



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH WEST



Daily Service: How faith communities contribute to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration in the South West of England

Case Studies

prepared for Government Office for the South West
and The South West Council of Faiths

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Introduction

These case studies were prepared as part of a larger research project funded by the Government Office South West (GOSW) in partnership with the South West Council of Faiths, and reported in "Daily Service: How Faith Communities contribute to Neighbourhood Renewal & Regeneration in the South West of England"¹.

The case studies listed overleaf illustrate a range of projects in which faith communities are engaged across the South West of England, and which make a valuable contribution to the regeneration of their local communities. Each case has been selected as an example of 'best practice' in such endeavours. Keys to their success are identified, and there are examples of the problems that were encountered by those involved as they sought to achieve their aims.

The keys to the success of these projects have a common thread, comprising the use of faith groups' buildings for community space, the valuable contribution of the many volunteers that are drawn from the faith groups, the perceived permanent and independent commitment of the faith groups to their communities, and the often vital role of key individuals within the faith organisations themselves and in potential partner organisations. A willingness to embrace partnership working, both with other faith groups and with local authorities and regeneration agencies has also often proved vital.

The potential gains from the successful involvement of faith communities in the regeneration of their localities, and in neighbourhood renewal projects is well illustrated by these case studies.

¹ Marion Jackson & Richard Kimberlee 2004 "Daily Service: How Faith Communities can contribute to Neighbourhood Renewal & Regeneration in the South West of England: Final Report", Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, University of the West of England, Frenchay, Bristol, BS16 1QY

The Case Studies

1 Action Group for Halcyon, Plymouth.

Run by a partnership of local residents and the church, and calling on church members as volunteers, this provides a building that is used as a base for a number of community activities in a large housing estate. NRF and ERDF funding has been obtained.

2 All Saints House, Plymouth

A building-based project with two funded workers and managed by a registered friendly society active in charitable and regeneration work in the city, this provides “a creative resource” to support community activities through giving space, research and campaigning.

3 Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Originally founded with the active support of volunteers from local churches and the local council, this provides a drop-in centre and advice services for refugees and asylum seekers when they arrive in the county.

4 Harbour Light Community Project, Hayle, West Cornwall

Based in church-owned premises, this involves young people from a deprived area in arts-related activities as a way of boosting their self confidence and belief in their own creativity. Funding from several sources supports the project leader and artists to run holiday and after-school workshops.

5 Penzance & Newlyn Breakfast Project, West Cornwall

Hosted by the Salvation Army, this project depends on funding, support in kind and volunteers from a team of local faith groups to provide breakfast to homeless people 365 days a year. Other funding also helps support outreach project workers and advice sessions for those who need them.

6 Sikh Resource Centre, Bristol

A community centre for people of all faiths and relying on many volunteers, this primarily supports the local sikh community through youth and elderly people's projects, the provision of information on Sikhism etc.

7 The South Bristol Community Church Trust's New Withywood Centre

Resulting from several years of partnership working between local churches, the city council and local residents, and after an active fund raising campaign, a new community centre is to be built offering facilities and services, as well as incorporating a new church.

8 Spinney Green, Camborne, West Cornwall

A partnership between the church, district council and other representative local bodies obtained funding from The Countryside Agency and the district council to create an open space on redundant church-owned land. It offers a teenage shelter, play space, planting and nature walks and local art.

² see the Glossary at the end of this report for the explanation of abbreviations.

Case Study 1 - Action Group for Halcyon Project (AGfHa), Plymouth

Aim:

The partnership that oversees the AGfHa have a clear mission statement: *“a Community organization working from a grassroots level to support real people in North Prospect to identify, provide and access opportunities that will improve their quality of life, working in true partnership with community and voluntary organizations, local businesses, churches, education and training establishments, local schools, health services and other agencies to bring about positive changes to lives, the environment, the culture and local image”*

What does it do?

The AGfHa is primarily based in a church-owned community building in the centre of a large housing estate in Plymouth. The partnership, which includes the active participation of a Methodist minister and church members, oversees a range of different community based projects.

The building was originally host to a workshop programme run by NCH to recycle furniture. Now there are crèches for local parents and the rooms are frequently hired out to various local, community, activities, including an over 50's group, a youth club and a craft club. Since their successful bid to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) they have been able to develop their building, partly in partnership with the Probation Service. They employ a community centre development worker to win and manage small pots of money to host a range of new activities. They are also host to Summer Splash activities for young children from the estate. Recently they invited young people from the estate to participate on an exciting graffiti project and their work was exhibited at a local art gallery. With the LSC they host IT training in partnership with a local community centre. There is also a popular and very busy homework club available three nights a week for local school children.

How did it start?

The Halcyon Project was initiated by the Methodist church. The faith group were one of the first organisations to move on to the *'garden estate'* over 50 years ago. The Church building was constructed with communal use in mind. It has several meeting rooms and offices in addition to a worship area.

Seeking a new direction after the NCH pulled out in 1998, the church like other churches in the area joined a Bible Society project that encouraged faith groups to reach out to discover and learn about the needs of their local community. This sowed the seeds for the church to develop a community strategy, which led to outreach work to embrace local groups. An early attempt by Sure Start to use the building floundered following bureaucratic difficulties and obfuscation from the planning department at Methodist headquarters. The local church members perceived this reversal as a tremendous let down but it acted as a catalyst to encourage them to consider alternative possibilities for the buildings. The incumbent Minister, with the help of a local community development worker, encouraged the church to apply for NRF and ERDF funding. Crucially they also received extensive support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Team at the city council, who helped them to develop a community-led project.

