

Exeter Community Initiatives

Strategic Journey



Helping where it matters most

Our Mission and Values

Exeter Community Initiatives helps where it matters most.

We want to see our communities become stronger, more resilient and ready for the future.

We help people get back on track by improving their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing; increasing their sense of belonging; learning and developing the skills to succeed in life.

Through our work we seek to challenge inequality, homelessness and poverty and support the campaigns of others.

We value partnership and work with other organisations where this can create greater impact.

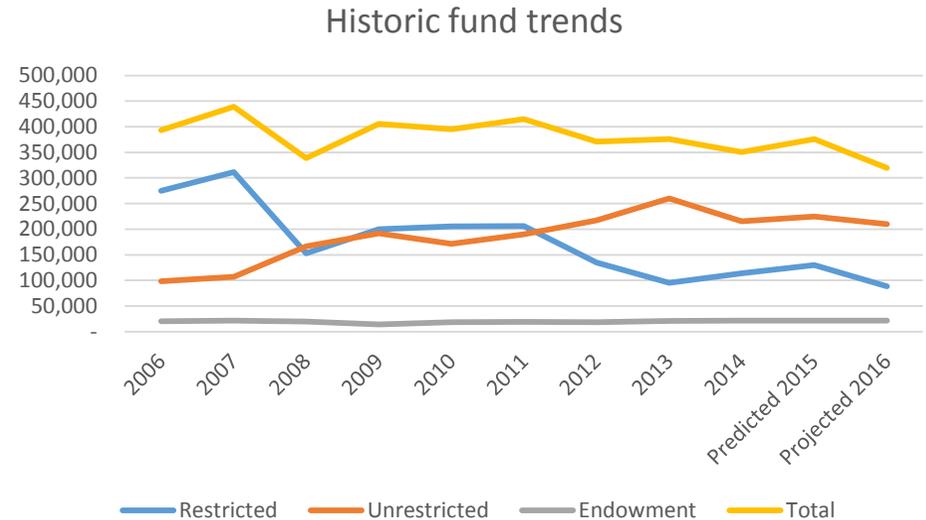
For our staff and volunteers, we provide a safe and supportive working environment, and encourage a culture of shared learning.

We work with professionalism to deliver to the highest quality: treating everyone with respect and empowering them to help themselves.

We believe in the power of community, mutual responsibility, support and understanding.

Our financial position

ECI is in a healthy financial position. Years of prudent financial management have kept our reserves healthy. Even over the last 3 years where we have taken risks and invested in the future, have been led in a way that has resulted in minimal use of our unrestricted reserves.



ECI's reserve policy specifies that in the event of ECI having to cease its activities, sufficient funds should be available to pay for the cost of six months of charitable operation to cover the wind-down period and the redundancy costs of any remaining staff. This figure is currently at around £120,000 so we can see we still have good head room to accommodate this.

The relatively large reduction in total funds by March 2016 is mainly due to the projected use of restricted funds, with a small use of unrestricted funds allocated for fundraising. This is a conservative projection and we would be expecting additional funds to be raised through the fundraising activities.

Projections for 2017 suggest a continuing but small use of reserves, slightly reducing the current levels of unrestricted reserves. Beyond 2017 it is difficult to judge given the significant change in ECI expected after the results of the Children's Centre bidding is known. Scenarios are covered below.

Previous priorities

ECIs current strategy was published in June 2011. Based on our learning and reflections, we have continually revisited the strategy and annual priorities. There is a clear line of progression from this previous plan, through to our current plan.

Initially we identified 4 areas of focus: Community Development; Children and Families; Partnerships, Social Enterprise & future project development and Measuring the impact of ECI & local organisations.

We carried out a review of the strategy in 2012 and identified 3 key outcomes Wellbeing, Belonging and Learning & Skills as central to all the work we do and framed these into a more coherent strategic framework for decision making.

