

EXETER COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



OUTLINE STRATEGY APRIL 2008 - MARCH 2011

(as at 13.03.08)

*'Promoting social inclusion
by enabling individuals and developing communities'*

BACKGROUND

What is the purpose of this document?

This outline strategy has been developed to provide a clear summary for all our partners about the future overall direction of our work over the next three years. It is not intended to be a detailed document with information about precise outputs or outcomes, as these will be developed as part of the next phase of work, in developing a full Business Plan and fundraising strategy for both the organisation as a whole, and individual projects.

How was it developed?

This outline strategy was developed as a result of reviewing progress against our current three-year strategy, carrying out an analysis of our current strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats facing ECI (a SWOT analysis), and then developing a draft strategy for consultation with our partners. This process included two major events, a Partnership Day in June 2007 attended by key external partners, and a Trustee/Senior staff Away-Day in July 2007, followed by a meeting of an ECI Strategic Development Group including trustees, staff and volunteers in November, and discussion by trustees in December.

A draft was then sent out for consultation with staff, volunteers and external partners from December 2007 to February 2008 and amended in the light of comments received, and this version approved by trustees at their meeting on 13th March 2008.

The responses to the draft strategy confirmed the importance of the three broad priorities which we have identified as project development/management (Priorities 1 & 2), community development (Priority 4), and the new priority of advice, consultancy and facilitation (Priority 3). They also highlighted the importance of Priority 5 being seen as a means to enable the other priorities to be carried out effectively, rather than being an end in itself. The responses also helped us clarify the specific new projects we wish to develop over the next three years, with the number of potential new managed or supported projects (Section 2 and 3) being reduced overall, although Section 2 has seen the addition of a new community development project in Beacon Heath (2b) in response to research work already carried out, and wider feedback received.

The importance of our first value statement about working in partnership with others to both identify and meet need was also confirmed by our partners' responses. Specifically, it was suggested we be more explicit about the contribution ECI can make to enabling the development of a community development strategy for the city and this has been added as a new priority (4f).

Respondents also suggested adding a section to the strategy outlining the current climate for ECI's work, and highlighting our track-record over recent years, and these changes have been made.

Current Climate for ECI's work

ECI's natural model of working, through which we develop and manage community projects, and then help them become independent, means the size of ECI is continually changing. The ECI model is one we are proud of, as we believe it makes us different from many charities who feel the pressure to become ever-larger and 'build an empire'. We like to think that our way of working gives us credibility as 'an honest-broker', a view that the overwhelming majority of our partners share. As part of this process, St Sidwell's Centre is due to become independent on 1st April 2008.

Other factors are also playing their part. In recent months, more of our work has focussed on consultancy/facilitation rather than project development, in particular the Homelessness Collaboration Project, and this features strongly in our new strategy. At the same time, current funding for key projects is coming to an end at similar times. Combined with pressures on local authority funding, the impact of re-organisation (e.g. the introduction of Devon Primary Care Trust, and the uncertainty about the future unitary status of Exeter), and the centralisation of the Big Lottery, these all pose major challenges. A recent South-West Forum survey of voluntary sector organisations in the region confirmed that these pressures are not confined to ECI alone. Whilst we will continue to identify new resources for all existing projects, with ECI at its largest since March 2002, when St Petrock's and Turntable became independent, we are also preparing ourselves for life in a potentially smaller ECI from 1st April.

Previous Achievements

Since 1991 when Palace Gate Project was set up, the following are some of the highlights of what has been achieved by Palace Gate Project (until 1993), and later all the projects of ECI:

- ✓ 8 major new projects established as part of ECI (Turntable Furniture, Exeter Homes Committee, St Petrock's Centre, St Sidwell's Centre, CARD Project, Farm Hill/Kinnerton Way Project, PORCH Project and Flying Start Children's Centre)
 - ✓ 2 other major projects established as sub-projects of Palace Gate Project (Palace Gate Counselling Service and Exeter Homemaker Project)
 - ✓ 6 projects supported to become independent of ECI (Exeter Homes Committee, Homemaker South-West, Turntable Furniture Project, St Petrock's, Palace Gate Counselling Service and St Sidwell's Centre)
 - ✓ At least 20 major partnership initiatives established with our support and involvement (including a Clothes Store, Drop-In Service, Christmas Care, Elderly Day Care, Clothes Voucher Scheme, Exeter Credit Union, LINKS Project, Meaningful Occupation Project, Devon Furniture Forum, Diverted Giving Scheme, Exeter SMART Move, Homeless Collaboration Project, Devon Consortium, etc)
 - ✓ 125 community groups, initiatives or networks supported each year with issues such as campaigning, funding advice and premises, including at least 20 different Black and Minority Ethnic groups/networks
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Previous Achievements (continued)