An Action Group for Halcyon (AGfHa) was constituted in September 2002, comprising 11 members of mainly local residents and two church members. This coincided with the appointment of a new minister who was taking up his first ministry, having come from a career as a local authority business support manager. His skills proved vital in helping to develop a long term perspective and write bids. The buildings are now run by this broader partnership. The Halcyon project overseen by the AGfHa won £38,000 matched funding from the NRF and ERDF. This enabled them to employ a centre development worker and an administrator. There was some capital spend to replace windows, provide new furniture and provide an extension to the alarm system; additionally there was support to help with the running costs of the Centre in anticipation of additional community usage.

Problems

The faith group involved in this project have faced and dealt with many disappointments in their journey to become active participants in regeneration initiatives. Initially their own bureaucracy let them down because the church's planning procedures and insistence on using its own architects proved too onerous and time consuming to maintain Sure Start's interest, who found more amenable premises at a local community school. In spite of feeling extremely let down by their own organization, they found the strength within themselves to continue.

Some members of the community have expressed concerns about Methodist members possibly playing an overbearing, evangelistic role at the centre. However, the minister and active members of the church have stressed that any evangelism is *"extremely low key and not in your face"*, although numerous pastoral issues have arisen from community involvement in activities hosted at the centre. Inevitably, in enhancing their profile in a community where need is great, faith group support is going to be increasingly called upon by local residents. But the church and community members are sensitive to this issue and have had long discussions around controversial issues like religious symbolism in signage. Thus when the church wanted to erect a new cross at the centre the following sign was also erected: *'People of any faith or no faith are welcome at the Halcyon Centre'*.

In fact they are very aware that as Christians they cannot actively proselytize. Indeed messages from funders have almost made them feel that they are not welcome.

*"I can remember ***** sitting there, you know from ERDF, from the South West office, saying specifically that there must be no evangelical stuff at all and she was really concerned that it really was a secular project and that there should be no hint of anything Christian going on anywhere. So the message we got was that there was lots of money out there as long as you don't belong to a faith." (Project Manager)*

They feel that is still difficult to access funding if they declare themselves as a religious group. Like many others, they have also encountered difficulties with learning how to administer and run a regeneration project. Their bid depended on church members giving up considerable time to oversee the project's development and administration but they are not necessarily skilled professionals, and mistakes have been made and lessons learnt.

Outcomes

For the faith group this project has ensured their continued presence on the estate. They are also pleased to have the building renovated and increasingly used by the community, meaning there are many beneficiaries of the activities hosted in the building. However, despite concerns amongst certain partnership members and additional anxieties expressed by funding agencies, there has been little increase in attendance at the church.

Benefits of being a faith based regeneration project

On the estate people are often restricted in terms of the areas and places they feel they can visit. Some families and elderly people rarely leave the estate. In fact it is *“almost like people feel they need a passport to go across the road”*. With limited social horizons and places to visit, the church is often one of the few meeting places where locals feel comfortable:

“One of the neighbourhood chaps, when we were putting together the bid for this project, said: ‘ you know this church is still here....the estate has gone through so many different times but you are still here and the people are still here’... and that is what local people have noticed it is the staying power” (Minister)

The project benefits from the services of church members, who often carry out activities for no reward. Currently there is also an administrator who acts as project manager and who gives her services on two days a week free of charge. Very few projects from the voluntary and community sector could rely on this level of unpaid voluntary commitment.

Keys to AGfHa's success

- the AGfHa's membership's willingness to commit themselves to long term goals and to make the effort to sustain the project idea over many years,
- unpaid hours committed by volunteers,
- partnership with other agencies etc,
- sustained support from the NRF team at the local council.

Case Study 2 - All Saints House (Plymouth)

Aim:

To be a community development resource that can promote the needs of the community and people of Stonehouse, Plymouth

Origins of All Saints House (ASH):

This project is a community development resource based in a building owned by the Diocese of Exeter, but managed by the local Church of England parish of St Peter's.

St Peter's church was built by Reverend George Rundle Prynne in 1848 who, at the time of the church's foundation, professed to have both an evangelical mission and a community focus to help the poorer parishioners in the community it served. This focus has continued up until the present day.

The All Saints House project is managed by the St Peter's Ichthus Society, which is chaired by Father Sam, the local vicar and one of the founders of the Society. The Ichthus Society is a registered friendly society that has a track record of managing a range of charitable and regeneration projects for people across the city of Plymouth.

The All Saints House project is based in a house owned by the parish. It is currently dependent on reserve funds from the Ichthus Society but has sustained itself over the last ten years through attracting a broad range of funds from various sources, both from statutory agencies and regeneration initiatives. The enthusiastic project worker and administrator have "*lived on their wits*" for many years and continue to do so today.

Recent Community Activities:

The ASH Project has been involved in numerous community development activities and regeneration projects over the last ten years.

One of the most imaginative of these was the creation of a community newspaper: 'The Stonehouse Observer'. This has been a source of information, and central to campaigning activities around community issues, over the last decade. ASH was also host to a local, cheap, healthy living café for several years, which was supported by funding from local social and health services.

