutory partners to set up a series of practical initiatives to meet local needs, we hope to identify further funding to appoint a second worker in due course.

Promoting social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities

New Strategy

In March 2008, the Trustees approved a new outline strategy, setting out the future overall direction of our work over the next three years. We have identified three priorities: project development/management, community development, and a new priority of advice, consultancy and facilitation.

The development and consultation process helped us clarify the specific new projects we wish to develop over the next three years, with the number of potential projects being reduced overall, although the new community development project in Beacon Heath has been added.

Partnership/Representation Work

The Baring Foundation funded a project to review our partnership working, which culminated in a final event in June 2007 called 'Effective Partnership Working - Mantra, Mirage, Myth or Miracle?!' ECI staff and representatives from 15 local partner agencies shared learning gained from ECI's partnership-working activities over the past 18 months. A full report of this project is available on request.

ECI staff have also contributed to a wide range of other organisations, partnerships, networks and other initiatives. For example, ECI's Executive Director, Alistair Macintosh, has continued to chair the Devon Consortium (the group of infrastructure organisations responsible for the implementation of a local plan to enable more effective support for front-line voluntary and community organisations in the county). He has recently been selected as Chair for a further two year period. Potential important developments over the next year include a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) assembly for Devon with the opportunity for the whole sector to exert more influence over the way local services are delivered through developing and improving the VCS's representation and campaigning processes.

Volunteers

102 volunteers have given their time, experience and expertise to the charity during the year. Some sit on committees, others help with administration. But most volunteers are actually involved in the 'hands on' delivery of services to clients or users. Without their help, we would not be able to operate in such a cost-effective and organised manner.

The charity also meets its objectives through supporting volunteers with their own personal development. One such example is Kathryn Langrish, an office volunteer who helps out with admin tasks at 14 York Road. Kathryn has Down's Syndrome, and until she volunteered at ECI was finding it difficult to get a paid job. After two years at ECI, she has now gained the skills and confidence in her own abilities to get a paid job as a trainee reporter with the Express and Echo, and, luckily for ECI, she will also continue to volunteer with us alongside her paid job.



Kathryn, our Admin volunteer, says "I first heard about ECI through family members. I like working here as I get to do so much. I take my time to do the job well."

Project Work

Exwick Neighbourhood Project

The Exwick Neighbourhood Project was a community work project which aimed to actively involve the community, of all ages, in the issues that affect their lives, and to improve the quality of life of people living and working in this part of Exeter. The project ended in August 2007 following the completion of a three-year grant.

In the final few months the project's work focussed on supporting Exwick Community Association to manage the newly opened Exwick Community Centre. Support was also provided to the Ivy Project, to enable them to run a Youth Festival in Exwick, based on the festival we had organised in the previous year.



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Other Partnership Work and Activities

"Good people who know what they're doing. Communications are good. They give and build confidence. They employ good people. They create a good benchmark."

"Over-enthusiasm is their only fault. Sometimes they need to be more politic i.e. it may be better to go slowly and softly, reflect on other organisations' interests and be more subtle. ECI have 'naïve enthusiasm' but it's a welcome change - willing to say what others only think."

(Evaluation Report by Sarah Taragon - comments from local partner organisations)

CARD Project

"X...is an excellent mentor and has also become a close friend. In the time we have had together we have done many activities together. The good thing is he is not an addict. We learn from each others experiences...I have a lot in my life today and now have good prospects and a future."

(A CARD client)

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

The main referral route is from the three Devon prisons and also Eastwood Park women's prison in Gloucestershire. Most clients are not involved with the probation service, but in some cases we also complement the support already provided by probation staff.

During the year, we decided to re-shape how we operate, with the Mentoring Co-ordinators acting in a case management role, to help settle the client's circumstances: usually focussing on accommodation, drug stabilisation and benefit issues. A volunteer mentor is then introduced to progress the broader issues of resettlement.

This year we have supported 80 offenders through the hard work, skills and commitment of our 19 volunteer mentors. A further training course for new mentors began in May 2008.

Staff oversee a Client Support Fund which made 18 grants to clients totalling about £350 during 2007/8. The fund provides occasional financial help to clients, when they do not have their own funds, and when other funding is not available. Typical items include smarter clothes for work or interview, replacement 'Identity' documents such as birth certificates and sessional childcare costs to cover an appointment or training event.

We were pleased to welcome back Gill Amos, Mentoring Co-ordinator, from maternity leave in the summer of 2007. Gill is again working alongside Carol Forrest.