- ✓ 75 groups per year provided with meeting space and wider support at St Sidwell's
 - ✓ 839 households helped to gain tenancies by Exeter Homes Committee's rent deposit scheme
 - ✓ Over 1,300 people received counselling
 - ✓ 470 households supported in maintaining their tenancies through Exeter Homemaker Project
 - ✓ Over 35,000 food vouchers issued to help homeless people get a good meal without begging
 - ✓ Over 2,500 homeless people provided with food, clothing, nursing support, advice, training and help with accommodation as part of over 115,000 individual client sessions at St Petrock's
 - ✓ Over 600 families on low incomes each year have been provided with furniture
 - ✓ Provided mentoring and housing support to 220 offenders
 - ✓ Over 500 copies of the 'Open Hearts, Open Minds' social inclusion handbook have been sold, with an IT newsletter now available
 - ✓ Contributed to numerous community partnerships, networks and other initiatives
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OUTLINE STRATEGY

What is our overall purpose and aim?

Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) promotes social inclusion by enabling individuals and developing communities. It aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the Exeter area in order to increase their self-esteem, confidence and skills through:

- a) managing, delivering, and facilitating community projects/activities which provide practical and emotional support to disadvantaged individuals and groups;
- b) identifying, developing, facilitating and implementing new projects/activities in response to unmet need;
- c) promoting, enabling and undertaking community development work;
- d) challenging and addressing the causes of social exclusion.

How do we work?

The way we work, or our values, are as important to us as what we actually do. Indeed for a social inclusion and development agency, the two are inextricably linked. We aim to work in the following ways:

- ✓ As part of an inclusive culture, which works in partnership with others to identify the most appropriate ways of responding to need and challenging social exclusion
- ✓ By emphasising the value of individuals and the importance of developing their potential
- ✓ By supporting the development of independent projects and initiatives where possible
- ✓ By promoting Equal Opportunities and challenging discrimination
- ✓ Through respecting the importance of ecology and the environment to personal social well-being
- ✓ With a professional approach involving the provision of quality services and organisational practice
- ✓ Through a recognition of the importance of proper research, and the need for regular monitoring and evaluation of our work
- ✓ Through an acknowledgement of our Christian roots as part of the recognition of the wider spiritual dimension in all our work.

Who do we work with to achieve our aims?

ECI was originally established as a partnership between the local churches and the wider community, and works with a wide range of partners including local people, local faith communities, community groups and organisations, the Council for Voluntary Service and other voluntary sector bodies, statutory agencies, business and local partnership bodies including Exeter Social Health and Inclusion Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership. These partners are represented on the various project committees and steering groups that oversee different aspects of our work.

What are our overall priorities for future work?

ECI will seek to achieve its aims through focusing on the following overall priorities:

1. Manage and develop existing projects to respond to the changing needs of the local community.
2. Identify, develop and implement new projects in response to needs identified.
3. Provide advice and consultancy to, and carry out facilitation work with, other groups/organisations.
4. Support local communities and groups to help them engage in a community development process to tackle social exclusion, and promote and enable a community development approach at a strategic level within Exeter.
5. Ensure the continued improvement of our internal systems and procedures to enable the highest standards of service delivery possible within the constraints of the resources available to us.

ECI seeks to maintain an appropriate balance between each of these overall priorities, and in particular to take account of the need to develop and manage both new and existing projects which help sustain the organisation, alongside our overall approach of supporting groups to become independent, and supporting/advising/facilitating projects which are never directly managed by ECI.

What are our Specific Priorities for Future Work?

Within each of our broad priorities, we have identified the following specific priorities:

Priority	Timescale
1. Manage and develop existing projects to respond to the changing needs of the local community: a) manage and develop the CARD and PORCH Projects as an integrated project to provide effective housing and mentoring support for offenders to promote resettlement and reduce re-offending b) manage and develop the Ujima Project to support black and minority ethnic communities in Exeter (see also Section 4c) c) manage and develop Supporting Community Development in Exeter (SCDE) to support community groups in identified areas of the city (see also Section 4a and 4b) d) manage and develop Flying Start Children's Centre to co-ordinate services to families with children aged under 5 in the central wards of Exeter	On-going On-going On-going On-going
2. Identify, develop and implement new projects in response to needs identified: a) support the development of a Housing Project to acquire and manage property to provide good quality, low cost accommodation for local people in priority housing need, by means of sustainable methods b) work with local residents in Beacon Heath to establish and manage a community development project including an emphasis on promoting practical solutions to environmental issues c) support the development of a project to help offenders and/or other vulnerable people into sustainable employment d) undertake regular liaison, networking, and research work in conjunction with other individuals/agencies in the city to identify other areas of unmet need for socially-excluded groups as they arise, and explore opportunities to respond to these.	Years 1, 2 & 3 Year 1 Years 2 & 3 On-going