Project workers based at ASH have also conducted a variety of different research activities for various regeneration initiatives. These included an evaluation of a reminiscence project for elderly people in Stonehouse on behalf of Healthy Plymouth, a partnership of city organizations seeking to improve the health of local people in 1997. With Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding they have conducted research for a Social Economy Audit in areas such as housing, planning, oral history and leisure. They have also studied an area recently regenerated into 80 business units in Union Street, a site of a former fashion factory that closed due to international competition.

All Saints House has supported other local community projects in unobtrusive and unquantifiable ways. For example, a local community centre had a problem with the VAT and Tax returns; it became known to the ASH workers and the Ichthus Society and the project workers intervened to give financial aid and assistance at a time when an impasse had been reached between the community centre and the local authority in terms of understanding who had responsibility for outstanding liability.

Activities hosted by All Saints House

- Mediation projects to help resolve neighbourly disputes,
- Offices for the Mental Health charity MIND.
- Research for a variety of community groups, service providers and regeneration initiatives,
- A drop-in venue for local people.

In order to sustain their activities, they are seeking to work with an existing local development trust through the Development Trust Association Movement. They are also aiming to undertake research into the feasibility of developing a night care scheme for local elderly residents living in the community.

Problems

The major problem is the need to find further funding to support the ASH activities. The project worker and her administrative support worker talk about the long hours they commit to ASH, and how these often increase to meet new needs. They are local people with a deep commitment to addressing local needs, which means greater demands are placed on their time commitments.

In order to meet local community demands and requests for support, they feel that their meagre resources (two members of staff) are always outstripped by potential demand and community need.

Outcomes

AHS is a small scale project that perceives itself as *'an incubator for good ideas'*. It is a creative resource for the community that seeks to develop innovative solutions to local problems.

A lot of the activities that have been kick started in the area and initially managed by the Icthus Society have now been mainstreamed and have moved on to other premises. The AHS workers' willingness to be experimental and to build on initiatives that are grounded in local need, has enabled them to embed developments in local structures. Also their sustained presence in the community has allowed them to develop a reputation amongst regeneration and other local professionals that they are a key organization that can directly link into the local community on behalf of agencies, if the latter require to gain understanding of the views and needs of 'hard to reach' groups.

ASH has also been seen as being able to take risks and work *'with the less respectable issues in the local community'*. In the past it has worked with AIDs sufferers.

Keys to All Saints House Success

- The perception that they are a faith-based group enables them to be seen as independent and not necessarily tied into a vested interest.
- Their location in a church-owned building gives them a permanent presence in their community.
- Not being tied into service delivery has empowered them to be an active campaigning unit on local community issues.
- Continued support from The Icthus Society has enabled them to maintain flexibility in terms of work they are doing; they are less tied into performance indicators and outcome/output deliverables than organisations with more restrictive funding sources.

Case Study 3 - GARAS: Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Aim:

To promote the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers in Gloucestershire.

Objectives:

To provide a place of safety and reassurance for those who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers, to give advice, to help basic needs if necessary, to promote awareness and understanding of the situation of refugees and asylum seekers.

"somewhere to calm,.. befriend, ..signpost..."

Origin of GARAS

In 1999 a group of volunteers, the majority of whom were from local churches, set up GARAS in a local community centre. It provided a drop-in centre with two paid employees supported by a number of volunteers.

At that time growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers were arriving in Gloucestershire, following the introduction of the national policy to disperse refugees around the country. Gloucestershire County Council Social Services recognised that there were limits to what they, as the statutory authorities, could do to meet the needs of the refugees and asylum seekers so they approached a number of organisations who might be able to help, including the church.

As a result Adrian Slade, the social responsibility officer for the diocese of Gloucester, suggested setting up a group to be called Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and GARAS was born. GARAS was to lobby on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers, and to be on their side and to support them as they struggled to make a home in a foreign, and often hostile, environment.

Before GARAS was set up there was nowhere for asylum seekers to go except street corners, creating a very visible social problem and attracting hostility from local residents. It was very difficult for the statutory authorities to make contact with them to offer advice and to help them access the services that might be available to them.

Adrian Slade credits the first two workers at GARAS for much of the project's success. The first director was *"an ideal person to set something up"*, successfully motivating and engaging people and working very long hours in her determination for it to succeed. The other caseworker, who has been there from the beginning, was a male Muslim who was vital in dealing with Muslim asylum seekers and in opening up a whole new avenue of working with the local Muslim community.

GARAS now

Five years on GARAS is an established charity with a full-time Director, two advice workers, a part-time finance officer, three self-employed counsellors and some 20 – 30 volunteers. GARAS has a

board of eight trustees, and is supported by four patrons and 100 members, 80% of whom are church members. The board is chaired by Adrian Slade.

Initially the volunteers mostly came through the churches but now they are from a more varied background. They are people for whom the aims of the organisation are important: *"they [the volunteers] find us"*.

Activities at GARAS include:

- a drop in centre open 3 days a week providing refreshments, social contacts, advice and support;
- advice and counselling on a one-to-one basis on eg legal problems, immigration procedures, health, housing, getting children into schools, understanding benefits;
- advocacy;
- liaison with other agencies;
- help in kind with basic needs for new arrivals;
- youth work;
- newsletter and other publicity to raise awareness in the wider community.

