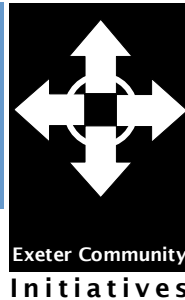


Exeter Community Initiatives

Newsletter Spring 2011



ECI in numbers

From October to December 2010.....

110 people attended Beacon Heath's Apple Day celebration

9 groups were given infrastructure support, and **3** networks facilitated, by ECI projects

43 volunteers gave **457** hours of help across all our projects

20 people benefitted from Harvest's cooking and preserving workshops



Mincinglake Orchard
Play area in 1985

LATEST NEWS

- Our new project, **Transitions** is gearing up to start in April, with recruitment for a Volunteer Co-ordinator under way
- **Beacon Heath held a Wassail celebration** in the Community Orchard on 16th January, attended by 30 people despite the heavy rain!
- **Exeter Parenting Co-ordination** has expanded its geographical area, with seven parenting programmes being facilitated in Exeter, East and Mid Devon this Spring term
- Despite 4.5% budget cuts to **Flying Start Children's Centre**, existing work with families will continue and we are developing our work in this area
- We have secured a further year's funding from Exeter City Council for facilitating the **Homelessness Collaboration** project

For more information

- ☎ **Projects and General Enquiries** 01392 205800
- ☎ **Flying Start Children's Centre** 01392 666224
- ✉ **14 York Road, Exeter EX4 6BA**
- ✉ **info@eci.org.uk**
- 🌐 **www.eci.org.uk**

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PROJECT WORK

Beacon Heath Community Project

The Mincinglake Community Orchard Group helped to organise a Wassail celebration in January, which 30 people attended, even though it rained! The group meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Devon Yeoman pub, Beacon Lane, from 6.30pm until 8pm and welcomes all Beacon Heath residents.

During February and March, Community Artist James Bond will be working with a group of teenagers from the Beacon Heath area, to create a sculptural bench. Funds for this project have been raised from the community, along with grants from Exeter City council and Devon County Council.

A Community Skills survey has been launched in Beacon Heath. In the survey people can identify skills they already have and others they would like to learn. Exeter College has granted ten free 9 hour training courses to the community, which will run in response to the survey outcomes.

Community Hubs

The Community Hubs project recently ran a free session for charity Trustees around their roles and responsibilities. The training was attended by 17 people from 6 different Community Associations across the city and was appreciated by all participants. Everyone at the session said how useful it had been and that they had learnt a lot.

All of the Community Associations in Exeter find it hard to recruit new Trustees. Trustees are volunteers and play a valuable role. It takes time and commitment to be a Trustee but it can also be very rewarding, so if you feel you would like to get involved please contact the Community Hubs project. We can give you advice on being a Trustee, put you in touch with the Associations that are looking for new Trustees, and support you in your role if you decide to take this on.

"Useful and clear event with enthusiastic trainer who gave facts with reality to make manageable"

"Very informative. Each person attended walked away with new points to check for their charities"

'Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees'
Training participants

The next free training session we will be running will be about Organisations' Legal Structures on Monday 21st March 2011, 6–8 pm at St Sidwells Centre.

The Exeter Community and Residents Association Network is looking at developing a website where each group can have a page to let people know what is happening in each area of the city. We will let you know more when this is up and running.

Flying Start Children's Centre

Flying Start has set up a monthly support group for families of prisoners and ex-offenders in partnership with the charity String of Pearls. Trained mentors who have had a family member in prison, run the groups in conjunction with a Flying Start worker. For more details, contact Dee Masters at String of Pearls on: 07962 045123.

In January we launched the new Children's Forum, for children aged up to 5 to express themselves through art-making. Community artist Sophy Miles, is running a series of one-hour sessions aimed to support children to develop skills and confidence to make their opinions known. A Parents/Carers Forum has also been launched, which meets on the second Friday of the month between 10 am and 12 noon, with crèche provided. We are looking to recruit more members to this group, which helps reflect on how improvements can be made to children and family services in the community. Please ring 01392 666224 for further information.

PROJECT WORK



Harvest

Here at Harvest we're busily getting ready for the Spring, with lots of exciting new plans for 2011. We have a new cohort of volunteers who

will shortly be trained as Growing Champions, preparing them to support a new group of Incredible Edible MiniGardeners. We are also developing three new community growing spaces in partnership with a Church, a Children's Centre and a group of residents in Beacon Heath.