At the same time we identified priority areas for 2013/14 with a clear action plan for the Management Team to work to. The priorities were:

1. internal systems development, including monitoring & evaluation and learning & development
2. embedding and stabilising existing delivery and establishing a good quality new project
3. capitalising on existing momentum in project development and continuing to ensure we are identifying unmet need
4. expressing our voice
5. ensuring support with managing the changes to benefits is incorporated throughout ECI projects as appropriate

We then updated the priority areas in 2014/15 to be:

1. Monitoring, evaluation and demonstrating impact
2. Challenging inequality
3. Developing a response to need, based on mutual support and aid
4. Improving quality

Progress on previous priorities

ECI has made good progress against previous priorities, showing us to be a careful and yet ambitious charity, dedicated to achieving the best for our communities.

We continued to:

- improve the awareness the people of Exeter have of ECI.
- support Family Resource as a key element of our children and families work

We were successful at:

- retaining Flying Start and winning the contracts for Chestnut and Countess Wear Children's Centres.
- securing funding for a new project, Ripple Effect to work with people speak up about drug and alcohol recovery services.
- securing funding to keep Transitions going into the future.

We responded to local need:

- developing the Urban Farm and Jelly to give greater choice regarding employment and skills support.
- developing the Bike Bank to provide meaningful occupation for people at the 'sharp end', experiencing drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness and mental health issues

We created a focus on quality and have:

- improved our financial systems; now making much better use of our accounting system, SAGE.
- created a more comprehensive learning & development plan and have made some progress, trailing Yammer as another way to build links between staff working across different projects and sites.
- successfully recruited trustees to fill identified the skills gap in business and further strengthened our skills in families and links with the Church of England and the Cathedral of Exeter.
- implemented a much more managed approach to risk and risk reporting.

We started to embed a more strategic planning system and have:

- continued to focus on outcomes and impact measurement.
- a strategic framework that aids decisions about new work we need to get involved with.
- produced our first Impact Report in 2013.

The review process

ECI has carried out a thorough review of our position and are confident that we will be able to move forward as positively as possible.

At the point of starting the review we were very fortunate to be approached by Pilotlight, a charity that strategically supports charities to make greater impact. Through this support we have benefited greatly from the input of our Pilotlight team, experienced private sector senior managers, who have guided and led us through the process of this review.

- September 2014 – research and investigation into ECIs current situation internally and externally
- October 2014 – Trustees and staff away day
- December 2014 – PQASSO assessment
- December 2014 – staff survey
- February – All Staff Meeting
- March – Investors in People assessment
- May to July – Stakeholder consultation and feedback

Key messages from the review

We have taken the key messages and all the information we have gathered through the review and created a set of aims and objectives that neatly capture our forward direction.

From the various events, conversations and research we have carried out, the following key messages came through:

- The Children's Centres form such a significant and important part of our work that we must explicitly plan for their future
 - We have an amazingly passionate, committed, energetic and skilled staff team
 - We must look to develop our capacity to continue to respond to unmet need
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- We must continue our journey towards demonstrating our impact
 - We need to continue to improve our internal communications and connectivity
 - There continue to be lack of clarity about our identity and mission
 - Our strength is our flexibility in approach and ability to maximise opportunities
 - ICT failures cause very significant issues and wastage
 - We have good management and leadership
 - Staff would like to know about the trustees a bit more
 - We could improve the links between projects to deliver better outcomes for all
 - We have a good focus on quality

2015-18 Strategic Aims



Helping where it matters most

Aim 1

Enabling staff to deliver high quality outcomes for the people we support

Objective 1

Nurturing supportive, trusting and professional relationships

Objective 2

Minimising wastage and bureaucracy, maximising frontline resource

Objective 3

Achieve and sustain externally assessed Quality Marks

By 2018 we will be an even better charity to work for, supporting the delivery of high quality outcomes.