Annual income and expenditure is approximately £70,000. The main source of funds in the last few years has been government grants distributed through the County Council social services. The structure of official funding is changing with the establishment of NASS, the National Asylum Support Service and the advent of Clearsprings (a commercial firm contracted to provide housing for refugees and asylum seekers). So far support from the County Council has ensured that GARAS continues to receive grants from these new organisations.

Other funds have come through earmarked social services grants for counselling and youth work, donations from the churches and other fund raising activities. The changes in social service funding means that GARAS is now making applications to a wide variety of possible sources.

Problems

In the beginning GARAS had to overcome the mistrust that is so often found within local authorities when it comes to dealing with faith communities, and which can result in an unwillingness to include them as partners in funded projects. In this case though the person responsible at the social services was:

"much more open to working with a faith-led group than is usually the case".

GARAS also faces specific difficulties, apart from the usual problems of funding, premises and staffing encountered by all such social welfare projects. Funding sources for their users are limited and their operations can be hampered by prejudice and hostility to refugees and asylum seekers in the wider community. GARAS is trying to raise awareness and increase understanding in order to counter this.

Also the work is emotionally demanding on the staff. Dealing with some clients' stories, and with those whose claim for refugee status is turned down, can be very stressful.

Outcomes

There are some 500 refugees and asylum seekers in Gloucestershire of whom about 40 people use the drop-in centre each day it is open. People from over 40 different nationalities came to GARAS in 2002/3.

Once people receive permission to stay, their use of the centre drops away. A measure of GARAS' success in this is that most of their work is with new arrivals. The centre's aim is to help people stand on their own feet.

"...most clients are motivated, bright, resourceful..."

Important evidence of the value of GARAS' work comes from the on-going support of the local authority, which is helping to ensure that they continue to get financial support for what they do.

"...there has never been any doubt that the county council saw us as vital for delivery of services to refugees and asylum seekers..." (Chair)

The project certainly contributes to building social cohesion within Gloucester city by giving refugees and asylum seekers somewhere to go and by facilitating their contact with support services. Without GARAS the problems would return to the street corners. It also aids economic regeneration through the funding that is attracted to the locality to support those refugees and asylum seekers.

As a faith led project, GARAS demonstrates actions motivated by a faith group's recognition of an unmet need in their local community:

"Welcoming the stranger is a core Christian value" (Director)

"It [the centre for advice and support] would probably not have happened without the Christian churches" (client)

Keys to GARAS' Success

GARAS has benefited from:

- visionary and committed individuals
- a clearly defined project
- partnership with local churches and local agencies
- networking to resource GARAS' needs

Case Study 4 - Harbour Light Community Project, Hayle, West Cornwall

Aim:

To help restore 'creative expression' to the heart of community and family life, so that it may become a 'fabric' within our communities, enabling communication, sharing and a healing of social divisions and exclusion.

Now established as a charitable company, the Harbour Light Community Project is involving young people from the local community in arts-related activities in a deprived area of Hayle in West Cornwall. St Elwyn's church and hall were already being used for art exhibitions and musical events as part of a plan to increase its use by the wider community when the idea of Harbour Light was born.

What does it do?

Harbour Light's first programme was a summer holiday project in 2003. For a month the project offered 'taster sessions' in a variety of creative skills on three days per week, using Phillack hall and the Hayle Methodist church hall.

These sessions enabled young people to participate in a fashion show, the making a music video, and a creative writing workshop. There was also a 'junk samba' workshop using instruments that the participants had made themselves. Professional artists led all the activities and some 30 young people were involved. The children were enthusiastic and the parents very supportive.

Subsequently Harbour Light built on this experience to offer five after-school workshops every week of the school term for 10 – 14 year old children from the local community. These cover visual arts, music, drama, dance and poetry. It has also started a samba drumming group for adults.

How did it start?

As with many such projects, Harbour Light came about through the vision and determination of a few key individuals.

The vicar of St Elwyn's was already working to expand artistic uses of the church and the neighbouring church hall. A former music teacher who had recently moved into the parish was seeking ways to fulfil his vision of bringing artistic experiences to people who had never had the opportunity to explore their creativity before. Another churchman provided vital help with fund-raising and applications for grants.

"What has been very crucial to the project has been people coming along at the right time"

Harbour Light was set up as a charitable company with a board chaired by the Vicar of St Elwyn's church. For the first year a total of about £30,000 was raised from the Church Urban Fund, the Cornwall Independent Trust Fund, the Paul Hamblyn Foundation and the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest (administered by Penwith District Council). This allowed the employment of the project leader to manage the development of the project and the hire of artists to run the workshop sessions. Volunteers also help with the sessions.

Problems

The major problem at the moment is fund raising to ensure the longer term sustainability of the project. The current funders have been *"helpful, enthusiastic and open"* but meeting the requirements of different grant-making bodies in terms of what must go on the forms etc is very time consuming. One obstacle is that grant givers appear reluctant to meet the core costs of an on-going salaried position. Another is the length of time it takes to get a decision. A quick turnaround from application to decision was particularly welcome wherever that was found.

There is also some concern that older teenagers and young adults are not being attracted to the workshop sessions so new ways of attracting them off the streets and into the activities are being developed.

Contribution to regeneration through individuals

"Turning the creative tide"

The project is driven by a belief that individuals of all ages have ability and a need to be creative but that they are often inhibited by past negative experiences and lack self-confidence. Creativity has been lost in many communities: too many people are saying: *"I cannot do it"*.