On 1st Feb we launched the 'War of the Grow-

ses' – a competition between a team of Harvest volunteers, a team from the Ivy Project, and a group from Kazlum Support. Each group manages a raised bed in St Sidwell's Centre's community garden. Harvest challenged the other groups to see who can grow the most food in one of these beds between 1st Feb and 30th September. Visit the Harvest web pages to keep updated.

We have also launched a series of swaps for food growers. The first will be Seedy Sunday and Potato Day, on 27th Feb, 11.00 – 1.00 at the community hut in Belmont Park. It will be a chance to swap surplus seeds, and there will be seed potatoes, a sowing workshop, children's activities, a visit from the Men in Sheds, as well as a café selling refreshments.

Homelessness Collaboration

The Service User Consultation has been completed and the resulting report (unsurprisingly) highlights the difficulties in accessing affordable accommodation. Amongst other requests, participants wanted better information to be provided about services, as it can be hard to take it all on board when you are distressed. Due to disappointingly low numbers, the results cannot be taken to be representative of the population. Instead they can be considered indicators of which areas may need further investigation. For a copy of the report, contact Laura Callaway, Project Co-ordinator on 01392 205800 or email laura@eci.org.uk.

Having had confirmation of further funding from Exeter City Council, the Collaboration group has been prioritising actions for the coming year. These include increasing public awareness of homelessness issues and services, and looking at ways of increasing emergency accommodation in the city. The aim is to build on this winter's multi-agency response to providing emergency accommodation in the cold weather, which has been well received by clients and well supported by partner organisations.

Exeter Parenting Co-ordination

In November 2010 Exeter Parenting Co-ordination extended its the work to cover East and Mid Devon as well as Exeter. In practice this has meant a very busy Spring term 2011 organising and overseeing seven parenting programmes being delivered in Exeter, Crediton, Uffculme and Honiton between January and April.

The experience of attending a group can be really daunting for parents and children, especially when their relationship feels very negative and stuck. One Dad who attended Strengthening Families with his teenagers, admitted that when he first joined the group he felt sceptical that anything could be helpful as he truly thought there was no point in trying. By the end of the course he said his relationship with them felt much better.

"There is more respect. I don't shout as much, I try and think before I speak so I am not going off on one, as we were all shouting at each other before, now things feel calmer. I think all parents of teenagers should do this course, or maybe before they get to that age"

A Strengthening Families participant

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Transitions

Our new project, Transitions, works with people making the transition to independent living, to increase their resilience through developing their skills and building networks in their community. Recruitment for a Volunteer Co-ordinator is under way and we will be looking to recruit volunteers in the Spring. If you are interested in helping others to set and achieve personal goals and develop support networks, or would like more information on the project, contact Carole Pilley, Community Development Manager on 01392 205800 or email carole@eci.org.uk.

SUPPORT US

- **NEW! ECI is now on localgiving.com**, making it easier for our supporters to contribute to the projects that are making a difference in our city. Secure online payments can be made via PayPal, and Gift Aid can be included. Go to <http://localgiving.com/charity/exetercommunityinitiatives> to donate.
- Use <http://sites.whitebox.org.uk/eci/> as your homepage. ECI will get 4p for every search you make.
- **Volunteer for one of our projects.** ECI has a range of roles on offer from working with parents to helping out with funding applications. Contact details can be found on our website, www.eci.org.uk
- **Include a donation to ECI in your will.** Through Exeter Community Initiatives you can leave a legacy for your local community. Contact Matt Bell on 01392 205800 or email matt@eci.org.uk.
- **Make a regular donation via the Share Scheme.** This helps us continue our development work and deliver projects to unmet need. Contact Louise Porter on 01392 205800 or email louise@eci.org.uk
- **Spread the word!** Tell others about the work we do and pass this newsletter on.

We are grateful for all the support you continue to give us.

THE FINAL WORD

In the last three months we have been writing our new strategy, funding and communications plans, setting budgets, and reviewing our governance (the structure for the trustees), as well as continuing to develop ideas into new projects to meet local need. We have also been sorting out the 'teething problems' of our new telephone system and wish to apologise to anyone who has been adversely affected. We are thankful the cuts to the Children's Centre budget were not as bad as we expected and our thoughts go out to those that have not been so lucky. The homelessness sector has taken a particularly hard hit and ECI pledges to support in any way we can.

Matt Bell, Acting Director

