



“Community Links’ Youth Inclusion Project really does make a difference”.

Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland pictured here during her visit to our Youth Inclusion project in Forest Gate

# Community **Links**

annual report **04/05**

## About us

Community Links is an innovative charity running community-based projects in east London. Founded in 1977, we now help over 53,000 vulnerable children, young people and adults every year, with most of our work delivered in Newham, one of the poorest boroughs in Europe. Our successes influence both community-based organisations around the UK and national government policy.

## Our vision

To be champions of social change.

## Our purpose

To tackle the causes and consequences of social exclusion by developing and running first rate practical activities in east London and by sharing the local experience with practitioners and policy-makers nationwide.

## Our work ...

is based on the belief that we all have the potential to do great things.

In east London ... Our activities include education programmes, care schemes for children, advice and advocacy, training for adults, respite for those with special needs and much more.

Across the UK ... We pioneer new ideas and share the learning nationally with demonstration projects, evidence based policy contributions, training programmes and practical publications.

## Our year

Just as we encourage and support our service users to develop and grow, Community Links continues to develop through a process of strategic review and reorganisation. Two key staff appointments are now contributing in a strategic way to the strengthening of our organisation. Max Weaver joined Community Links as our new Chief Executive and Gordon Lane began work as our new Director of Finance enabling our Founders to take on new and exciting initiatives within the organisation. linksUK was established as a new national department of Community Links, incorporating our existing policy work and publications programme and developing new initiatives in consultancy, training and public speaking. Our innovative national initiative We Are What We Do was launched with the goal to inspire people to use their everyday actions to change the world. Locally we are working closely with the London Borough of Newham to make our important relationship even stronger.

## The results

- 53,000 children, young people and adults benefited from our network of innovative projects.
- 98%+ attendance on our Education Otherwise programme helping young people excluded from school to complete their education and achieve some qualifications.
- Our New Deal project worked with 337 young people, 155 of whom found long-term employment. This represents nearly 50% of participants securing sustainable work – a figure way above the national average.
- Advice has been delivered in 17 community languages, and sign language, to 6,000 people using our drop-in advice and 3,000 our outreach advice services. 200 people have been represented by expert legal advice at appeals.
- Entitlements were identified for over 1,350 local people delivering more than £2.75 million into the local economy.

- linksUK was launched and delivered 5 consultancy projects, published 5 books, spoke at 15 events, developed 2 UK-wide campaigning networks and carried out 3 major pieces of research.
- We continued to influence social and economic policy – 12 changes in national government policy over the past six years have been linked to our influence.
- New publications included: 'Cheats or Contributors' an important new work on the informal economy, David Robinson's 'Unconditional Leadership' and a series of practical guides for young activists.
- Our national initiative We Are What We Do (WAWWD) launched, with the book 'Change The World For A Fiver' selling more than 125,000 copies. An Australian version has now been published and we are considering approaches from publishers in 9 other countries.
- Other WAWWD activities included a national day of action, a series of films on Channel 4 and a website attracting over 250,000 visitors in its first few weeks alone.
- 164 permanent and 178 sessional staff and more than 350 volunteers made all this possible.

## We do it together

Approximately 80% of our frontline services are delivered by current or former users.

A huge thanks to all of our supporters from companies & trusts, local and central government agencies, statutory agencies and to those individually who have helped to make this possible.



Jan

# Children and youth



*"I like tennis, it's fun"* said ten-year-old **S-Team** member, **Laila Shenair**, pictured here on Wimbledon Ladies' Singles Final Day after representing Community Links by performing the coin toss between finalists **Lindsay Davenport** and, subsequent **Champion, Venus Williams**. Community Links was chosen for this honour by former Champion Virginia Wade.

### S-Team

Set up in 2004, the S-Team project works with more than 5,000 people each year offering an innovative response to conflict within local communities. Sport is used as a medium to bridge differences between groups due to age, racial tension, criminal activity or a combination of the three – with a special focus on young people

between 8 and 21 years old. Both crime and fear of crime have dropped significantly where the project functions.