By giving young people an opportunity to experience arts-related activity, Harbour Light hopes to enable them to find ways of expressing themselves, to grow in confidence and to come together with others across the generations – thus aiding the wider regeneration of their communities. In the workshops the artists aim to respond to the young people as individuals, to listen to their needs, and to encourage them to say what they themselves want to do.

"The kids are gradually seeing what we're talking about when we say we want it to come from them nothing has prepared them for this".

The music workshops illustrate this process of growing confidence and self expression. In the beginning the youngsters started by singing songs.... now they are writing songs, playing instruments, performing. They are learning to respect each other and to listen.

"We are seeing a calming down and a growing self-discipline".

Outcomes

Many of the benefits of this sort of activity for individuals and the wider community are intangible but for one young lad with a troubled past:

"... I no longer have to see my social worker..."

Future aspirations include developing a closer partnership with the local community school, maybe basing the young people's workshop sessions on the school premises. There are also plans for an Easter holiday project for 14 – 20 year olds. In the longer term it is hoped to expand Harbour Light's activities into wider community initiatives, such as driving the refurbishment of the church hall and the possible incorporation of housing units for homeless young people into the building.

It is difficult to have clear criteria for success. The numbers of participants are relatively small but are increasing as the range of activities in the project expands, but a rapid rise in numbers may not be everything.

"Perhaps it needs to be small scale to allow... individuals to flower"

Benefits of being a Faith Community Project

A project like this gains from being church-led in a number of ways. The churches are providing the physical space to house the activities and bring the support of the church community. There has been direct church funding through the Church Urban Fund. This supportive environment also allowed for flexibility in the early stages while they were feeling their way.

"It is a fundamental part of being a faith-based project to be open to being led to where there are opportunities as they arise ... and to listen."

But such an approach is not always easily compatible with many potential funding bodies' requirement for a detailed business plan, with all the details specified from the start. There needs to be openness and flexibility from grant givers too.

Case Study 5 - Penzance and Newlyn Breakfast Project

Aim:

To provide nutrition to those without homes, and to enable them to access quality advice and support.

What does it do?

This ecumenical project provides breakfast to homeless people 365 days of the year in Penzance and Newlyn, West Cornwall. It also hosts a number of drop-in advice sessions every week to facilitate access to housing, employment and health services for their clients.

The Salvation Army provides the premises and administrative help, and hosts two outreach workers involved with the project. The Penzance & Newlyn Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Roman Catholic churches and the Society of Friends fund raise for the Breakfast project, bring support in kind and find the volunteers who staff the breakfast service.

There is a rota of 50 volunteers drawn from the local churches to ensure that there are 3 – 4 volunteers there to cook and serve breakfast to 15 – 25 people each day between 7.30 and 9.30am. The numbers increase during the summer and fall off during the winter.

It is very much a team effort of all the churches together:

“We couldn’t do it without the other churches” (Salvation Army)

Four days a week there are advice and counselling sessions later in the morning provided by professionals from the services offering help with housing needs, assistance into employment, training for new skills and help with health problems.

The Salvation Army outreach workers also take out soup 4 nights a week, which is how they find newly homeless people and to draw them into the Breakfast project.

In 2003 the project received approximately £16,000 from official funding for housing needs administered through Penwith District Council. Local churches and the Salvation Army meet the rest of the costs.

The essential policy is one of:

“ bringing loving, unconditional and professional service to our neighbours”

Faith is to be demonstrated implicitly, not explicitly so there is no proselytising., ie respecting the dignity of those using the project to make choices in their own lives.

“the gospel in action rather than words”

How did it start?

The Breakfast project was founded in 1999 when the clergy of Penzance came together to find a co-ordinated response to the large numbers of homeless and troubled people who came knocking at their doors seeking help.

At the same time there was a member of the Salvation Army in Penzance who was an experienced social worker and keen to run a project that could contact those who were homeless and offer them advice and help with resettlement.

The Salvation Army did the fund raising, with letters of support from the other churches, and set up an outreach project. Initially the outreach project received money from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister funding for homelessness action, administered through Penwith District Council. The Salvation Army itself also committed funds. Larry Wright, Team Vicar of the Penzance Team Ministry of the Anglican church, was the first chair of the project's steering group.

Two outreach workers were employed. These went out and found people without homes and brought them into the Breakfast project. But it was clear from the start that the project would only work if the churches could find the volunteers. Approximately 150 volunteers have been involved in the five years since the project was set up.

Problems

Initially there was some suspicion of the project from the statutory agencies working in this field but the project quickly gained credibility.

There was opposition from some church members who had strong reservations about providing free food to people who would spend any money saved on drugs and drink. The Breakfast project's policy is that, in spite of this, it is more important to ensure that those without homes get nutrition and contact with potential help.

There was also some nervousness and uncertainty amongst the partner churches about whether they would be able to meet the likely level of need or, alternatively, whether they would be overwhelmed.

The ban on proselytising led to the withdrawal of one evangelical church from the partnership.

Working with so many volunteers is also potentially problematic. It is important to ensure that all the volunteers understand the essential policies of the project so it is necessary to ensure that they receive some training from the professional outreach workers. The volunteers need help to develop the inter-personal skills appropriate for working with people with disturbed lives and, often, serious addictions or mental problems.

Outcomes

Approximately 100 new homeless people use the project every year.

