

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

In the last quarter, the Polish Community in the South West has received continued support from Ricky, as they prepared for a regional gathering. He has supported the Tiverton Polish Association and helped draw together the different activities operating in the Exeter area. The Exeter Polish Support Group is now based at St Sidwell's and helps migrant workers and their families to settle in Exeter. For more information see www.exeter.pl.

We were pleased to award £250 from the Ujima Small Grants fund to the Exeter Malayalee Association for the Festival of Onam celebrations at the Exeter City Football ground. Activities included traditional games and entertainment in the form of dance and short plays. Membership of this association has increased over 50% from last year to more than 80 families resident in the area. Their website can be found at www.exetermalayalee.co.uk.



Celebrating the Festival of Onam with games

Ujima continues to support seven existing groups and has helped two new ones this quarter. Ricky has been involved in a series of talks on "the Changing Face of Exeter" and has made many other contacts with members of diverse communities through this and other activities.

St Sidwell's Centre

This quarter, St Sidwell's has taken another important step towards independence from ECI, by registering with Company's House. Three current Project Committee members became the initial trustees of the St Sidwell's Centre (Exeter) as we will become known from April 2008. In an informal ceremony the

signing of the Company's House registration forms was facilitated by James Evans (Commissioner for Oaths) from Foot Anstey Solicitors.

Local barber Damien Owen has donated his first three days' takings to St Sidwell's Centre, in the time-honoured tradition of London Barbers. Having recently moved to Exeter from London, Damien was keen to continue the tradition and to help his local community. We are grateful to Damien for his donation of £155.

"The St Sidwell's is a lovely Centre with a good ambience with multicultural activities and people in constant attendance" (A local resident)

35 community groups have used the centre in the last quarter, of which five are new. In total 338 user group sessions have taken place, and with 4,170 individual user sessions, the centre has certainly been busy! Four new volunteers have joined the team to bring our total to 37, who between them have contributed 866 hours of help. A big thank you goes to our volunteers as ever.

We are still searching for a treasurer for the new organisation. If you are interested, please contact Anderson Jones on 01392 666222.

GOING PAPER-FREE?

If you prefer, we can arrange to send you an electronic copy of the newsletter. Just let Gill Robertson know on 01392 205800 or gillr@eci.org.uk. (This edition is approximately 198kb.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Exeter Community Initiatives

Grant aided by



Newsletter

Winter 2007

NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS!

Parties, family gatherings, getting together, and goodwill, shouldn't just be for Christmas or other religious festivals throughout the year, but sadly for many they are. Recent interviews we have conducted with homeless people highlighted that Christmas promises to be a particularly difficult time for some, with no home, no family, no warmth, no security and no hope!

ECI's work is all about bringing people together, in a long-term ethos of partnership and collaboration, throughout the year. For example, whether at St Sidwell's, or through the support provided by the Ujima Project, ECI is about creating the atmosphere and environment in which goodwill, and meeting and working together, can be fostered and celebrated.

The benefits of partnership working have been demonstrated in a very practical way by the Homelessness Collaboration project, which ECI is facilitating. Seven frontline homelessness organisations have committed to exploring ways they can work together more effectively. This process has created tangible improvements in communication and openness. Trust is building, and partnerships are developing.

It is increasingly important to be part of networks and partnerships in this changing world. Particularly with regard to funding, where consortium bids are increasingly being encouraged and commissioners are seeing the benefits of receiving one larger funding application from a group of organisations, rather than lots of smaller ones. Although commissioners/funders are

doing this to save resources, it also has the effect of encouraging partnerships and collaboration. This can ensure that a more strategic view is being taken, which is ultimately to the benefit of those who use the services.

So in the case of the Homeless Collaboration Project, it might, for example, lead to more 'out of hours' services being provided, and increase the potential for homeless people to have a better Christmas. And this is good news for all of us, both at Christmas and throughout the year!

Trevor Gardner, Project Development Manager

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

- St Sidwell's has registered with Companies House, with 3 committee members becoming its initial trustees
- ECI has supported 60 existing groups and 7 new ones this quarter
- CARD has supported 44 offenders through 27 trained mentors, with 22 new clients
- 152 homeless/vulnerably housed people were asked their views on current and future services in Exeter
- 145 families are now registered with Flying Start Children's Centre
- PORCH has supported 30 clients, 16 in prison and 14 in accommodation
- Over 70 people attended the Annual Review Meeting and Social event

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

EATS Project (Exeter Accredited Tenants' Scheme)

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.

The final EATS steering group enabled partners to explore ways of co-ordinating and promoting the training beyond ECI's involvement. Partners are excited about the project and confident that the training will help their clients to access and sustain accommodation. We wish the project well and look forward to hearing about its progress.