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Take  
action

Come and join in the fun at a Community Links event while giving vital help to the many practical projects we run. From a great night out, to team building days, or a rewarding challenge, there are lots of opportunities to get involved.

*"Thank you again so much for putting on this event, we all had a blast! It was an even more structured, fun and fast event than I had expected – you all did a great job! We'll definitely be back next year!"*

Mike McEvoy, Linklaters New York after attending the Texaco Community Links Karting Challenge 2005



**April: London Marathon** – our runners take to the streets

**June: Texaco Community Links Karting Challenge** – team based endurance race around the biggest indoor karting track in Europe

**July: The London Triathlon** – enter alone or as part of a team to swim, cycle and run for us

**September: Hydro Active Women's Challenge** – walk, jog or run 5km in London, or Birmingham

**October: Voluthon** – teams of business volunteers join forces to take on fun community challenges that really make a difference.

**Christmas: Children's parties**, the toy appeal, quiz nights, Christmas lunches, and many more festive activities.

**All year round: Exciting challenges** including parachuting, trekking, running and cycling.

Check out our event dates, sign up to our e-newsletter and register for events online by visiting [www.community-links.org](http://www.community-links.org) or contact Emma Taylor, [emma.taylor@community-links.org](mailto:emma.taylor@community-links.org) or 020 7473 9661

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# Influencing and innovation

## UNTIE YOUR TONGUE AND GET LIFE LICKED



A practical guide to speaking up and speaking out

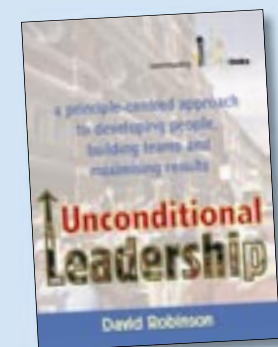
We launched the first three titles in our new Young Activists Series: *How to be a Community Champion*; *How to be a Fundraising Champion*; and *Untie Your Tongue and Get Life Licked* which aim to get young people more involved in their communities.

Full details of the linksUK publications programme can be seen on our website [www.community-links.org](http://www.community-links.org)

Following research work done with a senior secondee from the Inland Revenue into the Informal Economy linksUK published the first part of our research in a report entitled *Self employed people in the informal economy – Cheats or Contributors?* which includes policy recommendations. Further publications will be forthcoming as we continue this area of our research. Our Ideas Annuals continue the sharing of innovative community projects from across the UK.



Publishing is one of the ways that linksUK shares experience from the ground up. This year we published the well received book *Unconditional Leadership* by David Robinson reflecting on his experiences of founding and leading Community Links.



*"The lessons set out here are relevant to anyone who is really serious about making a difference to the world they live in"*

Dr Geoff Mulgan, Director, Young Foundation, formerly Head of No 10 Policy Unit and Founder of Demos

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**Youth Inclusion Project**

Our Forest Gate Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) continues to go from strength to strength and has recently won a national award for its achievements over the past year.

YIP works in close partnership with the Youth Offending Team, police, schools and voluntary sector agencies in offering alternative activities to the 50 young people most likely to commit crime or anti-social behaviour. These carefully

structured activities also help their personal, social and educational development.

**Home Office Minister, Baroness Scotland** (pictured above with young people and workers from YIP) visited Forest Gate in July 2005 and chatted to some of the 13 to 16-year-olds who are involved in the project.

Commenting on the programme Baroness Scotland said "The 83 per cent reduction in offences is exceptional and a great

achievement. The individuals here are now becoming valuable contributors to the community. This is evidence that the YIP really does make a difference. Everyone involved should feel proud of what has been achieved."



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## Advice and outreach work



*"People like dealing with me because I'm just like them."*

Kay Rendell, Community Links Advice Team, pictured above with a client.