Priority	Timescale
<p>3. Provide advice and consultancy to, and carry out facilitation work with, other groups/organisations, to support the development of new and existing projects:</p> <p>a) co-ordinate and facilitate the Homelessness Collaboration Project which helps organisations that provide front-line services to homeless people to work together more effectively</p> <p>b) provide advice and consultancy to St Sidwell's Centre as a newly independent organisation in areas like staff, financial and organisational management</p> <p>c) provide support to local faith community groups (e.g. Southernhay United Reformed Church) in the development of their buildings for wider community use, including exploring funding options to develop this work (e.g. through appointing a dedicated worker)</p> <p>d) support the development of a project working with homeless people arising out of the Homeless Collaboration Project (see Section 3a) e.g. for those with complex needs, a Wetspace or a Night Shelter</p> <p>e) facilitate the development of an advice network for Exeter to provide a co-ordinated approach by agencies providing advice to disadvantaged groups</p> <p>f) carry out other advice, consultancy and facilitation work for groups/organisations in response to needs identified, including developing a model of working with 'associates' to increase ECI's capacity to respond to such needs.</p>	<p>Years 1 & 2</p> <p>Years 1 & 2</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Years 2 & 3</p> <p>Years 2 & 3</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>4. Support local communities and groups to help them engage in a community development process to tackle social exclusion, and promote and enable a community development approach at a strategic level within Exeter:</p> <p>a) provide outreach and development support to the Exeter City Council-led Neighbourhood Engagement Project, both for the pilot phase, and if it is extended across the city (in partnership with Exeter CVS)</p> <p>b) provide tailored support and advice to both new and existing community groups in identified areas of the city, through Supporting Community Development in Exeter.</p> <p>c) provide tailored support and advice to both new and existing black and minority ethnic groups and individuals, through the Ujima Project.</p> <p>d) ensure appropriate meetings/networks of local groups/individuals working in different localities are convened to share ideas, information and good practice</p> <p>e) ensure that the needs and views of local communities and groups are appropriately represented locally.</p> <p>f) work with statutory and other voluntary sector partners to determine a community development strategy for the city</p> <p>g) promote social inclusion and community development issues at senior level to statutory and voluntary agencies through regular contact with these agencies.</p> <p>h) develop our organisational newsletter to raise awareness of social inclusion and community development issues.</p> <p>i) work with a range of partners to contribute to training events and resources for local agencies and groups (including promoting the Open Hearts, Open Minds website for those working with socially-excluded groups, and community work or community 'leadership' skills).</p> <p>j) strengthen links with other agencies working to promote social inclusion, and share examples of good practice, locally, regionally and nationally.</p>	<p>Years 1,2 & 3</p> <p>Years 1,2 & 3</p> <p>Years 1,2 & 3</p> <p>Years 1,2 & 3</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Years 1 & 2</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Year 1 & on-going</p> <p>Years 1,2 & 3</p> <p>Years 1,2 & 3</p>
<p>5. Ensure the continued improvement of our internal systems and procedures to enable the highest standards of service delivery possible within the constraints of the resources available to us:</p> <p>a) employ, support and supervise appropriate numbers of suitably qualified staff to implement this strategy</p> <p>b) identify, develop and support local volunteers to be involved in the range of groups and activities, both managed and supported by ECI</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>

Priority	Timescale
<p>5. Ensure the continued improvement of our internal systems and procedures to enable the highest standards of service delivery possible within the constraints of the resources available to us (continued):</p> <p>c) provide high quality financial management, personnel, IT and administrative systems</p> <p>d) develop and implement a new fundraising strategy with an emphasis on widening the range of funding sources and building the financial security of ECI, including a more realistic approach to charging for our consultancy and facilitation work</p> <p>e) develop new publicity materials and methods for publicising and promoting our work, in particular taking account of modern technologies</p> <p>f) review the implementation of our learning and development policies and practices in preparation for seeking renewal of the Investors in People standard</p> <p>g) provide more opportunities for trustee development e.g. through training, away-days, peer support, etc.</p> <p>h) reflect on, and where possible, implement the recommendations of an environmental audit, and ensure that environmental concerns are addressed across all areas of our work</p> <p>i) ensure all work is carried out in accordance with ECI policies and procedures, undertake a regular programme of review, and develop new policies and procedures in line with the latest legal changes and recognised standards of good practice.</p> <p>j) ensure appropriate reporting to a range of stakeholders, and develop and implement more robust systems of monitoring and evaluating our work, with continuing emphasis on demonstrating how ECI's work 'makes a difference'</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Years 1 & 2</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1 & on-going</p> <p>Year 1 & on-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Year 1 & on-going</p>