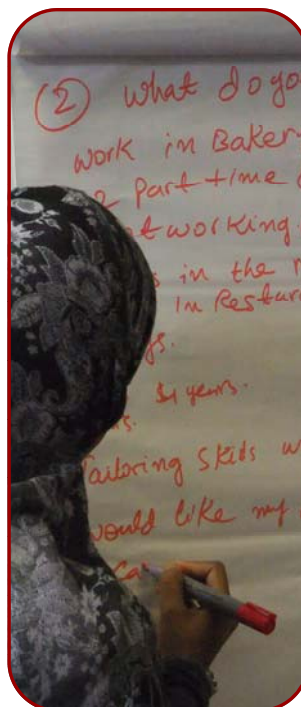


Tackling Poverty

**Community-led projects
tackling working-age poverty
and social exclusion**



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tackling working -age poverty
and social exclusion**

**2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion**



Community Links

is an innovative east London charity, running a wide range of community projects for 30,000 people every year. Based in Newham, we have over 30 years of experience working with local people to support children, young people, adults and families.

Through our national work, we share lessons with government and community groups across the country to achieve social change.

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Stephen Timms, MP
Polly Toynbee, Journalist,
David Akinsanya, Film Maker/Broadcaster
Kathleen Carter, Trustee, Church Action on Poverty

Community Links

Community Links is an innovative east London charity, running a wide range of community services and projects for all ages. Based in Newham, we have over 30 years of experience working with local people to support children, young people, adults and families.

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Church Action on Poverty

Church Action on Poverty is a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. We work in partnership with churches and with people in poverty themselves to find solutions to poverty, locally, nationally and globally.

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Introduction

All the organisations and projects featured in this publication were either entries into The Tackling Poverty Awards or took part in a Listening Event as part of The 2010 European Year for Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The Tackling Poverty Awards were organised by Community Links and Church Action on Poverty to celebrate projects that are making a meaningful contribution to people of working-age living in poverty in the UK.

The Listening Events brought together 36 organisations around the country to hold meetings in local communities focusing on issues of working-age poverty. These events heard from over 600 people with direct experience of poverty and uncovered some of the myths around work and poverty in their local area.



One Listening Event participant said:

“One of the biggest myths is that there is no poverty in the UK and that it only exists abroad.”

The fact is the UK has a higher proportion of its population in relative low income than most other EU countries: of the 27 EU members, only four have a higher rate than the UK. The proportion of people living in relative low income in the UK is twice that of the Netherlands and one-and-a-half times that of France.¹

*Poverty makes people’s lives shorter and more brutal than they need to be. Poverty is not simply about being on a low income and going without – it is also about being denied power, respect, good health, education and housing, basic self-esteem and the ability to participate in social activities.*²

All the organisations in this publication are working to support people living in poverty, to try and redress people’s imbalance of power, respect, health, education, self-esteem and bring down some of the barriers of social exclusion.

For example supporting a full time carer having to survive on an equivalent wage of £1.54 per hour³, supporting a person with mental health issues living in an isolated rural location or ensuring that people living in marginalised communities can have a real say in local and national decision making.

Each of the organisations in this publication are highlighted because of the fantastic work they are doing in supporting people dealing with issues of poverty and social exclusion but also to represent the vital work that hundred of thousands of voluntary and community sector organisations do around the UK.

Gary Blake

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¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Statistics on Poverty & Social Exclusion

² Child Poverty Action Group, Poverty in the UK: a Summary of Facts & Figures

³ Carer’s Allowance is £53.90 per week amounting to a wage of £1.54 (for those doing the minimum 35 hours per week)

An Equal Voice

Communities and Neighbourhoods Building Effectiveness

Ealing CVS has developed an integrated programme, which supports people from deprived areas and marginalised communities to work as equals alongside decision-makers. Communities and Neighbourhoods Building Effectiveness (CANBE) programme uses a blend of community development, training, information-sharing and influencing skills to ensure “*an equal voice for the least heard*” in the London Borough of Ealing.

The CANBE project builds on local community development work over many years, including participatory budgeting pilots and community empowerment networks with people in deprived areas.

Sharing Experience

Some of the most effective anti-poverty work is done by small voluntary groups working with the most disadvantaged people, and run by those with direct experience of poverty. Yet these groups find it hard to share their experience and inform policy development. CANBE was developed to assist voluntary groups working with the most marginalised and deprived communities to understand and shape new policy initiatives alongside local and national decision-makers.