PORCH Project

The PORCH (Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing) Project provides a coordinated approach to supporting prolific and other priority offenders (PPOs) released into the Exeter, East and Mid Devon, and Teignbridge areas. It identifies and sustains suitable accommodation for offenders through individual casework and support for accommodation providers. This promotes effective resettlement, thereby reducing both the frequency and seriousness of further offending.

At the beginning of the year 24 clients were being supported and a further 40 new clients were supported during the year, making a total of 64. Of these, 31 were found accommodation and supported in it. Throughout the year we have liaised with a total of 42 organisations to establish a comprehensive network of housing providers and support agencies.

The Practical Support Fund made 108 grants totalling over £4,500 during 2007/8. 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.

SERIO (Socio-Economic Research and Intelligence Observatory) at Plymouth University completed an evaluation of the pilot period, which culminated in a major event in February 2008. The event was attended by a wide range of stakeholders and supporters, at which we showed a DVD made with help from Cricklepit Media featuring three service users who told their own stories of working with PORCH.

The staff team of Sarah Richards (Project Co-ordinator) and Michelle Swinburn (Project Worker) has been joined by Claire Paine (new Project Worker, ex-CARD Mentoring Co-ordinator), whilst Tanya Hall (Community Support Worker) departed on maternity leave in August 2007 and has been replaced by Nick Walker.



PORCH evaluation event

COMMENTS FROM PORCH USERS

"I have never come across something like PORCH... I couldn't thank them enough... if I'm in trouble they help me... quickly and productively... it's made a difference on my life".

"They [PORCH] are totally different. I thought they would just help with accommodation but they have done everything else, they have put me in touch with West Country Training, managing my medication, helped me to talk to ENDAS".

CARD PORCH Project



Carol Forrest, Mentor Co-ordinator, with a CARD client

During 2007 it became clear that the two projects had much in common with the clients and offender groups served, in terms of the key issues and problems faced, and as shown by a growing number of cross-referrals. The Committee was also aware of the changing commissioning environment for services for offenders with greater emphasis on 'joined-up' working. It was therefore agreed to merge the projects to provide an integrated housing and mentoring casework and support service, and the new CARD PORCH Project came into being on 1st April 2008.

A successful bid was made to Devon Supporting People last summer for additional funding to support an integrated project to take it forward beyond the Spring of 2008. This has allowed for the additional housing worker and enabled us to expand into the Teignbridge area of south Devon.

Flying Start Children's Centre

Flying Start Children's Centre aims to improve the quality of life and opportunities for children aged 0 to 5 in central Exeter through working with local families, groups and agencies to enable the provision of a range of support services.

The first staff started work on 8th May 2007, with an office base at St Sidwell's Centre. This initial year has seen the development of a wide range of services in partnership with local professionals such as health visitors and employment advice staff. One of the first projects established was our Heuristic Play sessions which began in June. Heuristic Play is where children lead their own play through exploring items which would not usually be considered toys, for example natural or household objects like pine-cones and cake tins.

Other new activities developed or supported during 2007/8 include a 'Baby Oasis' Café in collaboration with the Central Health Visiting and Midwifery Teams, a 'Dads and Littleuns' Toddler Group, a Health Clinic and Post-natal Support Group, Jobcentre Plus and Connexions advice sessions, Introduction to Parenting Workshop, Ante-natal preparation course, and a Smoking Cessation clinic.

The Autumn saw the establishment of a Home Visiting Service to families when they report difficulties such as relationship problems or a child with challenging behaviour within their family. At a parent's request, a Family Support Worker will assess the family's needs and help them to access suitable support.

A small grants scheme offering grants up to £1,000 was launched in late 2007, and has made 10 grants this year totalling £9,400 for items such as crèche worker salary costs, craft materials and play equipment.

In 2007/8, the Centre served 549 children aged 0 - 5 in St James, St David's, Newtown and Duryard wards with all 549 children and their families entitled to access our universal services. Over the period of a year 175 families have registered with us, with new families being registered every week. The focus for the year ahead will be reaching out to families we have not yet supported, including targeted work with teenage parents, families from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, families in supported housing, and fathers.

The end of the year saw a move into a second office base at Kingfisher House in Western Way, as an admin hub and reception area where families can seek advice and information. It will also connect us more closely with the other Early Years services, such as Devon Information Service for Children (DISC) which is based in the same building. The Central Health Visiting Team will be also co-locating with us.

"Alicia has learnt to share through Heuristic Play. I can relax whilst Alicia has fun." (Alicia's mum)

"The breastfeeding support group is a wonderful facility. More colourful toys and books would be great though." (These have since been purchased) (Local parents)

"After a period of ill-health, it is good to start using my skills again with a view to returning to work." (Heuristic Play Volunteer)



The Post Natal Support Group

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"ECI have a wide range of experience and expertise in working with voluntary and statutory agencies in the city and are able to provide valuable and honest links between these sectors. They have provided helpful assistance to our organisation ... in developing relationships with partner agencies and enabling more meaningful collaborative work to take place."

