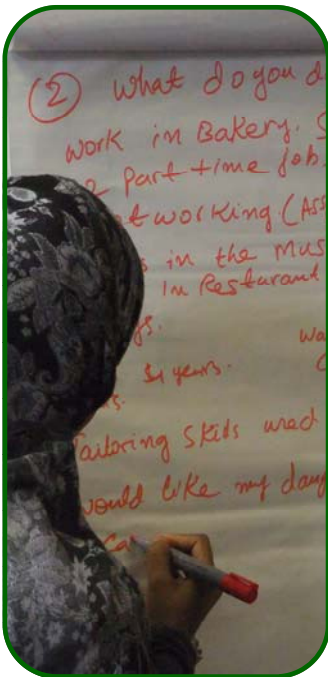


Tackling Working -Age Poverty Programme



Project Staff

Staff at Community Links, Church Action on Poverty and all staff in our partner organisations were admirably led by Gary Blake, EY2010 Project Coordinator, Community Links.

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And finally to the many local people who took part throughout the course of the year. We are very grateful and proud to have worked alongside you.

Community Links

Our purpose is to champion social change. We pioneer new ideas and new ways of working locally and share the learning nationally with practitioners and policy makers. As a result, we are recognized as national leaders in regeneration and social policy.

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Introduction

More than just a Launch, Lunch and a Logo

Community Links experience of 2010, the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

Aaron Barbour Head of Links UK

There is a general consensus in the charity sector that a special “Year” (or a “Week”) dedicated to a cause probably won’t change things very much. A cynical view says that they are little more than a ‘launch, lunch and a logo’ and to a degree this is right. They might be a helpful reminder of the issue, encourage some people to get involved or put their hand in their pockets, but mostly we just pass on by.

We didn’t want our contribution to the European Year Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010) to be tokenistic or a waste of the input. Our work programme for the Year was realistic in what we wanted to achieve. Not the eradication of poverty but raising awareness about the issues, by actively involving people experiencing poverty to voice their experiences and identify solutions. This approach emerges from the values we hold and the ways in which we and our partners already deliver our work.

Working-Age Poverty was one of four national themed programmes of the Year. We very much wanted to deliver this programme in our way, on our terms – from the ground up and involving service users. The DWP respected this and required minimal reporting back, for which we are thankful. This is the approach we’ve taken over the last 35 years, and we will continue to advocate for it to be used by government departments and other organisations when they next do a special “Year”.

Values

“Values are the beginning, the means and the end”

Community Links, Living Values, 2006

Community Links believes values are important. Values shape what the organisation does and the way the organisation does it – how it manages, how decisions are made, the manner in which people work.

Community Links founding statement expresses 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”.

We worked with partners who share our values. Church Action on Poverty, Oxfam and others who became our partners throughout the year, in part, because we share a similar ethos and approach to our work:

1. Empowering people: Increasing people's control over the decisions that affect their lives, by encouraging people to take the initiative, self- and mutual-help and foster action that is led by people's needs.

An important focus of the Year was to engage with people of working-age who had direct experience of poverty. One of Community Links' founding statements is to never do things for people but to guide and support, so putting local people at the heart of their own change. The programme was successful in engaging 1,199 participants, involving them and valuing them as active participants. *"Lots of opportunities to participate rather than just listen."* (Participant at the Welsh Dialogue Meeting) *"It was very interactive, open to participation."* (Participant at London Dialogue Meeting)

We developed a four-stage programme for the Year. This combined with our training and communication activities, enabled people to get involved and contribute through the listening events, dialogue meetings, policy meetings and legacy. Many participants commented on how they had not been involved like this before and welcomed the opportunity to express and share their views and listen to others. Through this process participants' levels of confidence grew, and this experience has encouraged many people to participate in future debates and opportunities. Many of the ideas developed throughout the Year are being further developed by local people and local community organisations in 2011, independently of Community Links and its partners.

Our experience of working with local organisations and devolved partners was generally positive. There were different levels of involvement and capacity. Some were used to this way and structure of working. Others were coming to the Year fresh. It helped that our Programme Co-ordinator had 20 years of experience of frontline community development work. He could relate to many of their issues, and they to him, as well as offering appropriate and practical support. This reflects the Voluntary and Community sector, and added to the richness of the Year.