CANBE also works directly with people of working-age poverty providing support for unemployed volunteers and assisting in the setting up of residents’ groups to ensure that local people are involved in decisions about regeneration.

Working in Partnership

Partnership work is varied including providing childcare, work with ex-offenders, and community development training in deprived neighbourhoods.

A key element is sharing information, for example, a weekly community radio show

provides a platform both for people of working-age poverty and for anti-poverty groups to reach a multicultural and diverse audience across West London. A regular policy newsletter provides relevant jargon-free briefings to community organisations.

CANBE is an extensive and flexible, programme which is developing a strategic approach to reducing poverty. At its core it is giving a stronger voice in decision-making to people who are living in poverty and supporting those people who want to make a difference to improve their local neighbourhood.

Whilst individual elements of the approach will be familiar the overall programme, blending a range of initiatives, is what makes it effective. Through strengthening civil society, anti-poverty groups, rooted in local communities CANBE is empowering people experiencing poverty with the skills and confidence to find a voice to tackle their exclusion.



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Promoting Participation

Sustainable Livelihoods at Swansea's African Community Centre

The African Community Centre promotes the health, wellbeing, and education, of African-Caribbean and African people living in Swansea. The key aim is to promote participation and break down barriers that prevent participation.

Local consultation identified many community members who had the skills and ability to work but were unable to do so. A number of highly-skilled people, having sought refuge in the UK after experiencing persecution or war in their home countries, were prevented from work due to their immigration status or qualifications not being recognised. This resulted in feelings of frustration and low self esteem. Inability to earn a living resulted in many people of working age living in poverty.

Sustainable Livelihoods

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) project is funded by Oxfam Cymru. It enables people facing poverty to evaluate their strengths using well established SLA tools which analyse their situations and living conditions. These tools enable people experiencing working-age poverty to analyse their positive assets which could make their livelihoods sustainable rather than a negative focus on what is lacking.

The project helps participants overcome loneliness, isolation and exclusion from mainstream education and employment. Participants are referred to free training courses, volunteering opportunities and activities organised by other community groups. In addition the African Community Centre has developed weekly support groups, one each for men and women, as it was observed that a gendered approach best met the social and cultural conditions of the African community.

Using SLA tools in a group setting enables members to explore their individual strengths and also have the opportunity to discuss and share experiences, learning from one another in the process.

Contributing to the community

Participants are made aware of the assets they possess and are able to put these skills to good use building a sustainable livelihood. Supporting members of the project to use their skills as volunteers aids community cohesion and helps restore individual self-confidence. Each participant of the project has the opportunity to gain new skills and sharpen-up existing skills. This also results in a significant impact on the self-confidence of the participants.



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Community Anchor

Involving local people in training education and support

Dove Workshop in the Dulais Valley, Wales was originally conceived as a response to the 1984-85 Coal Miners' Strike, by the women of the mining community reacting to the social and economic conditions of the time. Since its inception Dove Workshop has continued to develop its facilities and support services addressing the changing needs of its local community. It now operates as an independent community education project raising skill levels in the communities it serves.

Whilst services and projects have diversified over the years to meet the changing local needs of this deprived area, core values of equal opportunities, social justice and community self-help have remained constant in this community anchor organisation.

Dove Workshop provides a day nursery, educational guidance, a community garden and a café that serves the learners and attracts people into the centre. Community-based initiatives at the Dove Workshop promote financial inclusion, support budgeting, promote a local credit union and demonstrate, healthy cooking on a budget.

A full-time guidance worker is responsible for delivering a locally-adapted Sure Start project, engaging with young or single parents. Assistance with parenting skills, and a range of employability skills are on offer. Supporting these young parents, who are of working age and living in poverty, into sustainable, well-paid work is a key objective. However advice on childcare grants and benefits; as well as information on what other support may be available is also part of tackling poverty in a community which has had limited employment opportunities for over 25 years.

Formal and informal learning

Through partnerships with local education and training providers, Dove Workshop offers formal and informal learning. Whilst many people enjoy attending informal courses or training sessions for others a more structured course with accreditation from Entry Level to Level 4 is more appropriate.