(A local homelessness organisation)



Homelessness Collaboration Project

This project aims to ensure a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to providing homelessness services in Exeter through:

- building trust and promoting opportunities for collaboration between organisations working with homeless people in the city
- identifying options for future homelessness services in Exeter which maximise effectiveness and minimise potential for duplication
- enabling agencies to reach agreement on a preferred option and support the organisations in its implementation.

A Service Audit was produced in September 2007 that sets out which organisations do what, for whom, and when. This helpful document shows the breadth and variety of services provided in the city for homeless and vulnerably housed people.

In October 2007, ECI facilitated an Away-Day with support from Mike Beard, at which all the organisations involved in the collaboration process were invited to explore issues of joint working, resource-sharing and relationship-building. This proved a very successful day in which the seeds of working together more collaboratively seemed to take root.

September 2007 to January 2008 saw the homelessness research carried out. This consisted of interviewing 200 homeless and vulnerably-housed people to find out their views about the current services provided in the city and to help shape future services. We are enormously grateful to Huw Vasey and the University of Exeter as well as the 15 volunteers that helped with this. The final report is available on the ECI website and an Action Plan is being developed from the report's recommendations.

St Sidwell's Centre

St Sidwell's Centre is a community centre which works with local individuals and groups, mainly in the inner city area of Exeter. It aims to improve people's physical health, emotional well-being and quality of life, and to build a stronger, healthier and more inclusive community.

Groups using the centre include statutory agencies and local community groups. New groups/activities during the year include Bollywood Dance classes, Wren Music sessions, a Community Book Exchange and activities for 0 to 5's supported by the Flying Start Children's Centre. In addition to the regular groups, there have also been a series of one-off events including a Vegetarian Food Day, an Afghan Lunch and a Women's Pampering Day (in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness). Art workshops run by Magic Carpet, an Exeter-based charity, helped us to develop a children's mural for the Old Chapel and an outdoor mural near the centre entrance.

The volunteer-run café has also been central to the centre's activities during the past year, providing about 80 meals per week. Volunteers are currently working hard with the Development Worker, Andi Tobe, to produce a business plan and identify funding with a view to developing a sustainable social enterprise.

As always, the commitment and dedication of our team of 42 volunteers has been central to all that the centre has achieved during the year, with over 2,500 hours being contributed. In February, we celebrated the arrival of Sue Dziewanowski, as the 100th person to join the volunteer team since the centre's previous phase of development began in October 2005.

Alongside the activity taking place in the centre, the major organisational change has been the preparation for becoming independent from ECI on 1st April 2008. As well as gaining company and charitable status, we now have a board of Trustees including local and user group representation, a new three-year Business Plan, and initial funding bids have been submitted to take the centre's work forward after the current funding ends in September 2008. The new organisation was formally launched at a party on 8th April by Dame Suzi Leather MBE, a former ECI Trustee and the first Chair of St Sidwell's Centre, and now Chair of the Charity Commission.

ECI wishes the St Sidwell's team all the very best for their future.



"I feel that I'm doing a little good to help others."
says Sue Dziewanowski, our 100th
St Sidwell's volunteer

Supporting Community Development in Exeter

'MY NEIGHBOURHOOD' PROJECT

In partnership with Exeter City Council and Exeter CVS, this project is concerned with neighbourhood engagement and giving more power to people at a local level. This pilot project began in June and runs until the end of November 2008. The project is focused on four areas of Exeter: Exwick; Clyst Heath/Kings Heath; Newtown/Polsloe and St. David's. Initial events in the summer of 2007 to promote the project gained good responses, with over 80 residents signing up to hear more. Local partnership groups have been developed, and are helping to develop Action Plans for each area.

SCDE supports development with communities (whether defined by geography or by common interest) with a focus on supporting community groups in disadvantaged areas of the city. The project also encourages co-ordinated planning and working amongst public, voluntary and community sector workers and promotes an understanding of social exclusion in Exeter.

During the past year SCDE has provided support to 17 existing groups and 6 new groups with issues ranging from support with applying for funding, to support with developing a constitution and roles of committee members.

OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS

During the past year the Open Hearts, Open Minds website was set up and an e-newsletter developed which already has over 350 subscribers. We have been involved with the editing of the newsletter and also in producing articles. One of the aims of the newsletter is to include articles that demonstrate learning about how to be more inclusive, based on work that is being carried out within Devon. Initial feedback from readers has been very positive to date.