2. Pursing equality: *Ensuring everyone has equal opportunity to achieve their potential.*

EY2010 helped build the knowledge, skills and capacity of individuals, as well as that of many of the organisations we worked with. Through running the listening events many organisations learnt new skills in how to involve their users, participate in meaningful consultation methods and to encourage and promote collective and individual action. *"We have never run an event like this before, but after doing this listening event we now have the skills and confidence to do similar events in the future."* (Co-ordinator of a small community organisation in the Midlands)

We offered facilitation support throughout the Year. For example, we provided the tools (how to... facilitate a workshop training), materials (fact sheets about poverty to inform discussions at the listening events; and Action Packs - guides about running such events); and financial support, through a small bursary fund, to enable people to travel to the listening events. Organisations liked this type of practical support. In addition our Co-

ordinator and relevant team members were always available over the phone, via email or in person to offer advice and support. A facilitator from a listening event in London said: *“The information sheets and quiz helped to engage participants and began a mini-discussion, as it highlighted people’s lack of knowledge on working age poverty and working rights”*. Another noted that *“It was very good because it helped people talk about their experiences or those they knew who are in poverty. I especially enjoyed the fact that people had varied views on their perceptions of poverty.”*

Our training programmes helped individuals and organisations build confidence and learn new skills that they will use in the future. A Community Development Manager from Bristol who attended the Campaigns training course said: *“After this training participants felt that they didn’t want to stop once the training had finished. We discussed what we could do next and the group involved in the training decided that they wanted to start up a local campaigns group. We’ve not had a campaigns group before but early in the New Year we will be meeting to discuss and plan some of the local issues the group want to start campaigns on. The training that we had has provided us with both the skills and confidence needed to do this.”*

3. Transforming lives: *Changing the conditions that diminish our society by asking questions about the problems and pioneering new ways of solving them.*

“The group that took part was made up of 18-30 year olds, an age bracket commonly portrayed as politically and socially apathetic. Discussing working-age poverty with these young people showed how wrong this is. Their responses were impassioned, constructive and rooted in their day-to-day experiences.”
(Listening event participant from London)

“It was an amazing experience and I’m very thankful for having the opportunity to put across some of my experiences of using Jobcentre Plus. More than that, it was a brilliant time, and I loved meeting some wonderful people and seeing a different perspective on things.” (Policy Meeting participant from Neath, Wales)

4. Making voices heard: *Supporting people to make their voices heard by advocating for themselves and sharing their stories widely.*

The Year provided several opportunities for people experiencing poverty to speak up and speak out, sharing their stories through the listening events and policy meetings with ministers and civil servants. Their stories were shared more widely through the publications, the media and use of online social media. For example, we published 46 blog posts over the course of the Year, which attracted over 32,000 hits. By using a combination of traditional broadcast and new media we were able to reach many more people than we would have been able to, even as little as three years ago. We used free and easy to use new media and social networking technology like blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, flickr to connect and collaborate with people. Building relationships and a loose network enabled us to engage with people very quickly. It takes just a matter of minutes to upload a short

video or blog post about an event and then start conversations with people about the issues raised, as well as then engaging with them on other aspects of the Year.

Our Programme Co-ordinator and core staff team were able to support people and organisations building skills and confidence through the training and materials offered. However we had to make our own voice heard in the absence of any nationally or EU-wide co-ordinated communications activity. We felt this was a missed opportunity to raise awareness of EY2010.

Another Community Links project, Chain Reaction, is based on the belief that “we all have the power of our own actions, but that none of us on our own can create social change, not governments, not businesses, not charities. We succeed when we work together”. We focused on using EY2010 to help individuals and organisations to connect together, from different sectors and parts of the UK.

Throughout the Year we provided spaces - at ‘real-life events’ and online - in which people could collaborate with others. *“I most enjoyed meeting others working with the unemployed, sharing practice and experience.”* (Public Sector worker at Cardiff Dialogue Meeting) *“I most enjoyed meeting people with direct experience of the issues – very inspiring to see them getting the opportunity to speak out.”* (Participant at Manchester Dialogue Meeting) *“I found the workshops very informative to hear views that I would not normally hear or consider.”* (Civil servant at a Policy Meeting).

5. Doing a good job: *Inspired by dreams and judged on delivery.*

Community Links and our partners had the necessary organisational infrastructure and experience to deliver this large, national Year. To make it a success we had:

Clearly identified objectives.

- A solid plan.
- A dedicated Co-ordinator, who was able to juggle the day-to-day, whilst keeping an eye on the overall Year and external partners, including reporting to DWP. It helped that our Co-ordinator acted as a single point of contact for the Year.
- Strong project management, including clear allocation of roles and responsibilities across the teams, regular project meetings, plenty of contact in between via phone and email, and formal review sessions.

All of which helped us to engage double the numbers of people and organisations we had originally expected to: 1,199 individuals in total. If we had not had these key ingredients such a wide ranging subject as working-age poverty would have quickly taken us off course.