Dove Workshop has a flexible approach. Several engagement and community involvement methods allow centre users to participate in a range of ways according to their needs. These opportunities range from taking lunch in the café, or buying fresh vegetables from the community garden; to attending a guidance meeting or educational opportunity, participating in a curriculum planning group, volunteering in the centre or even being a trustee of Dove Workshop. Yet each initiative deliberately seeks to involve local people and supports them to take action on issues that matter to them, on their own terms.

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Helping vulnerable debtors

Supporting people through the legal system

Zacchaeus 2000 Trust, (Z2K), is an organisation with an uncompromising attitude. It was started in the early 1990s by a group of concerned Christians who refused to pay the poll tax on the grounds it was unjust. Volunteers set out to provide support to poll tax defaulters.

Now Z2K has grown into a registered charity with four full-time staff and 32 trained volunteers supporting vulnerable debtors and those in extreme poverty to engage with the justice system. It has an innovative two-tier approach; both supporting individual cases and training volunteers to help debtors in court.

Building close relationships

Clients are referred to Z2K from local community groups, MPs, GPs and NHS health centres. A key element is building personal relationships with clients based on mutual trust and understanding.



By taking the time to listen and hear peoples' stories 'in the round' rather than dealing with a single aspect of a complex issue Z2K is also helping clients overcome depression and low self esteem, which prevent them taking action for themselves. By providing thorough support for those with complex and interrelated needs Z2K helps find a resolution which avoids clients needing continual engagement with advice agencies.

McKenzie Friends

Z2K is the only organisation in the UK that trains volunteers to act as "McKenzie Friends" in the Magistrates' and County Courts. These are court-recognised form of non-legal support for someone who is unrepresented by a qualified lawyer in court. Volunteers offer personal support through the trauma of litigation

For example one woman, who had been raped and tortured in Uganda, was being settled into the UK by a refugee centre. They gave her an old TV without explaining to her the UK TV licensing laws. Traumatized by her previous experience with the Ugandan authorities and not understanding British court proceedings, she was terrified when she received a summons.

Z2K persuaded TV Licensing to drop the case, preventing the situation from worsening and giving her confidence in the UK justice system.

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Caring for carers

Recognising the contribution of unpaid family carers

Carers Advice and Resource Establishment, Sandwell (CARES) supports unpaid family carers and the people they look after throughout the borough of Sandwell in the West Midlands.

CARES was originally established by a group of unpaid family carers who were familiar with the needs of carers and set up an organisation to work together in meeting those needs. It remains a carer led organisation where the needs of carers come first.

CARES offers information, advice, advocacy and both social and emotional support to carers. Support is available to carers both in times of crisis and when just a listening ear is needed and earlier action can prevent a more serious situation developing.

Complex benefits system

One significant part of the work of CARES is to assist carers navigate the complexities of the benefits system and also the health and social care processes.

Many carers become benefit dependant as their caring responsibility makes regular employment difficult if not impossible. In the last year CARES Information Service helped over 1,400 carers and increased their disposable incomes by £609,510. The individual benefit of this increased income improved health and wellbeing, gave carers more choice, and reduced debt and poverty. Carers with a heavy caring responsibility (over 35 hours per week) may be in receipt of the means tested Carers Allowance, the lowest income replacement benefit available.

Whilst the income may be limited the contribution made by carers is enormous. If unpaid family care was not provided it is estimated that health and social care

budgets would need to increase by £57billion pounds a year in care costs - in Sandwell alone, this equates to over £513million a year.

The support offered by CARES helps prevent the breakdown of caring relationships and the resulting costs of residential or nursing care.

Supporting Carers

CARES offers both practical help and emotional support to unpaid carers in Sandwell including one-to-one support and a telephone helpline service help with referral to other services, form-filling and advocacy at meetings. CARES works to give carers a voice in service review and development through it's consultation work.

Often carers approach CARES because they *"can't see a way out"*. Many carers suffer social and emotional isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities, feelings which may be compounded by economic pressure.

Through encouraging carers to undertake basic education and develop lifelong learning interests CARES can provide a connection to the outside world. This helps carers become more self-confident and enable them to interact within the local community, and potentially return to the world of work.

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Oasis Cardiff

Supporting new arrivals to support themselves

Oasis Cardiff is an organisation helping asylum seekers, refugees and recent arrivals to integrate into their local community. Oasis is run mainly as a drop in centre providing a safe place for people to seek support and to voice their concerns and establish shared solutions.