A critical part of the project's success is that it provides a way of contacting significant numbers of those without homes and sleeping rough, people that the statutory agencies often find very difficult to reach.

Individual users of the Breakfast project have been helped to turn around their lives, rehabilitate themselves and build up their self-esteem. Often they return to 'normal' lives in the community.

The volunteers involved have obtained a better understanding of the reasons why some people lead such chaotic lives, and have taken this improved understanding into the wider community, reducing some of the hostility on the streets where residents and the homeless sometimes get into conflict.

Some of the volunteers have gained new skills and some have started to work with the outreach project. Apart from having a sense of doing their Christian duty, many find an increased sense of their own self-worth and enjoy the commitment and fellowship of working on the project. Many are retired people who gain satisfaction from feeling that they are putting something back into the community.

Keys to the Breakfast Project's success

- having two professional workers involved from the outset who had experience of working with homeless people;
- being an faith-led ecumenical project fully supported by all the clergy and the vast majority of their church members;
- having access to a large number of volunteers;
- quickly gaining credibility with other agencies trying to reach the homeless, such as the local authority housing services, social services, health services, etc.

The Breakfast project is a good example of a faith-led project that uses the faith communities' premises and volunteer resources for the benefit of some of the most needy people in society.

Case Study 6 - Sikh Resource Centre, Bristol

Aims and Objectives:

The promotion of Sikh principles, the establishment of support networks, the improvement of employment rights, an offer of independent advice and guidance, the encouragement of the learning of the Punjabi language and the promotion of Sikh culture.

Origins of the Bristol Sikh Resource Centre

The Sikh Resource Centre (SRC) is a community centre for people of all religions and cultures but the majority of the users are Sikh. In Bristol it is claimed that there are between 10,000 and 12,000 resident Sikhs for which this centre is key resource. A Management Committee comprising of elected Sikh representatives from the four Gurdwaras across the city oversee the running of the centre.

The SRC was established in 1983 by Sikhs living in the Bristol area, who wished to promote religious tolerance and the teachings of Sikhism. The elders who were involved in the centre's establishment felt that they needed to preserve their roots and traditions particularly through cultural activities like language classes and festival celebrations. They were also concerned to offer young people support to develop understanding of their Sikh identity in the UK. In 1986 it became a registered charity and raised the money to buy its current building.

The SRC seeks to network with other local and national groups to share understanding and best practice. A tremendous amount of activity is provided on a limited budget. In 2003 the Sikh Resource Centre received £39k of its £64k income from Bristol City Council, of which £14k is from Social Services to deliver the elderly people project. The rest of the money of this grant is from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) which is for employing a co-ordinator and her assistant. As well as co-ordinating the myriad of activities, it is expected that the co-ordinator will also raise funds, develop an understanding of the needs of the community and work with statutory organizations and other agencies to meet local need.

What does the Sikh Resource Centre do?

With a very small budget the SRC is able to provide a range of community activities including running a drop in for Asian women, a drop-in benefits advisory service once a month, day care for the elderly, training programmes for adults, and educational classes for young people and children.

The Elderly Group Project: this has a weekly meeting and sessions on important and relevant themes like healthy eating, monitoring diabetes, gentle exercise, and aromatherapy. There are visits from advisers and other professionals. The elderly can also benefit from IT and ESOL courses.

The Youth Project: this engages around 35 young people, a substantial number of participants which compares well to other local youth projects in the area. It provides core courses in Punjabi and IT skills. Young boys and girls are also involved in Bhangra training and Bollywood dancing. Recently they have got involved with a fascinating United Kingdom history project (funded through the Bristol Children's Fund) where participants have been encouraged to gain knowledge and understanding of historical places across the UK and of the royal family. The idea for this activity and others are a result of user involvement in decision-making processes. Most activities develop at the

suggestion of service users. As a result they have arranged opportunities for young people to enjoy outdoor pursuits like kayaking, mountain biking and hiking. They have provided mathematics classes for young people for which there is currently a large waiting list and the project co-ordinator has won additional funding to run an after school homework club.

Adults: SDC has promoted sports, and hosted courses and talks on a diverse range of subjects for adults such as start up your own business, first aid at work, don't be afraid of the Inland Revenue, beginners and intermediate sewing and ESOL classes.

Problems

The Sikh Resource Centre is delivering a range of different courses to the community but the delivery team is small, placing a tremendous strain on the meagre resources available. It is becoming a victim of its own success. The youth group is currently oversubscribed and there is currently a waiting list of young people wishing to get involved. Resources and in particular volunteers are required to help deliver these services.

The SRC finds it difficult to meet all the community requests it receives for presentations on the Sikh faith and community involvement. It is frequently facing the dilemma of having to shut the Centre so that the workers can go out to meet this demand, while potential recipients get frustrated that the Centre cannot deliver more for their own organizations. In particular requirements to foster multi faith understanding in the Citizenship curriculum in schools has increased this demand still further.

The tutors who deliver classes at the SRC are poorly paid, making it difficult to attract recruits to meet the large demand. These classes are seen as vital for children who do not attend the local 'City Academy' secondary school where Punjabi is part of the curriculum.

A lack of development funding prevents the SRC from embedding itself in broader community-wide activities, where it's contribution would undoubtedly be beneficial. For example in Easton there is a multi-agency partnership being established to co-ordinate referrals and resources for young people at risk.