Together with our partners we were able to make the Year a success in part because we had the financial ability to make it so. It enabled new national and local partnerships to be developed with organisations and individuals coming together to look at issues of working-age poverty. Joint funding from the DWP and European Commission allowed us to recruit a

Programme Co-ordinator for the Year and fund a small core team to organise and deliver the Year's activity.

We allocated 20% of the budget to ensure that people who experience poverty and community organisations could participate; without this support they would not have been able to join in. Without funding from DWP and EU we could have not afforded to do this. We paid for various expenses: travel, catering, room hire, childcare, translation, stationary and other materials, a small amount of equipment (e.g. camcorders for shortlisted organisations to take part in the Tackling Poverty Awards). The small bits of funding allowed many who normally don't take part in awareness events to do so; and enabled us to work with established organisations, rather than starting up short-lived new organisation based on a special Year.

Summary

Community Links, in partnership with Church Action on Poverty and partners, was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in March 2010 to deliver one of the four national themed programmes – Working-Age Poverty – of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010. This report is a summary of the concluding report.

For more information about Community Links EY2010 programme visit: www.community-links.org/our-national-work/eu2010/

About the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010

Almost 84 million (17%) Europeans live at risk of poverty. In the UK around 20% of adults live in poverty. This isn't just people on benefits - over half are in families where at least one person works. Many are poor because they can't work, and benefits are not enough to lift them out of poverty. Others can work but can't find a job. And many are in jobs that don't pay enough to raise them out of poverty. For example in 2009, 22% of women were paid less than £7 per hour.

Read our poverty factsheet for more information: [www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/ey2010%20Factsheet%20\(final\).pdf](http://www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/ey2010%20Factsheet%20(final).pdf)

Inspired by its founding principle of solidarity, the European Union joined forces with its Member States to make 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The key objectives were to:

1. To raise public awareness about these issues; renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion; and to challenge stereotypes and collective perceptions of poverty.
2. To promote and facilitate engagement, to give voice to the concerns of people who have to live with poverty and social exclusion.
3. To ensure a lasting legacy.

A series of activities were run by social partners and governments across Europe throughout 2010. For more information visit:

www.2010againstopoverty.eu/homepage.html?langid=en

To promote the year in the UK the Department for Work and Pensions commissioned four thematic programmes and a series of regional events. The four thematic programmes were:

1. Child Poverty and Social Exclusion (Save the Children)
2. Multiple Deprivation and those who are most at risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion (Mentoring and Befriending Foundation)
3. Older People and Poverty and Social Exclusion (Community Service Volunteers (CSV))
4. Working-Age Poverty and Social Exclusion (Community Links and partners)

For more information visit: www.dwp.gov.uk/european-year-2010/

About Community Links

Community Links is an innovative charity running a network of over 60 community projects in east London. We work with over 30,000 children, young people and adults each year. Our record of success over 30 years is shared via evidence-based research and policy contributions; training and consultancy programmes; and communications programme including events and practical publications. Our national work seeks to share the local learning across the country to widen the impact of our projects and generate lasting social change.

Community Links, with Church Action on Poverty and its partners (see below), has a participative and inclusive approach to supporting people experiencing disadvantage to build their own ladders out of poverty, be that through practical local services, growing networks, research, communications and campaigns. This ground up approach to working with people was taken throughout the year's work.

The 'Tackling Working-Age Poverty' programme

Objectives

The objectives for Community Links and its partners were to:

1. Uncover the policy issues that keep people poor, and take them to policymakers.
2. Identify some of the myths about working-age people in poverty, and develop a programme of work to tackle them.
3. Recognise and share examples of good practice in tackling poverty, particularly amongst small local organisations.
4. Build the capacity of small organisations to campaign on issues in their local area.

Programme activities

Stage1: The programme established a participative framework within which to engage and guide the activity. The 'Tackling Working-Age Poverty' programme, including a three-stage listening, dialogue and policy meetings, were delivered through a series of grassroots meetings around the UK, to identify and then share some of the issues faced by people living in working-age poverty with policymakers and the wider public.

Stage 2: The programme raised awareness by communicating and promoting our tackling working-age poverty programme by:

- Producing, sharing and transferring practical materials and publications about working-age poverty.
- Delivering a communication and dissemination programme, including engaging the media.
- Organising the Tackling Poverty Awards to recognise projects that tackle working-age poverty.
- Conducting a small piece of research into working-age poverty with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Outcomes

As a result we have

Raised awareness by:

- Communicating and promoting EY2010; promoting UK strategies to tackle poverty; building a community of interested participants; and enabling people to raise awareness and gain media coverage in their local communities.
- The three types of meetings: self-organised, dialogue and policy, the research, communications work all raised issues and strengthen solidarity, whilst developing solutions, in local communities, government, media, academia and think-tank circles.