In response to an increase in the numbers of people needing assistance Oxfam GB funded a support group; it was felt there was a need for a place to be open in the day time for people to come and develop new projects which support asylum seekers in their transition to achieve refugee status.

Sharing Food

Sharing food in the community kitchen provides the core of Oasis activities. The project runs a food co-op with a weekly box of seasonal fruit and vegetables available at a reasonable rate. Weekly cookery sessions, including women only sessions, demonstrate how to use the fresh ingredients to produce nutritious and affordable meals from all over the world. After the cookery sessions participants are invited to stay and share the food they have made. A new venture – a gardening project will also help those considering growing their own food.

Practical support

A wide range of practical support will enable participants to learn everyday tasks such as how to register with a doctor and make an appointment, help with form filling as well as classes in English for new arrivals.

A Cycle Safe bicycle workshop also helps people repair and refurbish cycles which provide a cheap method of transport.

It's not all practical and serious work - there is also an opportunity to be creative. Craft sessions and singing workshop are great fun.

Contributing to the community

People who attend Oasis are from many different nations, they learn to work together and provide positive support. Many of those who have lived in the community for a little longer are well placed to offer support to those more recently arrived. Oasis also provides a base for participants who are encouraged to get involved in wider community activities beyond Oasis and their participants.



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Gamesley Crosslinks

Promoting positive images of an isolated estate

Gamesley is an estate on the edge of Glossop, a Derbyshire town close to Greater Manchester. It has been identified as one of the most deprived areas of the UK, with high rates of unemployment, poor health and a reduced life expectancy. This negative perception of the area was revealed in a survey of employers. Local residents were not offered work because they were felt to be low skilled and not interested in training or learning new skills.

As a result Adult Community Education was established in the area. Providing a local base addressed some of the barriers to training such as cost, childcare and transport.

Training programme

Adult Community Education delivers courses in confidence-building, childcare, cooking on a budget, construction and employment skills. Co-locating services in the Gamesley Early Excellence Centre enables participants to simply access other help including Welfare Rights and Citizens Advice Bureau.

Beyond formal services partnership work including Crosslinks have provided volunteers with the opportunity to improve the environment and supported practical gardening and DIY help at low cost for local people. The project works in partnership with housing to target the most vulnerable families including lone parents and elderly residents. A community garden scheme recently transformed several gardens into useable areas. This involved people gaining skills in planting, paving and preparing raised beds which were then put to practical use.

The diverse programme means the project has made a real difference to the lives of a large number of local people; 10% of the community have engaged in formal training and more recently large scale

community events have had 80% involvement.

Contributing to the community

Crosslinks is a partnership between Adult Community Education and Gamesley Church. It has developed a strong volunteering ethos and a feeling that the community care for and support one another. As part of the Active Listening Campaign Crosslinks has given the local community the opportunity to discuss benefit reforms. Over 30 local residents have attended discussion groups and workshops to consider reforms which will directly affect their lives. Crosslinks have provided the opportunity for them to voice their opinions and have them listened to on a national level.

Improvements in community life have been reported; information from Police, Fire Service, Jobcentreplus and the Housing department indicates that community cohesion is greater. Improved facilities for all Gamesley residents have made people feel more confident and less isolated.

More importantly the wide programme of training and community development has gone a lot way towards promoting a positive image of Gamesley and tackled negative stereotypes of the estate and the people who live there

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Unite and Campaign

The United Migrant Workers Education Project

The United Migrant Workers Education Project, UMWEP is a campaigning group which evolved from a number of low-paid, mainly migrant workers with English as a second language. Unite, the Union took the lead in co-ordinating the small organisations including the Justice for Cleaners Campaign, Justice for Domestic Workers group and the Chinese Migrant Network after meeting several small groups at community festivals.

It was found that some employers took advantage of the migrant workers' lack of understanding to exploit them. Providing support of a Trade Union and delivering English language, ICT and numeracy classes has helped members to learn about their rights as workers.

Gaining New Skills

Through education members have learned new skills. Classes in ICT not only increase employability but also enable participants to use e-mail to communicate with distant family back home.

Gaining these new skills has also helped in communicating and strengthening their communities in the UK. Project members act as translators; bringing communities together, gaining trust and opening doors.