The Community Links Advice Team offers advice on welfare benefits, housing and debt at a daily 'drop-in' surgery at our main centre in Canning Town. More than 6,000 people have used this service during the past year. An extensive outreach service has also been set up giving advice at weekly sessions held in a network of over 30 doctors' surgeries, hospitals and

local community centres around east London.

We also visit the homes of those who find it difficult to use our other services, for example elderly, frail and disabled people. Overall our outreach work enables 3,000 of the most vulnerable people to gain valuable access to advice and information on their entitlements.

### **Jobcentre Project**

Community Links has now recruited and trained more than 160 volunteers to help

claimants fill in benefit application forms in local Jobcentres. The aim is to help local people make better use of the benefits available, speed up their administration, and give advisers more time to spend with clients finding jobs.

Over the last 3 years more than 2,000 residents have received support. Problems with late or non payment of benefits reduced by 70%; the wait for a benefit payment has been reduced from 6-8 weeks to 3-5 days; staff were able to raise the job entry rate to the highest in the UK!

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### linksUK 'What if...?' Team

Our 'What if...?' Team (formerly known as the Social Enterprise Zone or SEZ) is now part of linksUK – our national programme of work.

The 'What if...?' team works with the users and staff of local public sector services to identify barriers to efficiency; to gather ideas for solutions; and run practical projects to test these ideas. Over the last six years we have designed new

ways to improve the delivery of public services in Newham. For example, we set up an independent disability benefits helpline, and a form-filling and interpreting service in local Jobcentres. On the basis of the practical evidence from our projects, we have secured 12 national policy changes.

We run a programme of secondments for civil servants to come and see for

themselves how policy translates into practice on the ground. Last year linksUK hosted a high level secondee from the Inland Revenue.

*"Community Links' practical work is rooted in east London, but they understand and clearly articulate the national implications."*

Lord Richard Best,  
Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

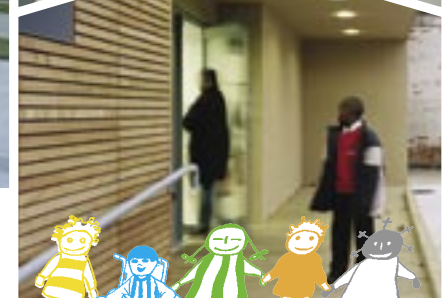
## Keeping young people safe



### Children and Young People's Resource Centres

In the past year we secured funding and built a new state-of-the-art facility in East Ham. PlayHut 2 (pictured above) is located within East Ham park and offers a medium sized activity space, computer, music and multi-sensory rooms ( for use by disabled children). Already over 200 children and young people are using PlayHut 2 each week.

Community Links now facilitates 11 resource centres like PlayHut 2 across the borough of Newham. These centres offer a full programme of activities to children and young people, 3 to 19-year-olds, under the same roof. Each centre offers year round, inclusive provision, opening when others don't and fully involving the young people in the planning, running and development of their centre. We also took on the former Newham Squash Club



premises last year, with the help of Newham's Culture and Community department, and have converted it into a leisure, information and education facility for young people.

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## Helping local people into employment

### New Deal

Our New Deal project continued to achieve high levels of success over the past year, way above the national average. Designed to support young people to find employment when all else has failed, we are again identified as the top performing programme in London. 155 of our 337 young people found good sustainable jobs thus gaining their stake in society.

*“Brendon’s sunny character and huge smile were the main selling points in his finding work. Brendon constantly contacted employers, whilst improving his limited literacy skills, and volunteering with the PDSA.”*

Christine Bowden, Programmes Manager,  
Community Links New Deal

Accompanied by Barry Cullen, Senior Jobsearch Tutor, Brendon successfully gained full time employment with BHS in Oxford Street and his reliability and enthusiasm has recently gained him greater responsibility.