Promoted and facilitated engagement:

- Establishing a framework within which to engage and guide activity, through Community Links future campaigns, and the development of the sustainable livelihoods approach as a method of engagement, analysis, and policy and practice development.
- Using participative approaches. These empowered people by providing the mechanism (online and real-life meetings), tools (how to... guides), skills (training) so enabling people to do things for themselves.

Ensured a lasting legacy:

- Grounding the knowledge, skills and on-going engagement in local communities
- Promoting, sharing and transferring practical materials and examples of good practice
- A community (structure) built through engagement – channelled through our networks
- Policymakers more aware of the issues and solutions and connected to more grassroots activities and organisations
- Continuing the work through Community Links future campaigns, and CAP's sustainable livelihoods programme, the wider EY2010 network and EAPN.

Taking a participative approach

An important focus of the programme was to engage with people of working-age who had direct experience of poverty. One of Community Links' founding statements is that people who experience a problem understand it best, so putting local people at the heart of their own change. The programme has been successful in engaging 1,199 participants, in a participatory not a passive way, involving them and valuing them: *"Lots of opportunities to participate rather than just listen."* Participant at the Welsh Dialogue Meeting. *"It was very interactive, open to participation."* Participant at London Dialogue Meeting.

Many participants involved in this programme commented on how they had not been involved like this before and welcomed the opportunity to express their views, share these views and listen to others. Through this process participants' levels of confidence have

grown and this experience will encourage many people to participate in future debates, future opportunities and has encouraged Active Citizenship. *“I would have liked to contribute more but I have never done this before.”* Participant at campaigns training course in Bristol.

This project has helped build the knowledge, skills and capacity of individuals, as well as that of many of the organisations it has worked with. Through running listening events many organisations have learnt new skills in how to involve their users, participate in meaningful consultation methods and to encourage and promote collective and individual empowerment. *“We have never run an event like this before, but after doing this Listening Event we now have the skills and confidence to do similar events in the future.”* Coordinator of a small community organisation in the Midlands.

While the majority of participants had direct experience of poverty, those participating also included policymakers for example, Members of Parliament; participants from the private sector, for example bankers working at Canary Wharf; Chief Executives of Voluntary Sector Organisations; and users from many different grass root organisations. These users were from a diverse range of organisations, for example organisations working with carers, BME women, people living in rural areas, people dealing with mental illness, young people, single parents, unemployed workers, people for whom English is an additional language, Welsh speakers, the African community, refugees, asylum seekers, homeless people, home-workers, people of different faiths and former political prisoners.

For more information visit: www.community-links.org/our-national-work/eu2010/

Programme Activities

Stage 1a: Listening Events (May-September)

We worked with 36 community organisations around the country to hold “Listening Events”, which brought together over 652 people, with approximately 90% of participants having direct experience of poverty, to uncover some of the issues and myths around work and poverty in their area. Many of the organisations involved in these listening events were small grassroots’ organisations that often don’t get an opportunity to engage in national or European wide projects.

Community Links provided support to organisations in helping them deliver these listening events through a small grants programme, by providing a Listening Event Action Pack, a Tackling Working-Age Poverty booklet and in some instances by providing a facilitator to help in the delivery of the listening events.

The listening events were delivered in a variety of formats, for example, some were delivered in a conference style format, small workshops and discussions groups, and one-to-one interviews with people. While Community Links actively supported these events, it also made a conscious decision that organisations had an important role to play in the process of “Self Organising” these meetings. This was because of the projects’ belief that organisations know their clients groups best and hence the best way of engaging with their clients. This project also held the belief that self organisation would encourage sustainability. Enabling organisations to self organise events in the future and be part of the future legacy of EY2010.