NEW PROJECT IDEAS

Some ideas for new ECI projects that have been generated since the summer, are now being explored further and prioritised against our assessment criteria. They include:

- A project that helps offenders and other vulnerable groups to gain employment
- The possibility of providing a Night Shelter for homeless people and/or a space for street drinkers to access services
- Exploring the possibilities of co-locating the existing services for homeless people with complex needs
- A project to help fathers to build and maintain good relationships with their children
- Exploring ways of helping a wide range of people to "go greener"

If you have any comments or suggestions to make, or contact details of organisations/individuals that could help us to further develop project proposals, please contact Laura Callaway on 01392 205801 or email laura@eci.org.uk.

Homelessness Collaboration

152 people experiencing homelessness and in temporary accommodation were interviewed for the Client Audit in the summer and around 60 people experiencing different aspects of homelessness will be interviewed for the focus groups. This represents a significant proportion of those experiencing these problems within the city. For the first time it will provide the homeless organisations, Exeter City Council and others, with important data, to develop a new homelessness strategy for the city and plan future services.

The full research report is due for completion at the end of the year and we are holding an event in early January to present the findings.

A very successful Away Day was held in October with the seven organisations, out of which a number of future possibilities are now being explored.

"Find ways of educating the wider public about homeless people..... too many pre-conceived ideas and prejudices about them"

"I think what you are doing now is a good thing and hopefully will help homeless people in the future. The more like this you can do the better"
Some comments received by people interviewed for the Client Audit

Housing Project

The Housing Project has taken on a new energy over the past few months, with both Exeter Shilhay Community and Christian Alliance Housing Association joining ECI to develop this new model of housing for the city. We are now at the stage of developing a business plan that will set out robust and sustainable financial modelling and initial housing options. It is hoped that this will be completed by the end of March 2008.

Church developments

We are continuing to work with Southernhay URC, to develop plans for the future. There are a number of options and possibilities that are now subject to a feasibility study, that will aim to match the needs of the church and the community, within a financially sustainable and affordable model.

EXISTING PROJECTS

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

The closer positioning of CARD and PORCH is continuing with agreement in principle to a formal merger, and more detailed work now taking place on the implications of this for practical day-to-day arrangements. Such a step would put us in a stronger position to appeal for funding, by uniting the best elements from each project.

We are pleased to have received a grant from Devon Supporting People which will maintain both projects until September 2008. The additional funding has enabled us to take on another Project Worker, and we are pleased to welcome back Claire Paine who has taken on this new role. We also welcome back Gill Amos from maternity leave.

“Nuno...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 mentee*

Flying Start Children’s Centre

As the weather has become so chilly many families are looking for activities to take their children along to. Flying Start Children’s Centre co-ordinates 0 – 5 services in Central Exeter. There is so much going on: there’s Bounce and Rhyme, Sing and Sign, Gym Joeys, and Heuristic Play, and lots more to keep tots warm on a cold or rainy day.

New to our area is a Dads and Littluns Toddler Group. Group Leader Cullen Henshaw is a full-time Dad and he is looking for other Dads who have the care of their children during the week to join him on Thursdays.

This month we have begun to jointly run an International ‘Stay and Play’ session with Heavitree and Polsloe Children’s Centre. The group meets on Thursday afternoons at Fairbanks Family Centre. The group attracts parents from diverse backgrounds and provides an environment to talk and share experiences about different cultures.

We have welcomed 3 volunteers to the team this month. They bring with them a wealth of experience and are going to make a valuable contribution to children’s services. Our Heuristic Play Volunteer, says:

After a period of ill health, it is good to start using my skills again with a view to returning to work.

We are looking to recruit more volunteers to contribute to our Parent Forum. This will be an active committee contributing to and leading services. Any parents of 0-5s interested in this role should contact a member of staff.

Please contact Flying Start Children Centre on 01392 666224 with any enquiries or email gentian@eci.org.uk.

SCDE (Supporting Community Development in Exeter)

This quarter, Carole has supported eight existing community groups, and convened four networks. She has also supported St David’s Outreach group to raise public awareness of all the good work being done by the many different social projects in the area.

Since 2001 a group of parishioners from St David’s Church have forged links with 23 different organisations or projects within their area. “Link” people visit each project about 4 times a year and the projects have mostly been appreciative of the interest taken in them.

Recently a small steering group has met to look at the mechanics of working together with Churches in Central Exeter to create a larger network called Exeter Churches’ Social Outreach.

If you would like to find out more about this project and which Churches are currently involved, please contact Carole Pilley on 01392 205807.