We will see:

- Demonstrable progress made against ECI wide and project outcomes
- Higher levels of customer satisfaction
- Higher levels of staff motivation and engagement
- Lower levels of reported ICT issues
- Achieve Level 2 PQASSO by June 2016
- Complete Investors in People action plan

Aim 2 **Build and develop existing services to meet future needs**

Objective 1
Defining a future for ECI Children's Centres

Objective 2
Learning from what works and changing our work to meet the need

Objective 3
Working across ECI to maximise our collective impact

By 2018 we will maximising the knowledge and skills within ECI to continually improve and redesign our projects to meet need.

We will see:

- An ECI with or without Children's Centres
- High levels of staff involvement in future developments
- Evidence of learning and service improvements in response to data
- Clear examples of inter-project work

Aim 3

Be at the forefront of meeting new needs

Objective 1

Using our collective knowledge to identify emerging or unmet needs

By 2018 we will be resilient, integrated in strategic partnerships, identifying unmet need with the resources to meet this need.

We will see:

- Strong delivery through strategic partnerships
- New projects developed and underway
- New projects chosen on clear rationale (e.g. strategic policy matrix)
- Identifying unmet need draws from wider range of input
- Increased levels of regular and unrestricted income
- Reduced fixed overheads and core costs

Objective 2

Securing sufficient unrestricted reserves to fund development work

Objective 3

Focussing on strong partnership delivery to meet needs together

Aim 4

Give a voice to those that need to be heard

Objective 1

Actively promote the impact of our work

Objective 2

Curating and using intelligence on poverty, inequality and homelessness

Objective 3

Supporting national and other compatible campaigns

By 2018 we will have a clear content about the lives we work with, communicating this effectively and thereby expanding awareness of our work.

We will see:

- In depth insight about the lives we work with, including case studies.
- Good quality and targeted communication of stories and insight
- Good use of social media to promote work and opinions
- 1 national campaign supported per year

A 3 year plan – year 1

Year 1 (2015) – Establish and strengthen.

- Aim 1. Over the last few years we have achieved improvements in the quality of our projects and services and have a very strong staff team. We will strengthen this through the PQASSO process and preparing to pass level 2, establishing greater staff involvement, better staff training and development and strengthening feedback and evaluation. We will support this by strengthening our ICT skills and infrastructure, internal communication and connections and building the trustee team with a focus on recruiting skills in ICT and HR and maintain a link with Exeter Diocese.
- Aim 2. We have made a good start in building a culture of shared learning and many of the actions above will lead to the achievement of Aim 2. We will learn from feedback and evaluation, data collection and the sharing of staff experiences to ensure we are delivering in the way we need to be. We will strengthen our Children's Centre delivery to learn, prepare and bid for new centres. And by bringing our teams closer, by utilising the PQASSO process we will join up better across project boundaries to maximise the collective potential we all have.
- Aim 3. Within this aim we need to start and establish a number of areas of work. We need to establish fundraising capacity and re-launch the Share Scheme and establish new and strengthen existing partnerships.
- Aim 4. This year we aim to establish the systematic gathering of life stories and communicate insights and impact across the whole of ECIs work.

A 3 year plan – year 2 and 3

Year 2 (2016) – Grow and translate

- Aim 1. We aim to translate our PQASSO work into achieving Level 2, growing staff involvement. We will have robust, reliable and resilient ICT infrastructure.
- Aim 2. We aim to translate our work into Children's Centres into a top quality bid and aim to win the Children's Centre contracts for Exeter.
- Aim 3. We will grow our fundraising activity to ensure development capacity is secure and meet targets as set out above. At the same time we will reduce our fixed overheads. We will grow the existing partnerships, aiming to start development on a new project.
- Aim 4. We will grow our insight work and the body of evidence around the need we meet.

Year 3 (2017) – Renew

- Year 3 is a significant year. We will be embarking on a new era, focussing either on life with or without Children's Centres. In both scenarios we will be focussing on renewing ECIs direction. The previous 2 years preparation work will create a foundation for this renewal to be positive and forward looking.