“Most people agreed that talking about something was a help in becoming more positive about their solution.” Listening Event, North Wales

“The group that took part was made up of 18-30 year olds, an age bracket commonly portrayed as politically and socially apathetic. Discussing working-age poverty with these young people showed how wrong this is. Their responses were impassioned, constructive and rooted in their day-to-day experiences.”
Listening Event, London

“After initial prompting all attendees participated well. Some who are benefit claimants were not aware of policies that are being put in place by the Government which may have a detrimental effect on their lives. We’ve learned that we need to be more politicized.” Listening Event South Wales

“United Problem aired in public.” Listening Event, West Midlands

“Knowing that I’m not the only one in this situation that there are other people having similar situations.” Listening Event, Derby

A number of themes emerged from the Listening Events in relation to working-age poverty: Jobcentre Plus, welfare reform, childcare, training and education, and myths and stereotypes. A two-page summary of feedback from the listening events can be downloaded here: www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/Summary%20of%20Listening%20events.pdf

Stage 1b: Dialogue Meetings (October / November)

Five dialogue meetings were then held in Manchester, London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast, with 108 people attending overall. The purpose was to develop a detailed policy response to the three main themes which had arisen from the Listening Events: Jobcentre Plus, Welfare Reform and Myths and Stereotypes.

Jobcentre Plus: At many of the listening events participants shared their experiences of using Jobcentre Plus and identified the important role that it plays in getting people of working age out of poverty. Many of the experiences that people had around using Jobcentre Plus were not always positive and the workshops at The Dialogue Meetings were used to discuss and develop suggestions about ways in which it could improve its delivery of services and support could be improved for its customers. Participants that took part in these workshops were people with current/recent experience of using Jobcentres, professionals representing users of Jobcentres and in some workshops people who worked for the Jobcentre and DWP.

Myths and Stereotypes: At the listening events discussions arose around the myths and stereotypes about people in situations of poverty and social exclusion. The dialogue meetings developed these discussions and ideas with a specific focus on the way that negative language used by different Governments is harmful to supporting people into work. The workshops looked at the way that “blame” is attached to individuals rather than society as a whole, how language can create an “us” versus “them” divide and how this makes people feel bad and hits people’s confidence.

Welfare Reform: Many participants taking part in the listening events discussed the urgent need for reform to the benefit system. The dialogue meetings looked at issues raised by the 21st Century Welfare Reform Paper including the introduction of a Universal Credit Payment, earnings disregard, work incentives, childcare for working parents and the complexities around the current benefit system.

“I think being involved in EY2010 has been an excellent experience for my organisation and the people we work with. It has helped start a dialogue with local people about the realities of poverty, both in terms of low wages and out-of-work benefits, as well as the real effects of systematic social exclusion from decision-making processes and civic participation.” **A dialogue meeting participant**

Stage 1c: Policy Meetings (September'10 and January'11)

The year culminated in two policy roundtable meetings with policy-makers and decision-makers, presenting the findings gathered from the listening events and the policy responses developed in the dialogue meetings; 59 people attended.

Welfare Reform Policy Meeting (21st September)

This policy meeting involved 47 participants, the majority of who had direct experience of poverty, along with decision-makers from DWP Benefit Strategy Directorate. Through four workshops (simplicity; work incentives/motivations; conditionality/sanctions; and principles behind reform) participants looked in detail at the proposals contained in the DWP's '21st Century Welfare' consultation document.

Feedback from this meeting was used in Community Links response to the 21st Century Welfare consultation

(visit: www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/Community_Links_21st_Century_Welfare_response_FINAL.pdf)

Jobcentre Plus Policy Meeting (24th & 25th January)

A delegation of people with current experiences of using Jobcentre Plus had a meeting with DWP Employment Minister, Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP, to share their experiences and the experiences of others, and to exchange ideas and suggestions about ways in which Jobcentre Plus could improve. Short video clips of participants talking about their experiences can be viewed at: www.community-links.org/linksuk/?p=2318

"It was an amazing experience and I'm very thankful for having the opportunity to put across some of my experiences of using Job Centre Plus. More than that, it was a brilliant time, and I loved meeting some wonderful people and seeing a different perspective on things. The trip to London was also brilliant!"

Gareth Shovla, Dove Workshop, Neath, 27th January 2011.

"The opportunity for a local representative to be a part of the policy meeting with Chris Grayling MP was unique and unprecedented, and has already made a huge difference to both Gareth and the case for job seekers per se. It has initiated a process which will hopefully continue with Ministers seeking to engage service users in the design of the actual services. It has invigorated Gareth's personal motivation to make the changes he needs to gain employment, and has given him a role within his community that is much-desired and appreciated."

Dean Cawsey, Communities First, Neath Wales

Stage 1d: Deliver a training programme

Training delivered over the course of the year helped individuals and organisations learn new skills that they will use in the future. Two training courses were delivered: Church Action on Poverty led a session on Sustainable Livelihoods in London, and Community Links presented a Campaigning workshop in Bristol; 21 people took part.

“Participants felt that they didn’t want to stop once the training had finished, we discussed what we could do next and the group involved in the training decided that they wanted to start up a local campaigns group. We’ve not had a campaigns group before but early in the New Year we will be meeting to discuss some of the local issues the group want to start campaigns on. The training that we had has provided us with both the skills and confidence needed to do this.”