*“After losing my dad, I found myself on my own and very far from home. I was determined to stop depending on others. I heard about the Links advice course, did this for one year, then had the confidence to do IT training too. I returned to Links on placement, then volunteered and then was appointed to a paid volunteer coordinator post – giving others the first step that I was given. Life has completely turned around for me and my children.”*

Farida Ssali, Community Links Advice Team



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*"We have run these courses for the last seven years and results have been spectacular. Eight of our current advice team were previous students on the course. Others are now employed by other advice agencies such as Age Concern or Citizens Advice or are accessing further education in the fields of community development or advice giving."*

Jude Simmons, Head of Community Work at Community Links

**Training in Advice and Community Development Work**

Last year saw 34 local people gaining professional qualifications in Advice Work or Community Development. Attendees on our courses have found skilled employment within their own communities, thereby maximising the employment potential for local people and regenerating the local economy.

**Community Development**

Our Community Development worker is working in partnership with other local

organisations in South Canning Town to improve the quality of life of residents in this deprived area. The worker has been instrumental in setting up the hugely successful Community Childcare Service which provides good quality, affordable childcare accessible to all parents and carers in the local community. Local people are also offered training as childminders and home carers to national standards so that they can access jobs.

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## We Are What We Do

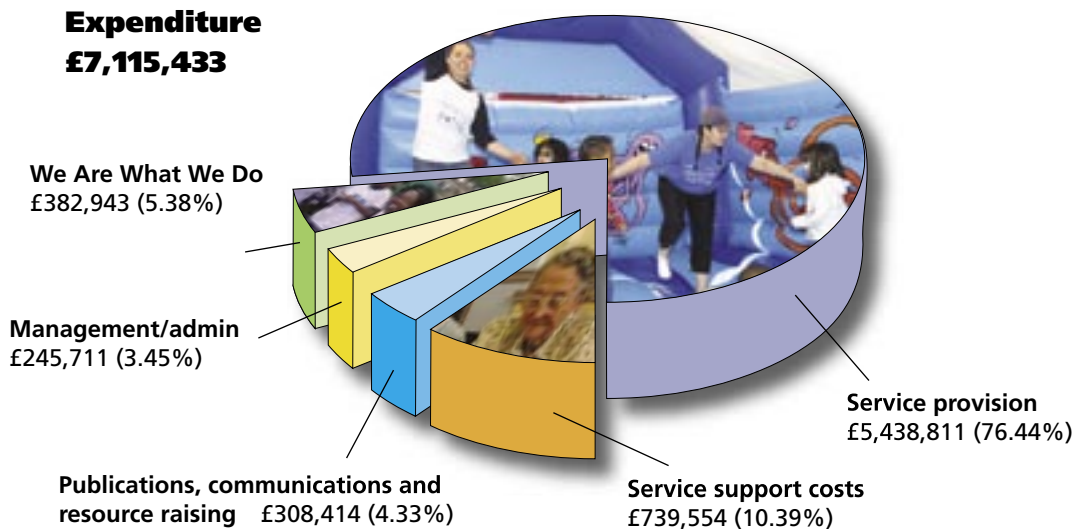
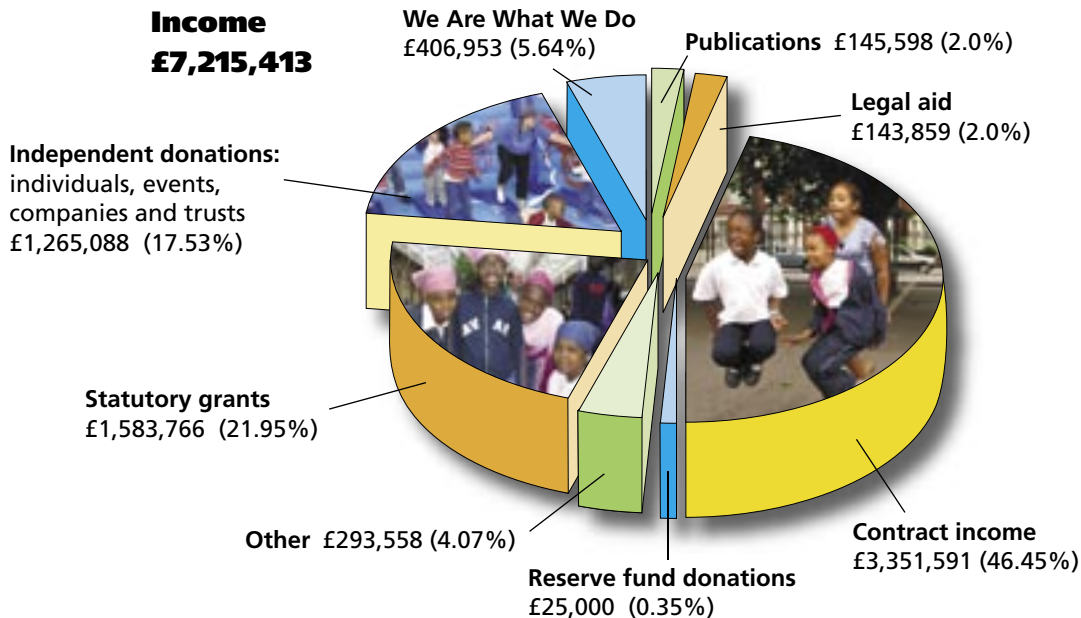
We Are What We Do is our latest national initiative. Rooted in our practical experience it is a new movement inspiring people to use their everyday actions to change the world for the better. We began with a book – **Change The World For A Fiver** – which has now sold more than 125,000 copies. Subsequent activities included the national day of action and a

