

Community **Links** annual report **06**



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About us

We believe that everyone has the potential to do great things.

Some people need advice and training to achieve this potential, others just need practical support to change their lives.

That's why we run a huge range of programmes from education to care schemes for children, advice and advocacy, training for adults and respite for people with special needs.

You might think this is pretty special in itself, but we also share our pioneering new ideas and learning nationally.

All this makes Community Links as ground-breaking today as when it was founded in 1977. Working in partnership with business, government and community partners, our desire to tackle the causes and consequences of social exclusion that are still on our doorstep remains as strong as ever.

Each year we help vulnerable children, young people and adults. Our work is largely delivered in Newham, one of the poorest boroughs in Europe, but our success drives social change nationwide.

Our practical activities and community-based projects in East London are changing people's lives. Day by day, month by month, year by year we are helping people to do great things.

This year, over 50,000 lives have been touched by our projects. Here's how.

1450 Elderly, isolated people visited either in their own homes or in their GP surgery by our advice workers.

746,000 Value of benefits successfully claimed for this group, making an incredible difference to the lives of the most vulnerable people.

14 Local people successfully completing a one-year in-house training scheme in community development. 5 went on to University, 3 gained full-time employment and the others are currently either doing voluntary work or looking for employment. All were previously unqualified.

2 National conferences organised and run by LinksUK.

1 Partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation resulting in a powerful report and conference on the Informal Economy.

23 Family holidays to Haven Holiday Park provided by the Children's team in association with Children Country Holidays. Over 100 children's holidays to various activity camps have been provided. These essential breaks are for families and children whose circumstances have not allowed them to take a holiday for many years.

2 New centres – Arc in the Park and our refurbished New Canteen centre which is now a fully-equipped education centre, open for the new school year.

3,000,000 Value of the contract awarded to our New Deal team to help unemployed young people.

500 New actions for Change The World 9 to 5 sent to the We Are What We Do website by people from all walks of life and all corners of the globe.

30 Percentage of sales coming to Community Links from www.auctionmystuff.org, an innovative new business that sells unwanted items on behalf of others using eBay.

120 Young people excluded from school on the Education Otherwise programme sitting AQA exams.

98 Percentage that passed.

We have seen an increase in external visitors to Community Links. New funders are interested in working in partnership with us and most importantly, we have developed and started several new projects. The New Deal contract in particular is a huge vote of confidence.

Internally we have strengthened our financial infrastructure, appointed a Head of Youth Work and worked across the organisation to produce a five year strategic plan leading us up 2011. This will ensure that we are well prepared to seize all opportunities around the Olympics in 2012.

We continue to produce Big Ideas, with We Are What We Do becoming fully international and the successful launch of Auction My Stuff.

Community Links turns thirty in 2007 and is pretty lively for it's age! We continue to be true to our values and remain faithful to our mission statement which we set out in 1977. This has been used to illustrate our work for each month of this calendar. We are so much more than the sum of our individual parts, but it is these individual stories of lives changed that we want to share with you in this Annual Report. After all, that's why we do what we do.

Max Weaver, Chief Executive

More about us

Trustees

Stanley Harris (Chair)
Euart Glendinning
Charles Richardson
Mary Hiscock
Haydn Powell
Radhika Beynon
Stephen Jacobs

Auditors

Mazars Neville Russell,
24 Bevis Marks,
London EC3A 7MR

Partners

We work with many partners in the community sector and in local and central government. We particularly appreciate the support of the London Borough of Newham.

Chair of Community Links Leadership Group

Sir David Walker,
Senior Advisor,
Morgan Stanley International

We are very grateful to our supporters, of which there are too many to mention. If you are from a Trust or would like to support us personally, please contact us on 020 7473 2270 or visit our website. If you are from a company and would like to become a corporate partner, please contact 020 7473 9649.

The following companies currently support us:

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Zurich

This has been a good year for Community Links



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To generate change

January

m	1	8	15	22	29
t	2	9	16	23	30
w	3	10	17	24	31
th	4	11	18	25	
f	5	12	19	26	
s	6	13	20	27	
s	7	14	21	28	

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Big ideas from small places

LinksUK captures and shares the practical experience of Community Links in East London with organisations nationwide.

Living Values is a great example. A major piece of research undertaken by the LinksUK team aimed at encouraging organisations to reconnect with their values and recognise their strength and worth as major contributors to public welfare. But it's not just words, this work also produced a report and conference entitled Encouraging Boldness in Third Sector Organisations.

Research, policy recommendations to Government, consultancy, training, public speaking and a programme of conferences and seminars. It's all going on from a small office tucked away up a back staircase.

Big Ideas that start in small places and help everyone benefit from the experiences of Community Links.



To find solutions not palliatives

February

m		5	12	19	26
t		6	13	20	27
w		7	14	21	28
th	1	8	15	22	
f	2	9	16	23	
s	3	10	17	24	
s	4	11	18	25	

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Live. Work.