Future Plans

They are currently looking at some redundant space at the back of their Centre, which they would like to see developed into more classrooms for young people. They estimate that funding of over £300k would probably be required to develop this resource.

Keys to the Sikh Resource Centre's Success

By pooling their resources and directions the Gurdwaras are able to develop activities and events through the Resource Centre that they would find difficult to sustain individually. Gurdwaras can identify what they would like to do but they do not have sufficient financial and management systems in place to develop their ambitions. Umbrella organizations like the Sikh Resource Centre help to address their needs.

A lot of the SRC's work depends on commitment and long hours given from volunteers in the community. Without this pool of unpaid labour, which is characteristic of so many faith-based projects, many of the exciting initiatives would not happen.

Case Study 7 - The South Bristol Community Church Trust's New Withywood Centre

Aims:

To develop a new 'Withywood Centre' which will house a new church, provide additional youth provision, offer a community facility and include a healthy living centre for the people living in the communities of Withywood and Hartcliffe; and to develop the work of "churches in the community".

What is it going to do?

Primarily based on a partnership between Anglicans and Methodists, two faith groups with an ecumenical outlook and a history of working together, the South Bristol Community Church Trust (SBCCT) has pulled together a range of key trustees to oversee their future strategy, including representatives from Bristol Area Community Enterprise Network, the Archdeacon, and an economic adviser who is also a director of a local community based training agency. SBCCT Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with an aim of constructing a purpose-built new building (Withywood Centre) for the community.

How did it start?

The SBCCT was formed in 1997 specifically to galvanise two church communities facing mounting financial difficulties. It aimed to realize a vision (that had been a feature of their inter-faith discussions for many years) of developing a new church and community centre to serve local residents. Poor services and a lack of facilities had been highlighted in a strategic study of the estate in 1997; a fact reinforced by a SRB5 Baseline survey (2000) and SBCCT consultations. To realise their vision SBCCT became proactive in seeking partners to help them realise their ambitions. In 2000 following a poor OFSTED report and a youth service review, the Trust forged a partnership with Bristol City Council to maintain youth facilities in the area and provide young people with a new building. In 2002 it developed a partnership with the Bristol South and West Primary Care Trust who were brought on board following their decision to relocate the local clinic. Links with Hartcliffe and Withywood Venturers (who are part funded by the LSC) meant that the planned facility could offer a unique opportunity for developing training facilities on the estate.

This has taken a lot of hard work. Community consultation, feasibility studies, funding applications for development workers, architect and design consultation, fund raising and selling the scheme has taken over eleven years. Total construction costs for the site including the acquisition of adjacent property and stamp duty etc are estimated to be £4,953,750. However funding will be achieved from the sale of existing church land, the sale of council property, a SRB5 capital grant of £1.8 million, £946,000 from the local PCT, £500,000 from Urban II, £100,000 from the Temple and Ecclesiastical Trust and further funding applications to NOF, the Lottery, Trusts and the LSC are anticipated to help the SBCCT reach a target start build date of March 2005.

In 2000 the Trust crucially gained SRB5 funding to employ a Development Worker who had the prime aim of operationalising their vision of developing the work of "*churches in the community*". The Development Worker subsequently employed worked tirelessly to deliver the vision by building on the community links and activities in which the churches and church members were increasingly

embedded. Beyond the Centre the faith groups had already been involved with a Credit Union, a detached youth project, a mixed ability social club, an advice centre, a police drop in, and a holiday play scheme. They had also been helping to run Community Networks and they have jointly managed a SRB5 funded Community Action Transport scheme. The two faith groups have additionally helped to form United Christian Action (UCA) to deliver community action. UCA is a collection of four churches which has grown out of regular meetings at lent groups, away days, joint services etc. Amongst other things they continue to host the annual NOISE project, a three day set of activities involving over two hundred young people engaged in social action across the community e.g. litter picking, clearing graffiti, site clearance and environmental projects.

Problems

On the whole the project has faced only a few barriers in terms of agency resistance to faith involvement. However they still struggle with resistance from individual professionals who would prefer to keep regeneration initiatives secular. Trust members tend to believe that this is because they have a misapprehension about the Trust's values and that it is an attitude held by some, often key individuals who are part of the network of agencies that work in the community. The Trust encountered difficulty in selling its idea for the 'Withywood Centre' to one of the major fund holders in the area. Key agency personnel felt that they were there to simply develop a new church. The project manager spent considerable time demonstrating that their focal aim had always been *'to serve the community on the community's agenda'*. It was little realised that the churches were only going to lease the church from the centre even though they had invested considerable capital into its development.

A second problem arose when a funding stream raised strong objections to the proposed building design, which envisaged a universal access point irrespective of whether the user wished to visit the church, café, youth area, training facility, clinic or meeting rooms. The funding stream was largely supporting the development of a youth facility and subsequently demanded that a separate youth only access be included in the design to prevent young people having to directly walk past the church!

Lack of capacity is a further problem. The project manager is adamant that exuding a professional demeanour and being well prepared has been an essential element in their success. However this has often been against the odds because the project in the early stages suffered from inadequate computer and photocopying facilities. Their current office space is based in the church, which has meant that it has also acted as a drop-in centre for people to visit with their problems and concerns which sometimes means they have to drop their focus on project development.

