

Our Strategy 2009–13

Shared Vision: Lasting Impact



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Community Links is an innovative charity with over 30 years of experience of running community based projects in east London and sharing local lessons to inspire positive social change.

This is an exciting time for east London. Newham, our home borough, has high levels of deprivation, poverty and unemployment, but also has regeneration on a unprecedented scale – the Olympics, Stratford, Royal Docks and the sixth largest regeneration project in Europe at Canning Town, which together combine into physical development many times the size of Canary Wharf. We want to ensure this unprecedented opportunity benefits the communities we support; but the challenges they face are complex, so we need to tackle more than one problem at a time.

We are therefore focusing our work over the next five years on four strategic aims.

Raising aspirations – building confidence and life skills, empowering people to explore their dreams, set realistic and achievable goals and fulfil their potential.

Extending opportunities – supporting those for whom progression from school to college to employment does not run smoothly, enabling them to get back on track and make a positive contribution to their own lives and to the community

Tackling poverty – ensuring families can meet their basic material needs - adequate income, appropriate housing, a safe and stable environment – and build a brighter future.

Strengthening communities – helping people to feel safer, building bridges across ages and cultures, and working to build a better society for all

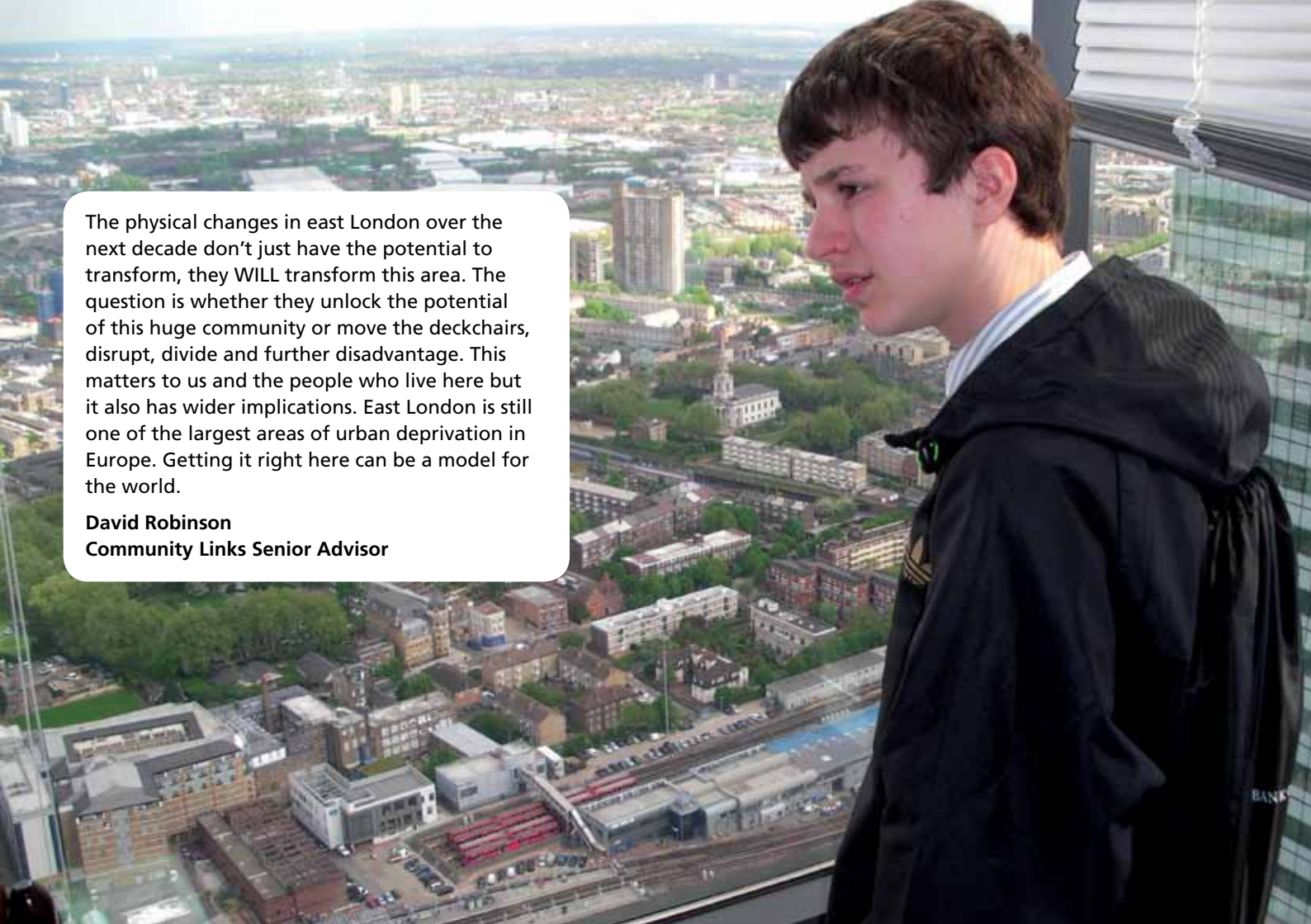
This Strategy Summary sets out our plans for the next five years – what we aim to do, what we are seeking to achieve, and how we will measure our progress towards enabling this very young, exceptionally diverse, vibrant community to make the most of this once in lifetime opportunity.