series of films on Channel 4, a website attracting over 250,000 visitors in the opening weeks, an acclaimed schools programme and much more. The response, not just in the UK but across the globe has been extraordinary! Check the recently extended website – **www.wearewhatwedo.org** – for details of a movement that is growing very rapidly.

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# Spending wisely

We are enormously indebted to all our funders who make our work possible. In addition, the generous gifts in kind and volunteer time donated by our supporters generate significant savings for us. In return, we make sure that wherever we do have to spend money, we do so wisely.



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# Christmas activities and Christmas Appeal



## Christmas activities and Christmas Appeal

Our annual Christmas Appeal – run jointly with local paper, the Newham Recorder – is firmly established as the major bringer of Christmas happiness to the disadvantaged children of Newham. The appeal is a real community effort with over 350 separate contributors ranging from school children giving their weekly pocket money, clubs, pubs and offices collecting toys to pensioners donating their Christmas bonus. Last year nearly 4,000 children received a bag of gifts to open on Christmas morning.

Last December over 900 children attended one of the many Community Links Christmas Parties – for

many this is the first party they have ever been to. With non-stop music, entertainment and a visit from Santa with a present for everyone, this is a memorable event for every child. Every year we take children to see (and shout at!) a traditional live pantomime. Last Christmastime more than 2,000 were taken. For the vast majority this is their first experience of live theatre – “Oh yes it is!”.

Most of us take gifts and special treats at Christmas for granted however, for those living on a low income, the expense of Christmas is a real struggle and the other bills do not go away.

**If you would like to help with our Christmas activities for needy young children please contact Paula Blake on 020 7473 9659, or [paula.blake@community-links.org](mailto:paula.blake@community-links.org)**

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*Season's Greetings from Community Links to our supporters, our staff and volunteers and most importantly to all the people of Newham and east London who it is our privilege to work with in the following ways:*

After-School Clubs  
 Appeals and Tribunal Representation  
 ASTA Resource Centre  
 At Risk Groups  
 Behaviour Improvement Programme  
 Britannia Resource Centre  
 Carer-Toddler Groups  
 CBS Youth Project  
 Chatsworth Project  
 Choice 136  
 Christmas Appeal  
 Claimant Support Services  
 Community Food Cooperative  
 Community Childcare Service  
 Community Outreach Advice Services  
 Crèche Projects  
 Deaf Advice Services