Community ambassadors

Through "Skills for Life" courses workers better understand UK law and have participated in campaigns to improve their terms and conditions at work. Several project members act as community ambassadors, working with external agencies to organise and campaign for improvements in conditions for fellow community members.

The UMWEP group has developed a support network. The education of those engaged has provided a benefit to a wider community as members can now pass-on guidance on education, Health and Safety, Welfare and Immigration Advice.

UMWEP has achieved a measure of success in a short period and members testify that individual lives have been transformed with better wages and improved terms and conditions at work.

Individuals report feeling empowered one participant, Tuti H Muslih, said:

'I still remember my first day, I was the only Indonesian, but I learnt so much. I've encouraged my Indonesian friends to join Unite and study. We felt fortunate that Unite has given us the opportunity to learn, improve and develop our skills.'



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Empowering Communities

Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network

The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network provides a co-ordinated community voice influencing government policies which impact on poverty. Through lobbying for anti-poverty measures at local, national and European levels NIAPN aim for a *'poverty free society'*. Their mission is *'to end poverty by empowering communities and influencing government through research, education and campaigning.'* NIAPN acts as an umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sectors in Northern Ireland and investigates and publicises the extent, causes and effects of poverty in Northern Ireland.

Ensuring the participation of people experiencing poverty is the key foundation on which all NIAPN projects are based. This bottom-up approach enables people living with poverty to influence, directly the work of the Network. Participative research, poverty awareness training and campaigning are all conducted around the issues that matter most to the members. Current campaigns include access to benefits, tackling debt and securing public utilities. By tackling media distortions NIAPN works to ensure public perceptions are genuinely based on the lived experience of people experiencing poverty.

The Network works with the most disadvantaged people in Northern Ireland's using community education approaches. They support people experiencing poverty to engage with decision makers on their priority issues.

Legacy of Conflict

As a region emerging from the conflict NIAPN is acutely aware of corrosive effect that growing up in chronic poverty can have. This takes on added significance in a society emerging from conflict. The interaction of poverty with the legacy of the conflict means that people in Northern Ireland live in segregated areas often with higher levels of disability and chronic physical and mental ill-health, resulting in high levels of worklessness and inter-generational poverty. And all of this in the context of a society where it is more acceptable to use violence, including violence for political ends, than elsewhere.

For sustainable solutions to be effective it is vital to consider the views of people in Northern Ireland who are experiencing poverty at a time of escalating violence.



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Returning to work

St Wilfrid's Centre supporting homeless and vulnerable adults

St Wilfrid's is a day centre in Sheffield for homeless, vulnerable and socially excluded adults. They provide welfare facilities, an all-day café, a hot lunchtime meal every day, shower facilities and a clothing store. The Centre works with people aged between 18-65 helping to increase their confidence and self esteem by providing regular programme of activities and real time work experience.

Formed over 20 years ago the Centre has provided support to hundreds of vulnerable people. Once a person's basic welfare needs are met they are encouraged to establish a daily routine.

Personal development

The St. Wilfrid's Personal Development Programme consists of a range of regular activities; including classes in numeracy, cooking, literacy, pottery, arts and crafts and computer literacy.

Many people who attend have mental health difficulties and have suffered from depression and anxiety for years. Those who find it difficult to cope with normal daily routines find some pattern to their lives invaluable. Providing meaningful work and an opportunity to adopt a routine help clients become more able to fit into a working environment. Some clients have never worked or haven't for a very long time, enabling them to learn useful skills may help get them back into the world of work.

Alongside the education classes work on the allotment is also on offer - growing fresh fruit and vegetables which are used in the café.

The value of relationships

The staff team build up a relationship of trust with clients, suggesting the type of activities which are available, and encouraging them to have to try these out.

Many clients have begun an activity very hesitantly but with the patience and calm techniques of staff and volunteers confidence increases and they begin to relax and enjoy their activities.

For those able to progress a skills workshop provides clients with workplace skills, the aim is to leave everyone with a sense of achievement. Clients are also encouraged to help with wider community projects in the city.

St Wilfrid's in partnership with other agencies are able to provide work experience opportunities outside of the Centre for clients who are ready to try something a little more challenging.

Benefits to clients are numerous. Some people, who when they first attended would barely raise their heads, have been transformed into sociable individuals who are able to offer support to others within the Centre. As well as individual progress there is an additional benefit to the wider community. Many of the people who attend have had issues with anti-social behaviour and previous drug or alcohol problems. Providing meaningful work and activities has enabled them to make a positive contribution to their community.