A participant on the Bristol training course

Eight people attending the policy meeting on Jobcentre Plus received one-day’s training on public speaking, lobbying and campaigning skills. The five shortlisted organisations for The Tackling Poverty Awards received support and informal training on how to make short films delivered to 20 people.

Stage 2: Raising Awareness

Stage 2a: Materials (February'10 / January'11)

Community Links and its partners researched and produced resources in several formats to communicate the messages throughout 2010. Copies can be found at www.community-links.org/our-national-work/eu2010/. The materials included:

Tackling Working-Age Poverty, Learning from the Experts

This publication was a summary of our special series of guest blog posts. The booklet was made available for download at Community Links and Church Action on Poverty EY2010 websites and printed copies were given to all organisations taking part in the UK Listening Events. It featured articles about working-age poverty and case studies highlighting people living with the consequences of poverty.

2010 Local Listening Campaign Action Pack

This publication was produced to support organisations in delivering EY2010 listening events. It includes examples of how to organise events, suggested different formats for events and advice on facilitating events. It also included monitoring sheets for organisations to record the number of participants and feedback sheets to record the main discussion topics from the events.

Working Age Poverty – A factsheet to support: local Listening Campaigns

This four page factsheet was developed to support organisations at their listening events. It included factual information about UK working-age poverty in an accessible format. Contents include a definition of poverty and a list of resources available to further research information about working-age poverty. It was also available for download through the EY2010 websites.

Working-Age Poverty – What are the issues?

This two-sided publication listed some of the main issues that were discussed at the listening events; *Job Centres, Welfare Reform, Childcare, Education and Training, Myths and Stereotypes and other Common Themes*. It was available for download through the EY2010 Websites and was distributed at 'The Spark in the Park' event (Oct'10), and to participants at the five dialogue meetings and sent to organisations and participants involved in the listening events.

Feedback Sheets – *Jobcentres, Barriers in getting out of Poverty, Welfare Reform, Myths, Misperceptions and Stereotypes about people living on benefits and/or in poverty, Parents and Childcare, and Education and Training*. These sheets were produced to supplement the 'What are the Issues?' publication. They contained more detail about the discussions from the listening events. They were sent out to organisations and individuals, and distributed at the dialogue meetings.

Tackling Poverty – Community-led projects tackling working-age poverty and social exclusion.

This publication featured 16 different community organisations from across the UK who are working to support people dealing with issues around working-age poverty. It was produced to showcase some of the successful work that voluntary and community sector organisations are doing to combat working-age poverty and included information about EY2010. A short print-run of 500 hard copies were produced and distributed to organisations and an enhanced downloadable version linking to online resources and video presentations was made available on the Community Links website.

The Tackling Poverty Videos

Five videos were produced to showcase the work of the organisations shortlisted for The Tackling Poverty Awards. The organisations were trained and supported to tell their own stories using video equipment supplied as prizes for shortlisted projects.

Stage 2b: Communications and Dissemination activity

Community Links and its partners were able to raise awareness of poverty and social exclusion among the general public through using a variety of communication tools, especially our blogs, twitter, posts of videos and engagement in discussion around specific topics. In the absence of any nationally co-ordinated media activity, Community Links and its partners shared its work throughout the year by:

- Hosting dedicated web pages about EY2010 and Tackling Working-Age Poverty. Visit: www.community-links.org/our-national-work/eu2010/ AND www.church-poverty.org.uk/whatwedo/projects/ey2010/workingagepoverty. These pages included background information about EY2010, feedback from The Listening Events and Dialogue Meetings, Blog pages, the videos made for The Tackling Poverty Awards, photographs, a list of events and activities that were delivered as part of this project and links to other EY2010 websites. Resources including fact sheets, application forms and different publications were available for download.
- Posting 46 posts on Community Links' blog specifically related to EY2010 during the year, (during which 32,409 visitors were attracted to the site).
- Sharing information about EY2010 through Community Links' Facebook page: www.facebook.com/#!/commlinks
- Encouraging other organisations and websites to share our EY2010 activities including:
 - A case study of someone in working-age poverty from Community Links was featured in The Independent, December 5th 2010:

www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/record-levels-of-poverty-among-families-with-wages-2151711.html