Deep Into Employment  
 Elderly Advice Services  
 Education Otherwise  
 Fathers Project  
 Form Filling Support  
 Free Law – evening legal advice sessions  
 GP Outreach Advice Services  
 Holiday Programme  
 Holiday Projects  
 Home Visit Advice Services  
 Hudsons Project  
 Hudsons Resource Centre  
 Instant Response Team  
 Manor Park Project  
 Moving On  
 New Deal for Young People  
 Newtown Resource Centre

Open Door Advice Sessions  
 Phoenix  
 Pre-School Groups  
 Project Transition  
 Project Inclusion  
 REC Resource Centre  
 S-Team  
 Safe In The City  
 Saturday Autistic Group  
 Tax Credits Awareness Project  
 Teenage Health Project  
 Teenage Parent Support Projects  
 Teenage Pregnancy Project  
 Three Mills Resource Centre  
 Toy Libraries  
 Warmzone  
 Year Round After-School Care Schemes

# Community **links'** CV

“ To generate change. To tackle causes not symptoms, find solutions not palliatives. To recognise that we all need to give as well as to receive and to appreciate that those who experience a problem understand it best. To act local but to think global, teach but never stop learning. To distinguish between the diversity that enriches our society and the inequalities that diminish it. To grow – but all to build a network, not an empire. To be driven by dreams, judged on delivery. To never do things for people but to guide and support, to train and enable, to simply inspire. ”

Community Links tackles the causes and consequences of social exclusion by developing and running practical activities in east London and by sharing the local experience with practitioners and policy-makers nationwide. Here are some of our achievements:

## **'To generate change'**

Community Links advice sessions on unsafe tower block estates in the 1980s inspired the Newham Tower Block Tenants Campaign. This became the outstanding direct action campaign of its time, forcing the demolition of the notorious Ronan Point in 1986 and leading to the birth of The National Tower Block Campaign and the demolition of similar dangerous buildings across the UK.

## **'To tackle causes not symptoms'**

In 2005, youth crime in Newham dropped by 25% (compared to 1% for other London boroughs). Our Youth Inclusion Programme has reduced arrest rates among its target group by 83%. Our innovative sports project, S Team, uses sports as a medium to bring together young people who are in conflict or who are disengaged from their communities. Both crime and fear of crime have dropped significantly where the project functions.

## **'To find solutions not palliatives'**

We believe that every child can succeed but some are denied the opportunity. There is a vicious cycle of

poverty and low educational achievement. Children excluded at Year 9 (aged 13) are unlikely to ever go back into school. They are identified as trouble and face an uncertain future as they move towards adulthood. Our Education Otherwise project offers over 120 full time education places. In 2005, 45 excluded young people sat public examinations successfully accumulating over 200 passes between them. Our support turns their lives around.

## **'To recognise that we need to give as well as to receive'**

When our Ambassador, Sir Neil Shaw, retired in 1998 we recognised his contribution to Community Links with our Ambassadors Award. In partnership with Business in the Community the idea has been developed to become the Prince of Wales Ambassador Award, recognising outstanding contributions to Corporate Social Responsibility.

“Community Links is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when people come together in partnership”

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

### **'To appreciate that those who experience a problem understand it best'**

In 1998, we set up the Social Enterprise Zone (now known as the 'What if...?' team) which harnesses the wealth of knowledge that exists in our community to enhance the delivery of local public services. In 2004 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published Enduring Change a report on how our work to date has secured 12 national policy changes which improve public services for communities across the country. For example:

#### **We suggested in October 2000**

"Reinstate automatically all benefits at their previous levels where a job comes to an end within a specified period of time, for example, six months."

#### **Policy Announcement**

"From April 2002 the process for reclaiming benefit for people on Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support returning to benefit after taking up full-time work for periods of up to 12 weeks will be streamlined."