Moving from benefits to employment is a scary moment. Helping people find meaningful work is a significant challenge, but it turns lives around.

Last year Community Links placed more than two hundred long-term unemployed young people into sustainable jobs. Our New Deal programme has been recognised as one of the best of its kind in the country.

This year, our New Deal contract has been extended to cover both Newham and Tower Hamlets, meaning that we can reach more people than ever.

With our help over 50% successfully find employment. Seeing the New Deal team in action, it's not hard to understand why. A constant buzz surrounds Jonny and the team, real energy and positivity that leads to results.

And what results. Although a small provider we have just secured a contract worth £1.5m a year to run New Deal as one of the London Prime Contractors.

Today we work with over 200 clients. Tomorrow, who knows?



To never do things for people but to guide and support, to train and enable

March

m		5	12	19	26
t		6	13	20	27
w		7	14	21	28
th	1	8	15	22	29
f	2	9	16	23	30
s	3	10	17	24	31
s	4	11	18	25	

Judgement call

Filling in forms is difficult. Especially if you're elderly, disabled or have literacy issues. Maybe English is your second or third language. Now imagine your welfare benefits are dependent on these forms being correct. Every day we guide people through this complicated process.

What if I get the form wrong? Who can I go to if my benefits are refused?

Many of these cases end up at tribunals, where facts can be challenged and statements refuted. A stressful experience.

We work with local trainee lawyers and volunteers from corporate law firms. We train them to represent people going to tribunal, because there is a national shortage of people with the right skills.

With our help 95% of people we represent win their tribunal.

We believe everyone has the right to a fair hearing. So we work to reach those that don't get one.



To tackle causes not symptoms

April

m	30	2	9	16	23
t		3	10	17	24
w		4	11	18	25
th		5	12	19	26
f		6	13	20	27
s		7	14	21	28
s	1	8	15	22	29

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A friendly face

The people we see are proud and dignified. But this pride sometimes means life in a single room afraid of the heating bills. Often this is simply because they are not getting the money that they are entitled to or are reluctant to ask for help.

Many older people live on a tiny income and don't have family to help them. That's where we come in. Sometimes it's support and advice if they are struggling with money or the complex welfare benefits process. Other times it's just a friendly face to talk to.

We'll even visit the homes of people who can't access our walk in advice service. We also offer outreach advice at sheltered housing and other community centres, as well as GP surgeries.

It's about empowering and improving wellbeing, providing that personal touch that we all appreciate. Whether you're young, or just young at heart.



To simply inspire

May

m		7	14	21	28
t	1	8	15	22	29
w	2	9	16	23	30
th	3	10	17	24	31
f	4	11	18	25	
s	5	12	19	26	
s	6	13	20	27	

Sporting chance

You don't have to be great at sports for S-Team to make you feel great. Using sports to reduce conflict between young people from housing estates brings them together and helps them to feel good about themselves, regardless of race, age or disability.

It works like this. A group of young people are playing volleyball, leaping around and having a great time. Watching from the sidelines is a severely disabled boy who can barely walk and has limited movement in his head, neck and arms. He follows the game

closely. Suddenly, he is invited to join in by S-Team staff.

Who? Me?

He starts his game slowly, with others helping out, trying to make it easier. Next thing you know he is playing the game, feeling the thrill of competitive sports.

From the sidelines to the centre.

From exclusion to inclusion.

That's S-Team.



To be driven by dreams, judged on delivery

June

m		4	11	18	25
t		5	12	19	26
w		6	13	20	27
th		7	14	21	28
f	1	8	15	22	29
s	2	9	16	23	30
s	3	10	17	24	

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Confidence. Belief. Self-Awareness

Global Learning Opportunities Beyond Expectations (GLOBE) is as far removed from the press stereotype of 'hoodies' on cushy safaris as it's possible to get. It's an international youth exchange that's enabling Newham young people to go to countries like Japan and Senegal and then play host to a return visit.

These exchanges are hard work. They take place over three weeks and the young people have to fundraise hard for their trip. As hosts, they must plan, get involved with logistics, organise events and keep everything to a tight budget.

That's hard enough to achieve as a professional adult. These are young people, often failing in education, without great employment prospects.

This scheme brings out their real potential. Helped along by our youth workers who are patient, calm and really care, these youth exchanges are broadening the horizons of young people from deprived neighbourhoods and raising their aspirations.



To distinguish between the diversity that enriches society and the inequalities that diminish it

July

m	30	2	9	16	23
t	31	3	10	17	24
w		4	11	18	25
th		5	12	19	26
f		6	13	20	27
s		7	14	21	28
s	1	8	15	22	29

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Big green space

Arc In the Park. It's a new Community Links centre located ... in a park. It's a big happy place painted big happy colours run by a big happy Australian called Mike. He's helped out by staff and volunteers who love what they're doing, you can see it in their faces.