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Supporting self-help

Tackling rural deprivation and social isolation

The High Peak CVS Small Groups Project supports a diverse network of informal and otherwise unsustainable groups scattered through the villages and towns in the rural northern Peak District. People who experience a problem are best placed to resolve it, and peer support is invaluable to those facing difficult issues. Many small community and voluntary groups in the High Peak - in particular those from disadvantaged, marginalised or rural communities - have been established as people experiencing problems have come together with others similarly affected to combat isolation.

Supporting local initiatives

Unlike urban areas, rural areas have seen little development of infrastructure for the voluntary and community sector. The small groups project, by providing practical support, has sustained local groups and helped them develop their own initiatives. For example a family with a member who has a disabling health condition may be the only family in a village trying to give their child the best opportunities and will not be in touch with others in similar circumstances. By setting up a support group with a wider geographical reach than in an urban area such families are given the possibilities of meeting together for positive action, peer support and information sharing.

Issues such as funding for start up costs, lack of transport and putting the group on a more formal and sustainable foundation can be tackled, as well as enabling the group to access information and support services available. A network and forum for groups to exchange ideas has been a way of groups learning from each other's successes and assisted groups to become sustainable and self-governing.

Enhancing Wellbeing

Groups who focus on health, disability or issues facing older people are the majority of those supported by the project, support that in an urban area might be part of statutory agencies or a larger charity's remit. Members of these groups very often experience difficulties because of lack of flexibility in employment practices, and resulting lack of confidence in their own abilities - being part of a group can help overcome these challenges.

For example a creative writing group formed to address mental health issues very successfully put on a play as part of the Buxton Festival. In Glossop a mental health project has set up a small pottery and aims to produce ceramics for sale which have been produced as part of the therapeutic work of the project.

Although not set up to target working-age poverty directly many of the groups consist of people coping with difficulties gaining and sustaining employment. Surveys show positive benefits to members and their groups and many new groups are seeking support. It is clear that the small groups project has enabled people to take more control of their life and benefited individuals, families and whole communities.

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Welfare Rights Advice

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres were established in Chesterfield during the early 1980s. This was part of a TUC initiative to support people in an area of high unemployment as traditional industries declined. With the loss of the coal mining industry by the end of that decade demand for support increased and their reach spread to areas across north Derbyshire. As recession bites the need for their work is again on the increase in communities facing high levels of unemployment and deprivation.

Face to face support

DUWC offers free and independent, open-access welfare rights advice, supporting people with supporting people with benefits and tax-credits issues. A form-filling service assists claimants to cope with complex official documentation. If someone needs assistance dealing with an issue DUWC staff will contact relevant agencies and local authorities on their behalf, and will offer representation at appeal if a decision needs to be challenged.

Advice sessions are run at several community locations across the area and these opportunities are used to ensure people are made aware of other services and support available to them or their families – and to ensure claimants are taking-up everything to which they are entitled.

Income Maximisation

Ensuring that people are collecting everything to which they are entitled makes a significant difference to individual lives. People report improved mental and physical health as a result of receiving money advice and resolving difficult issues.

Additionally this has an impact on the local economy. Through its Income Maximisation Strategy DUWC has put several hundred thousand pounds into the local economy, money which will be spent locally protecting jobs and services.

Community campaigns

In addition to the practical support DUWC engages local people in campaigning for the rights of those who are unemployed, on a low income or sick, injured or disabled by their work. Understanding the experiences of those who attend the advice sessions has been the catalyst for campaigns to improve the welfare service which arise from directly from people experiencing working age poverty



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Duffryn Community Link

Supporting the most vulnerable families

Duffryn Community Link is a community organisation which runs many interconnected programmes of community development work in Newport, South Wales. One project focussed on the families of the most acutely vulnerable children in the local area by concentrating on families with children referred to the nurture group (Rainbow Class) within Duffryn Infant School.

The Nurture group creates an environment which is halfway between home and school and supports each child's emotional needs so that they can settle in school and benefit from the education and support on offer. Whilst the children within the nurture programme receive a great deal of support at school during term time, their families represent the most deprived in the area and the effect on their children's lives is clearly recognised by teachers and support workers. As the Duffryn Community Link development officers sharply commented... *'well the kids go home don't they... and we're not there at the end of the day'*.