#### **Community Links What if...? team proposal**

"Make the existing Housing Benefit run-on of four weeks automatic."

#### **Policy Announcement**

"The rules of the Housing Benefit Extended Payment scheme ... will be simplified to ensure that payments are as near automatic as possible, reducing the likelihood of rent arrears building up while claims for in-work support are processed."

### **'To act local but think global'**

In 2004 Community Links created We Are What We Do, a new international movement which inspires people to use their everyday actions to change the world. We Are What We Do was launched with the publication of Change The World For A Fiver. The book sold more than 125,000 copies in the first six months. The interactive website [www.wearewhatwedo.org](http://www.wearewhatwedo.org) has recorded 70,000 completed actions from people around the world.

Several international editions of the book are now in development.

### **'To teach but never stop learning'**

Our national programme of work, linksUK, shares experience from the ground up offering practitioner-led consultancy; training and secondment opportunities; policy development and a publications programme. linksUK brings people together to share experiences, to innovate and to take action. In 2005 we launched our Collaborative Inquiry into the Values of the Third Sector.

“Community Links’ practical work is rooted in east London, but they understand and clearly articulate the national implications.”

Lord Richard Best,  
Director, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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

Newham has the most diverse population in the UK; more than 100 languages are spoken locally. In 1977, our founders had a dream that they could find new ways of addressing old problems and that they could do it with the whole community – 28 years later Community Links runs 140 projects from 60 sites in east London, working with over 50,000 people each year. Approximately 80% of our frontline services are delivered by current or former users.

“People like dealing with me because I’m just like them”

Kay Rendell, Community Links Advice Team

**‘To grow – but all to build a network, not an empire’**

Our publications include 15 Ideas Annuals. Published since 1989 and featuring more than 1,300 ideas for community regeneration from organisations across the country. These have now spawned issue-based Annuals, such as Health and Community Safety Annuals and regional Annuals, such as the Northern Ireland Annual. An award winning special edition of our Ideas Annual ‘Creating Magic’ detailing the success of the first year of the Local Network Fund was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills and launched at a Downing Street reception in 2003.

**‘To be driven by dreams, judged on delivery’**

At a Community Links’ Business Supporters’ Dinner in Summer 1998, we discussed the idea of a ‘people’s resolution’, seizing the mood of the millennium to raise money through a tithe. In 2000, Marks & Spencer’s launched the Children’s Promise, which has raised £19 million through final hour’s payroll giving.

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

Every adult can build a ladder out of poverty. We provide the hammer and nails. During 2004, we delivered specialist advice on debt, housing and welfare benefits to 9,000 people. Our advice helps people to access their basic rights, putting the money they are eligible for in their pockets (over half are under-claiming benefits) and helping them to rebuild their lives. We grow our own Advisors through an accredited training programme in Advice Work.

**‘To simply inspire’**

*“Community Links were fundamental to the development of TimeBank. Indeed, they inspired and came up with the idea of people giving what they are passionate about as opposed to people giving their time because they feel it is their duty. During the last 20 years, the team at Community Links have inspired all aspects of my work and each and every charity I have founded is a tribute to them.”*

Jane Tewson, Founder of TimeBank, Comic Relief, Charity Projects and Pilotlight.



“Community Links’  
work inspires us all”

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

# A bit more about us

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.



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**We are very grateful to all of our supporters, enabling our projects to run throughout the year.**

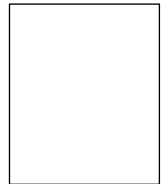
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David Hares, Chris King, Toby Stokes.



**Emma Taylor**  
**Community Links**  
105 Barking Road,  
Canning town  
London  
E16 4HQ



**Community Links**  
105 Barking Road, Canning Town  
London E16 4HQ

**tel:** 020 7473 2270  
**www.community-links.org**

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**emma.taylor@community-links.org**