Benefits of being a Faith Project

It is clear to people associated with this project that faith groups can deliver a high level of time and energy commitment which would not necessarily be seen amongst other regeneration agencies who work in the community. They work beyond normal requirements largely because their faith's values encourages them to develop a commitment to people in need. Faith group members believe they *"are vision led and passion driven"* which sustains their commitment even in difficult times. And when they have encountered difficulties with the delivery process they declare that they have found that prayer and fasting has helped them to be reflective and bring solutions to current difficulties.

The long term commitment of the partner churches to the community has enabled them to establish a good reputation amongst local people. Their presence is increasingly noticed. Local people are all too familiar with regeneration professionals being parachuted into their area only to disappear quickly. The churches' longevity has enabled them to establish an excellent track record of delivering on community programmes. This position is reinforced when local faith leaders declare that they see themselves as the only agency that will pick up the pieces when other agencies like social services cannot help or withdraw support.

Lessons to be learnt by Faith Groups wishing to participate in regeneration initiatives

They should:

- be all embracing and welcome everyone into their partnership,
- be able to write and accept an equal opportunities policy welcoming everyone,
- be seen to put the community first,
- be willing to give up total control of their project and open it to partners,
- be able to work flexibly with other people's agendas,
- win political support at an early stage: persuading local councillors and council officials of the merits of their project has generated crucial support ensuring successful progress through local governance structures,
- already be deeply embedded in the community and perceived as something more than just a faith group,
- have patience because it takes a lot longer than is expected,
- have representatives who are professional in manner and presentation and well rehearsed with the proposals that are being suggested.

Case Study 8 - Spinney Green, Camborne

Aims:

- (i) to make Spinney Green accessible to, and user friendly for, young people
- (ii) to make an open-air space for the wider community.

What is it?

The Spinney Green Regeneration Project has created an open space for community use from a piece of derelict land next to St Martin & St Meriadoc church in Camborne, West Cornwall. Owned by the Rectory, it had become overgrown with bushes, brambles and scrub.

The Spinney Action Group

The idea came out of discussions in 2001 between the regeneration team at Kerrier District Council and Rev Bill Stuart White, Rector of St Martin & St Meriadoc. Both were seeking to create somewhere for young people, and the church was concerned that teenagers were already regularly gathering on this piece of land.

The Spinney Action Group was formed, chaired by Bill Stuart White, to prepare a bid to the Countryside Agency Doorstep Green Scheme. This scheme had been set up to establish green spaces in urban and/or deprived areas.

The Spinney Action Group included representatives from the parish council, the regeneration team at the district council, the local clinic, the primary and nursery schools, and youth organisations. It was a partnership formed for this project. The Group became a registered charity, and ownership of the land was transferred to it from the Rector.

The project bidding process

An initial project preparation grant from the Countryside Agency helped fund consultations in the local community, and the preparations for the full bid.

A consultation open day was run by Cornwall Rural Community Council to seek ideas for what the community wanted to see on the land. School groups and other young peoples' organisations brought groups to this event.

There was some opposition from local residents worried about vandalism, crime and disruption if young people were attracted to the Green. Some of these concerns were allayed after a "*difficult*" residents' meeting.

Detailed plans were drawn up by the district council's landscape architect, and a full bid was prepared. At all stages the district council regeneration team and the Countryside Agency helped the Action Group in the bidding process.

"It [the bid] would not have happened without them".

The bid was made in the autumn of 2002 and an award of 70% of the estimated total cost of £130,000 was made. The balance was to be met from local sources, including contributions 'in kind' from volunteer labour for the work on the site. Although the tenders for the work were

significantly above the original estimates, the District Council agreed to meet the excess and the project was given the go-ahead. After some delays, the project opened in the Spring of 2004.

The Green

The project was completed in the Spring of 2004. In the event volunteer labour could not be used in the construction phase but will be involved in the maintenance later on.

The Green features:

- an open 'community meeting' space,
- walkways,
- benches made by a local wood carver,
- a teenage shelter for young people,
- sculptures and a mosaic from local artists,
- extensive planting of shrubs and flowers under the existing tree canopy
- rebuilt Cornish hedges at the boundary.

The Spinney Action Group will be responsible for running the Green, with some help from the District and Parish Councils. The focus so far has been on getting the funding and paying the bills for the work as it progresses; details of the on-going management remain to be worked out.

Beneficiaries

All those in the local community who use it; eg nursery and primary age children using the nature trail, young people using the teenage shelter, visitors to the local clinic, and elderly people from the neighbouring old people's home.

Those involved in preparing the bid and managing the project have also been learning new skills as they have gone through the process.

"we are all amateurs at this and would not have got this far without District Council support".

Outcomes

It is too early to judge the outcome of this project in terms of its actual usage but it is well sited for significant community use. But it is an interesting example of the process of getting such a project off the ground. It has benefited enormously from the close partnership between the church group, local people, the district council, and the Countryside Agency as the main funders. Key personnel have been committed and ready to help at every stage.

Keys to success

- Partnership between the faith group, local authority and funding agency,
- Grants to help the bidding preparation,
- Commitment by key personnel of all organisations involved.

Glossary

BME	Black & Minority Ethnic communities
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DSS	Department of Social Services
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GOSW	Government Office South West
LSC	Learning & Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NCH	National Children's Home
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
NR	Neighbourhood Renewal
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
SW	South West
URC	United Reformed Church
UWE	University of the West of England
VCS	Voluntary & Community Sector





University of the
West of England