Building on strengths

Duffryn Community Link assists local vulnerable parents to use the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to consider their strengths, capabilities and assets to enable them to build a more positive and sustainable future for themselves their children and the wider community. The project employs a livelihoods officer to engage in tailored one to one and group support, to give the families the opportunity to examine their experiences and find own solutions to the multiple issues they face. They are supported to find the most fulfilling and sustainable livelihood possible.

Locating Support

Finding the right location to engage parents- many of whom have negative experiences of school themselves - is vital. The nurture programme is based in the infant school and has access to its own kitchen for breakfast but also has meeting space for parents and teachers. The Forest Integrated Children's Centre is attached to the school from where Duffryn Community Link runs many projects. More anonymous settings are available at the Community Centre and also at Duffryn Community Link offices.

The Livelihoods project gives parents the opportunity to reflect on their lives and the impact this has on their children and find positive solutions to the barriers they face to becoming more active in their community and taking control of their livelihoods.

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Sustainable Livelihoods

The Thrive Project, Stockton on Tees

Thrive is a Church Action on Poverty initiative based in Stockton-on-Tees. The organisation is a coalition of individuals, community and faith groups in Stockton working to ensure the voices of people in poverty are heard by key decision makers. Thrive has improved the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in Stockton, by tackling debt, unemployment and anti-social behaviour.

There are two distinct areas to Thrive's work: community organising, and an innovative action-research and mentoring framework called Sustainable Livelihoods,

The process gets alongside people to discover the issues which are affecting their lives and to find ways to respond. It is a framework for understanding the disadvantages which affect people in poverty which also provides opportunities for people with first-hand experience of poverty to get involved in decision-making.

Community Organising

The second element of the project, Community Organising is delivered using an interesting community development model, developed by Saul Alinsky and used by President Obama in the US. Thrive has run training in this approach for its grassroots leaders in partnership with the Gamaliel Foundation in Chicago.

Overall the work undertaken by Thrive means that information about issues like debt are explored, issues which are not always openly discussed.

In one example Thrive heard first hand from customers about the charges levied by local hire purchase companies. Interest and service charges to low-income households were running at 40 to 50% APR to access television by putting money into a slot.

Thrive ran a campaign researched by actual customers of the company involved A spoof advertisement on YouTube, an online email action and direct telephone campaign all challenged the company. In the end, the two parties met and made significant changes, including reduced interest rates for customers and agreeing clearer statements about warranties. Thrive and the company are now going to meet with the Office of Fair Trading, data-sharing agencies and several other key players in the rent-to-own and home credit market, to improve conditions for other low-income customers.

People involved in the project report feeling more decisive, and being better able to deal with problems as they arise.



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The Poverty Alliance

Working together to tackle poverty in Scotland

The Poverty Alliance is the national anti-poverty network in Scotland. It seeks to influence policies at local and national level that will have an impact on poverty and create the conditions for a more socially just Scotland. The Poverty Alliance engages in campaigns, lobbying, networking and project work.

The Poverty Alliance operates as a membership organisation made up of grassroots community groups, individuals facing poverty, voluntary organisations, statutory organisations, policy makers and academics. A central element of their approach is working alongside people experiencing poverty to have their voices heard.

Co-ordinating campaigns

The Poverty Alliance has a key role in co-ordinating and leading campaigns. For example the Scottish Living Wage Campaign is supported by voluntary and community organisations, trade unions and the faith community and is calling for an end to poverty wages by raising the earnings of their lowest paid workers to the Scottish living wage level of £7.15 per hour.

Other key campaigns include the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform, a coalition of more than 40 organisations called for a fairer and more humane welfare system. And the new anti-stigma initiative 'Stick Your Labels!' - challenging negative stereotypes of those living in poverty.

Influencing policy

Alongside campaigning work, The Alliance is represented on a number of official advisory bodies at the local, Scottish and UK levels, and has contributed to the development of the Scottish Government's anti-poverty strategy *Achieving our Potential*. Other policy areas such as

health inequalities and free school meals have also been addressed. Throughout the year the Alliance organises dozens of events and seminars to help raise the level of debate about poverty in Scotland and to build pressure for real change.

Projects

As well as carrying the core activities of campaigning and lobbying the Alliance also implements a range of project activities. Projects are usually designed to highlight innovative ways of tackling poverty, or at getting people's voices heard in influencing policy.