www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/11527

www.inspiremagazine.org.uk/news.aspx?action=view&id=4314

- A two page article was included in Euroscene, a publication produced by the London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium (LVSTC) about activities and delivered by this project at the Spark in The Park EY2010 day:
www.lvstc.org.uk/docs/euroscene56.pdf
- Sharing the five videos made for The Tackling Poverty Awards. These were viewed 512 times during December 2010 – January 2011: www.community-links.org/linksuk/?p=2167 AND www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=F614463145DD3303
- Generating media publicity from the Tackling Poverty Awards. The event featured in local newspapers for example, the Newham Recorder on January 5th 2011 and The Buxton Advertiser, January 2011. The Awards also featured on different websites including The Welsh Refugee Council: www.welshrefugeecouncil.org/swanseas-african-community-centre-are-runners-up-in-prestigious-award/ South Wales News: (The Evening Post) www.thisissouthwales.co.uk/news/Centre-runner-awards/article-3077952-detail/article.html The Ealing CVS website www.ealingcvs.org.uk/index.php?nuc=news&item=295&func=view&id=79 High Peaks CVS Website www.highpeakcvs.org.uk/video/SGPCommunityLinks.asp Webwell.org.uk www.webwell.org.uk/Latest-News/Sandwell-Charity-Short-listed-for-Major-National-Award.htm
- Producing a video of the participants who attended the policy meeting with Chris Grayling MP (DWP, Minister for Employment) www.community-links.org/linksuk/?p=2318

Stage 2c: The Tackling Poverty Awards (June / December)

Community Links organised a “best practice” award to celebrate the work that different organisations do in supporting and engaging with people dealing with issues around poverty. The award called The Tackling Poverty Award, asked organisations from across the UK to submit a written application form, along with an independent written endorsement about the work that their organisation does.

The organisations were then short listed on the basis that they could evidence:

1. Positive engagement with people living in working-age poverty.
2. The benefits to those engaged in the project.
3. The benefits to the wider community.
4. Impact of the project in achieving its goals.
5. The potential of the project as a role model for organisations.

To make the awards as interactive as possible the five shortlisted organisations were each asked to make a video to demonstrate the work that their organisations do. A judging panel of four, included David Akinsanya, filmmaker and broadcaster; Kathleen Carter a grassroots poverty campaigner and trustee of Church Action on Poverty; Shadow Minister for employment Stephen Timms, MP; and journalist and broadcaster Polly Toynbee. The panel viewed these videos and scored the organisations according to the above criteria. The films were made available on-line for viewing and were shown at a celebratory awards ceremony at Community Links, London on 15th December, with 40 participants representing the five finalists' organisations, where the winners announced. The ceremony was attended by Stephen Timms MP.

One of the shortlisted organisations, High Peaks CVS has used the camera they were awarded to start a course in film making. In February 2011 they worked with former award winning BBC TV reporter and producer Alistair Macdonald to teach film making skills to people who haven't done this before. This free course showed participants how to write a script, film, edit and how to upload their film onto publicly available websites including YouTube.

"Thanks again for involving us in the event. It has given us a welcome boost at a time when the resources for this type of work are under threat from statutory sector cuts." High Peaks CVS

"The whole process was great to be part of, and even before the results were announced we all agreed that the event had been really good." Ealing CVS

"I thought the day was exceptional, and very well organised. It was a great way to recognise some of the excellent work happening across the UK, and I found it very beneficial to learn about the different organisations and meet the people involved with them. I also felt that the Community Links headquarters was an inspiring place and absolutely the right venue for the awards to be held in." Dove Workshop

"I think you did really well to pull it all together and it helps to feel part of a network of projects. I got some good information from the networking with Ealing in particular which will help our work next year. It was a nice relaxed and welcoming style and useful to have that time to socialise over lunch with other projects. We would be interested to maintain our contact with you. Thanks again for including us." CARES, Sandwell

Stage 2d: Tackling Poverty publication

To complement this award a publication '*Tackling Poverty, Community-led projects tackling working-age poverty and social exclusion*' was published. It showcased the work of sixteen different organisations and along with The Tackling Poverty Awards they recognised projects that tackle working-age poverty as well as showcasing examples of good work.

Stage 2e: Participatory Research (September / October)

Community Links worked with The Joseph Rowntree Foundation to get people to take part in a short research questionnaire about poverty in the UK; 67 participants took part.

Only two of the ten questions were correctly answered by 50% or more of participants. These were "*How much is Job Seekers Allowance per week?*" (£65.45) and "*How many children were living in poverty in the UK in 2008/9.*" (2.8 million). However when people were asked: "*Of those children living in poverty, how many have at least one parent in paid work?*" Only 19% of people identified the correct answer of 56% of these families having one person in work.