“The innovative charity at the forefront of community regeneration”

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP

“...one of Britain’s most inspiring community organisations”

Rt Hon David Cameron MP

A young man with dark hair, wearing a black jacket over a white collared shirt, is looking out of a window. The window provides a high-angle view of a dense urban area, likely East London, with various buildings, streets, and green spaces. The man is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking towards the left. The background shows a vast cityscape under a clear sky.

The physical changes in east London over the next decade don't just have the potential to transform, they WILL transform this area. The question is whether they unlock the potential of this huge community or move the deckchairs, disrupt, divide and further disadvantage. This matters to us and the people who live here but it also has wider implications. East London is still one of the largest areas of urban deprivation in Europe. Getting it right here can be a model for the world.

David Robinson
Community Links Senior Advisor

Shared Vision: Lasting Impact

OUR VISION: Confident and inclusive communities where everyone is able to fulfil their potential and no one is left behind.

Raising aspirations

1. Offer children and young people new and challenging experiences to build confidence and life-skills
2. Develop a range of accreditation and progression routes
3. Train and enable people to support others in their communities
4. Support people to tell their own stories - 'voices from the ground up'
5. Connect people together from different worlds to build new networks

Local Outcome: *Individuals able to reach for better opportunities in life.*

National Outcome: *Communities able to make a difference for themselves and others*

Extending opportunities

6. Support children and young people excluded from education to achieve
7. Develop targeted and practical support for NEETS
8. Address basic skills gaps through community based training
9. Offer wide range of into-employment support to over 18s
10. Work with partners to develop work placements and new experiences

Local Outcome: *Individuals have more opportunities to study, get qualifications and work.*

National Outcome: *Policies which reduce exclusion in education, training and employment*

OUR PURPOSE is to be champions of social change, tackling the causes and consequences of social exclusion by developing and running first rate practical activities in east London and sharing the local experience with practitioners and policy-makers nationwide.

Tackling poverty

11. Increase financial literacy through education and practical support
12. Offer advice and legal support so people can secure their basic rights
13. Develop targeted work with families to tackle child and pensioner poverty
14. Train local people and collaborate with others to deliver poverty reduction initiatives
15. Secure reform of the tax and benefits system

Local Outcome: *Individuals enabled to address their basic material needs*

National Outcome: *Policies which reduce the number of people living in poverty*

Strengthening communities

16. Offer range of support to young people most at risk of offending
17. Develop network of family support workers to address complex needs
18. Extend practical support to emerging community organisations
19. Draw out and develop leadership potential in communities everywhere
20. Connect organisations from all sectors to collaborate for social change

Local Outcome: *Individuals are positive about their communities and are actively engaged in a thriving third sector.*

National Outcome: *Communities engaged in positive social action.*

OUR VALUES: To generate change. To tackle causes not symptoms, find solutions not palliatives. To recognise that we need to give as well as to receive and to appreciate that those who experience a problem understand it best. To act local but think global, teach but never stop learning. To distinguish between the diversity that enriches 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'.

Well -Located and Well-Connected

21. Develop Community Hubs
22. Connect communities virtually
23. Work with strategic partners across east London

Integrated and Inclusive

24. Grow Our Own staff
25. Involve users in the design and delivery of services
26. Engage volunteers effectively

Innovative and Influential

27. Ground up approach to innovation
28. Measure the difference we make
29. Share our learning with practitioners and policy makers

Stable and Sustainable

30. Diversify income sources
31. Increase free reserves
32. Develop income from for- profit enterprises

Why we can deliver:

Community Links is the largest multipurpose local organisation in the UK, with 60 projects running out of 25 centres, supporting over 30,000 service users each year

We have exceptionally strong local roots. The majority of our frontline staff live in the area: many are former service-users who benefited from our '**Grow Our Own**' programmes.

We have built strong and lasting partnerships with those who share our vision – including local and national government, businesses and third sector organisations – and who work with us to make a real difference.

We maximise our impact by drawing out the learning from our local work, sharing it with other practitioners and influencing the development of national policy.



Download a full copy of our **Strategic Plan** from www.community-links.org, if you share our vision and would like to help us fulfil it please contact geraldine.blake@community-links.org



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