One recent example is the Evidence-Participation-Change-project (EPIC) aimed at putting participation at the heart of anti-poverty policy making in Scotland. It brings people with experience of poverty together with community and voluntary organisations and policy makers to find improved solutions to the problems faced by people experiencing poverty. The Alliance has also worked with community groups to make three short films as part of the *Making a Difference* project for the European Year for Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.



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Communities First

Co-ordinating and supporting work in Taff Bargoed Valley

Throughout this short collection we have identified community led projects operating “from the ground up” to tackle poverty. Some are projects of large voluntary organisations, others emerging local groups. The context in which each project is operating can be greatly affected by relationships with their local statutory authorities.

In the Taff Bargoed Valley, the Communities First Partnership, funded as part of a Welsh assembly programme, is harnessing the energies of residents and community and voluntary organisations, alongside the local authority and statutory agencies to collaboratively improve the lives of some of the most disadvantaged people in Wales.

The aim of the Partnership Board is to tackle social exclusion, by establishing an action plan to improve the economy, social welfare, environment, health and educational achievement for the community. They aim to build confidence and raise the self esteem of local people, maximise their incomes, encourage and improve education and skills training for work, create jobs, and ensure public services are delivered in ways which are responsive and locally accountable. The Communities First Partnership area comprises the rural area of Bedlinog (including the village of Trelewis) and the urban area of Treharris, south of Merthyr Tydfil with a population close to 10,000.

Infrastructural support

In practical terms the Communities First Partnership board is providing and supporting infrastructure and facilities in which the project level work can take place. For example in Bedlinog the Partnership Board manages a disused infants school that has been transformed into “Bedlinog Resource Centre”. It houses

several services such as Credit Union, Crèches, Parent and toddler groups, Welsh language coffee mornings, keep fit classes, an internet café, adult education classes, and a youth drop-in. A variety of statutory and non statutory service providers are using the centre for outreach services and local appointments. In Trelewis, the Communities First team has an office within the local Community Centre, which operates an open-door information and advice service for any community issue. In Treharris a new town centre building is operated in partnership with the Workers Education Association, who provide an community based education courses, some informal, yet most accredited, to encourage residents back into learning.

In addition a series events, open days and festivals throughout the year to encourage whole community participation and profile, projects and initiatives that improve skills and increase potential job prospects. Fundamentally the Taff Bargoed Communities First Partnership provides places and supports frameworks in which outreach services and community-led projects can take place.

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Tackling Poverty

European year for Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion 2010

Inspired by its founding principle of solidarity, the European Union joined forces with its Member States to make 2010 the European Year For Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The key objectives were to raise public awareness about these issues and renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The guiding principle of the 2010 Year was to give voice to the concerns of people who have to live with poverty and social exclusion, and to inspire every European citizen and other stakeholders to engage with these important issues. The Year also aimed to challenge stereotypes and collective perceptions of poverty.

As part of the European Year, **Community Links** and **Church Action on Poverty** have been working together to uncover attitudes to poverty, work and unemployment amongst people of working age. We've always believed that people who experience a problem understand it best.

Using this principal we worked with grassroots community organisations across the UK organising local Listening Events to uncover, raise awareness of, and begin to tackle some of these issues. We have also worked to recognise and share examples of best practice in tackling working age poverty, particularly amongst small local organisations and one way we have tried to do this is through the Tackling Poverty Awards which identify and celebrate projects that are providing meaningful and effective support to people of working-age living in poverty in the UK.

Four successful shortlisted projects each won a digital camera and the chance to make a film about their work. All long listed projects are featured in this publication highlighting their work.



Click on the icon to view the films.



Tackling Poverty

“One of the biggest myths is that there is no poverty in the UK and that it only exists abroad.”

As part of EY 2010 the European Year, for combating poverty and social exclusion **Community Links** and **Church Action on Poverty** have been working together to uncover attitudes to poverty, work and unemployment amongst people of working age.

We worked with grassroots community organisations across the UK organising local Listening Events to uncover, and begin to tackle some of these issues. We have also worked to recognise and share examples of best practice in tackling working age poverty, particularly amongst small local organisations, through the Tackling Poverty Awards which identify and celebrate projects that are making a difference in the lives of people experiencing working-age poverty in the UK.

This publication details some of the community-led projects tackling working-age poverty in the UK.



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