There's loads of space for kids to run around and let off steam with games, sports and adventure play activities. Inside there's more play space and room for drama and music.

During the summer it is home to an open access scheme where hundreds of local children and young people come and go as

they please. During term time it's used by special needs children and in the evenings becomes an after school and youth club.

It's a big green space in an area that doesn't have a lot of that.



To teach but never stop learning

August

m		6	13	20	27
t		7	14	21	28
w	1	8	15	22	29
th	2	9	16	23	30
f	3	10	17	24	31
s	4	11	18	25	
s	5	12	19	26	

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Schools Out

Sophie runs the Education scheme in Silvertown. She works with young people who have complex family problems, suffer from abuse at home or have learning difficulties. So no surprise that they can't settle in school.

Our education programmes support over 120 children and young people each year, from late primary school to more intensive schemes for teenagers who have been excluded from school. This is often the last chance for these young people, their final opportunity to achieve.

Sophie sees the potential in these young people and they prove her right – all students either go on to further education or work.

To truly make an impact in East London we must see more people in work, less poverty and improved well-being. We have to start with education. It's as simple as ABC, really.



To appreciate that those who experience a problem understand it best

September

m		3	10	17	24
t		4	11	18	25
w		5	12	19	26
th		6	13	20	27
f		7	14	21	28
s	1	8	15	22	29
s	2	9	16	23	30

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Youth inclusion

You need to be creative and innovative to get young people to respond. The Youth Inclusion Programme works intensively with 13 to 16 year olds who are engaged in crime or are identified as being most at risk of offending, truancy and social exclusion. The team tries to ensure that the most at risk young people are included in mainstream activities.

That's where the creativity comes in. A recent activity was based on the BBC's The Apprentice, with the group split into teams and set different tasks, such as running workshops on drugs and health.

The project works with the 50 young people most likely to commit crime or anti-social behaviour. Last year, they won an award for achieving an 83% reduction in offending.

So when asked who was hired, Project Manager Mark Steer's answer wasn't surprising, "In the end, three were hired. We should have had two winners but all three were exceptional.

We let others down gently, we didn't just shove them in a taxi with a suitcase!"



To grow – but all to build a network not an empire

October

m	1	8	15	22	29
t	2	9	16	23	30
w	3	10	17	24	31
th	4	11	18	25	
f	5	12	19	26	
s	6	13	20	27	
s	7	14	21	28	

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5 alive

Messing around in a sandpit all morning? Not quite.

It's all about delivering professional, quality care in a safe, welcoming environment. Our network of Pre-School projects includes Mother and Toddler groups, crèches, Carer and Toddler groups and Pre-School schemes.

Pre-Schools are OFSTED registered, which means that parents can choose us to look after their children until they start school. And they do, especially if their child feels settled and happy.

Kim runs the Peabody under 5s scheme and is responsible for their developmental learning.

Little people. Who later become big people. Who need to do well at school, at work and in life.



To act local but think global

November

m		5	12	19	26
t		6	13	20	27
w		7	14	21	28
th	1	8	15	22	29
f	2	9	16	23	30
s	3	10	17	24	
s	4	11	18	25	

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Be the change

Today, Frances spent the morning in Tollgate School working with years 5 and 6 – 134 children in total. She explained We Are What We Do and talked to them about how they can be involved.

In the afternoon the children made drawings of their favourite actions and wrote why they liked them. The drawings are to be turned into posters displayed in shop windows, offices, community buildings and libraries.

Now on their second book, Change the World 9 to 5, We Are What We Do is getting big. From 10,000 copies to half a million.

From schools in Newham to Australia, Canada, Germany and beyond. Hundreds of thousands of people taking action to make the world a better place have made it a truly global movement.

From their project in Newham to We Are What We Do Action days in Uganda, working with individuals, schools, local organisations and businesses to share responsibility and change lives.

www.wearewhatwedo.org



To recognise that we need to give as well as to receive

December

m	31	3	10	17	24
t		4	11	18	25
w		5	12	19	26
th		6	13	20	27
f		7	14	21	28
s	1	8	15	22	29
s	2	9	16	23	30

2 way door

Corporate volunteering gives our projects access to skills, energy and resources. It also offers business employees a great opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

Taking a moment to stop what she was painting, a volunteer told me that she had enjoyed giving her time and felt she had made a difference. When I probed a little further, she admitted to feeling touched and slightly humbled by witnessing the way the staff were transforming young people's lives.

Equally, the young people spending a 'work day' at offices in the City are usually surprised at how welcoming people are. They return feeling that they too could be working there and that it is attainable. Everyone comes away with an appreciation and respect for each other.

A glimpse through the door at what the other world is like breaks down social barriers and makes everyone realise that we are not so different.