Ujima Project (supports Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Exeter)

The Ujima Project aims to support the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities of Exeter through:

- providing direct support for existing groups or networks;
- supporting the development of new projects, groups or networks in response to un-met needs; and
- supporting BME communities at a strategic level.

Through the work of our Community Development Worker, Ricky Croal, the project has provided support to 13 existing BME community groups and 3 new groups during the year. This has included help with issues such as organising events, developing a constitution, business planning, funding applications, finding volunteers, finding new premises, advice on promotion and publicity, etc. Over 450 group members have benefited from Ujima's support.

Groups supported by the project include the South West Anglo Polish Association, who were looking to set themselves up formally as a group, and the Exeter Malayalee Association where Ujima made a small grant of £250 towards the group's celebration of their annual festival of 'Onam'. The project also supported the Exeter Interfaith Group to organise 'a Walk of Faith' starting at the Mint Methodist church and calling into other religious meeting places before ending up at the Islamic Centre where tea was served. The Ujima Project helped to organise the Holocaust Memorial Commemoration Day, held at the Guildhall, in particular by enabling a traveller group to become involved through giving a reading. The Jewish community were very keen for the event to commemorate more than just the holocaust, including other genocides past and present.

The Ujima small grants fund has made 6 grants during the year totalling £1,350 for projects such as the Devon Traveller Forum, Refugee Support Group Devon, and the Exeter Malayalee Association. Ricky has also supported 20 individuals directly on issues ranging from accessing learning opportunities, to support in organising meetings in order to have their views heard. As well as working directly with BME community members, the project has also assisted various organisations to develop their own strategies for working with BME communities. In particular, Exeter College has been supported in developing its race equality strategy, and in recruiting members to its Community Diversity Group, which helps shape its courses and support offered to BME people.



Malayalee children celebrate the Festival of Onam with games

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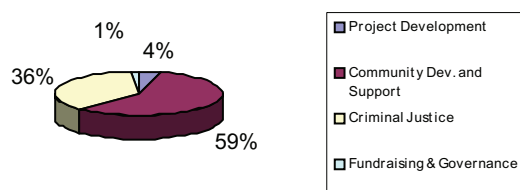
Trustees

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

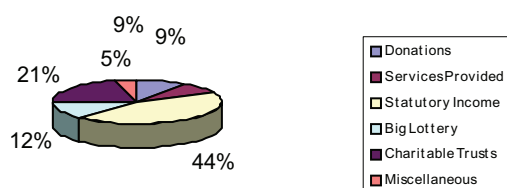
Heather Morgan	(Chair)
John Thorndyke	(Secretary)
Jane Allen	(Treasurer)
Margaret Barnes	(CARD PORCH)
Stewart Barr	(SCDE)
Steve Barriball	(St Sidwell's Centre)
Pat Cusa	(Flying Start)
Martyn Goss	(St Sidwell's Centre)
Canon Tom Honey	
Ruth Saltmarsh	(CARD PORCH)
Marie Winckler	(Steps)
Wilson Wong	(Ujima)

Finances

Where does our money go?
Total expenditure of £667,428



Where does our money come from?
Total income of £714,642



£30,000 of the £47,214 surplus is money received in 2007/8 but committed for work in 2008/9.

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

Exeter Community Initiatives

Registered Office: 14 York Road, Exeter EX4 6BA

E-mail: info@eci.org.uk

Web-Site: www.eci.org.uk

Charity No: 1026229

Company No: 2844870

Thank You

Our funders during 2007/8 included:

- Anderton Foundation
- Baring Foundation
- Big Lottery Fund
- Capacity Builders (Home Office)
- Church Urban Fund
- Dept. of Communities and Local Government
- Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral
- Devon Community Foundation (Local Network Fund and Exeter Positive Steps)
- Devon and Cornwall Probation Area
- Devon County Council
- Devon Partnership Trust
- Execution Trust
- Exeter City Council
- Exeter Community Safety Partnership
- Jamieson Bystock Trust
- KPMG Foundation
- Lankelly Chase Foundation
- Learning and Skills Council
- Lloyds TSB Foundation
- National Council for Social Concern
- Norman Family Trust
- Safer Devon Partnership (Home Office)
- Sunrise (Sidmouth) Trust
- 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 and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, Exeter University, Michelmores and Westcountry Payroll.

Our Staff and Volunteers

The 102 volunteers and 31 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

CARD PORCH Project (Mentoring)	01392 256246
CARD PORCH Project (Housing Support)	01392 205850
Flying Start Children's Centre	01392 666224
SCDE/Ujima Project	01392 205807
New Developments	01392 205801
General Enquiries	01392 205800