Other findings included:

- 60% of people thought 1 in 20 or 1 in 9 people in the UK live in poverty; the correct number is 1 in 5.
- 68% of people thought that 35% or 10% of the UK's benefit bill goes to workless working-age adults, solely to supplement their income; the actual percentage is only 5%.
- 55% of people thought the UK was ranked 3rd highest compared to the 26 other EU countries for the % of people living in poverty, the UK is actually ranked 7th highest.
- 60% of people thought either Wales or the West Midlands have the highest rate of poverty in the UK; the highest rate is in fact in London.
- 58% of people thought Black Non-Caribbean or White ethnic groups have the highest level of poverty in the UK in 2008/9; the correct answer is Pakistani & Bangladeshi.

Stage 2f: Various Participatory Workshops delivered throughout EY2010

Community Links and its partners delivered various participatory workshops to raise awareness about EY2010 working-age poverty, in-work poverty and Jobcentre Plus. Workshops were delivered at Morgan Stanley Bank, The Anti Poverty Network Cymru, The TUC Poverty Conference and at Building a Better Future Conference, London. 79 people attended.

Our Partners

1. National Partner

Church Action on Poverty (CAP), as national partners both organisations worked closely throughout 2010 including monthly meetings to plan and review project delivery. Examples of partnership delivery included: the development of materials used for the Listening Events, delivery of the Listening Events, the delivery of training around Sustainable Communities, the Dialogue Meetings, the Best Practice Awards (The Tackling Poverty Awards) and the planning of the Policy Meetings. Both organisations also worked together in developing a joint communications strategy for EY2010 that featured on both organisations websites.

2. Devolved Partners

Oxfam Cymru: Partner for delivery of activities in Wales. This included eleven different Listening Events across Wales, the delivery of a Dialogue Meeting in Cardiff, supporting Welsh organisations to enter The Tackling Poverty Awards.

Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network (NIAPN): Partner for delivery of activities in Northern Ireland, this included the delivery of three Listening Events and a Dialogue Meeting in Belfast.

The Poverty Alliance (Scotland): Partner for delivery of activities in Scotland, this included two listening events, research through one to one case studies and a Dialogue Meeting held in Glasgow.

3. Listening Event Partners

A total of 36 community organisations were involved in delivering the listening events. These organisations represented a good geographical spread across the UK. They are: ***

4. Other Partners

Anti-Poverty Network Cymru: The project delivered a workshop around working-age poverty at their AGM, Rhyl in North Wales.

Church Urban Fund: Supported the strategic development of the year.

London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium (LVSTC): We worked with LVSTC to develop and deliver activities at 'The Spark in the Park' event, October 2nd.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Worked with JRF to undertake participatory research into people's knowledge around poverty in the UK and Europe.

Trade Union Congress (TUC): Delivered a workshop around In-Work Poverty at their Poverty Conference, London, October 18th.

Next steps

Many of the issues that have been identified and discussed first at the UK-wide listening events and then at the dialogue meetings will be taken forward by different organisations that have been involved in this programme. Please contact them directly to find out more.

Community Links will campaign for changes to the way that Jobcentre Plus delivers its services. This campaign will run throughout 2011 and it will lobby for some of the specific changes that were identified by participants at the listening events, dialogue and policy meetings.

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Church Action on Poverty, with partners, is developing a Poverty Media Unit. The Unit will establish a network of people with direct experience of poverty who are willing and able to speak in the media on the basis of their own experiences. This will be achieved through developing partnerships with local and national organisations who work with people in poverty in participatory ways, and who will provide the direct link with and support for grassroots participants.

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Issues that were identified by participants at the Welsh listening events and dialogue meetings are being lobbied for by **Oxfam Cymru** with the Welsh Assembly. In 2011, Oxfam Cymru will be working with Jobcentre Plus and Welsh Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to provide training for Jobcentre Plus staff around issues such as poverty awareness, awareness of local support delivered by local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and better customer care. These were identified at the Welsh EY2010 listening events.

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For more details about Community Links and the EY2010 'Tackling Working-Age Poverty' programme please contact

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Tackling working-age Poverty

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



Community Links, working in partnership with Church Action on Poverty and others, was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver one of the four national themed programmes of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010. This report is a summary of the work over the course of the year and some of the early impact.

An important focus of the programme was to engage with people of working-age who had direct experience of poverty. The programme engaged 1,199 participants, in a participatory not a passive way, involving them and valuing their input. Many participants commented that they had not been involved like this before and welcomed the opportunity to express their views and listen to others.

Throughout this process participants confidence has grown; this experience has encouraged many people to take up additional opportunities to participate in debates and campaigns.



Church Action
on Poverty

