Issue 4|Winter 2002/3

www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

inclusion

The newsletter for those involved in tackling social exclusion

"Social exclusion in rural areas is an individual thing," says Carola Jones of Nottingham Rural Community Council

Country Life

AN ELDERLY gentleman is helped to give up smoking and his health improves. A young woman can now get to work through the loan of a scooter. Villagers develop a business plan to keep the local shop open. These examples of rural residents overcoming social exclusion are partly down to the work of Carola Jones, a community development worker at Nottingham rural community council.

"I help local people to understand their own needs and develop the skills and expertise to do something about them," says Carola, who is based in one of the most rural areas of England.

"But I'm not a social worker. I try to tackle the broad issue not the individual problem. Once needs have been identified I also help bring projects to life and make them a reality."

Carola is acutely aware of the nature of social exclusion in the countryside: "Social exclusion in rural areas is an individual thing," she says.

"In deprived areas in the urban environment, your next door neighbour is likely to be in the same boat as you, but in villages there are no clear pockets of deprivation - you could be very isolated in terms of knowing people with similar problems."

A major part of Carola's work is building partnerships with the local authority and organisations such as the Community and Voluntary Service, Age Concern, St John Ambulance and Mind - to provide services that rural communities need.

As a result of one such partnership, a post was established for a befriending co-ordinator for East Bassetlaw. This in turn led to the formation of a friendship group in remote villages where there were many lonely older women. They now meet and talk about common concerns and shared experiences. Sessions have been run giving advice on energy efficiency, pensions and access to health care.

● Funding from the Countryside Agency helped set up the four community development worker posts in Nottinghamshire.

New funding for drug treatment

AN UPDATED government drug strategy is focusing major increases in funding on the treatment of drug-using offenders.

It will trigger a doubling in the number of Drug Testing and Treatment Orders made by the courts, backed by a 44 per cent increase in funding over the next three years to nearly £1.5 billion by 2005.

The orders aim to redirect people who have committed significant drug related crimes into treament programmes, out of prison and off drugs for good.

Home Secretary David Blunkett said: "We must achieve real reductions in the level of problematic use if we are to turn around the lives of individuals and their communities."

The new approach is based on research showing that the 250,000 class A drug users with the most severe problems account for 99 per cent of the estimated £10 to 18 billion a year social costs of drug abuse. These significantly affect the country's most deprived areas. Vulnerable tenants often live in fear as prostitution, gun crime and other drug-related activity run out of control.

"The best place for drug using offenders is in treatment. [This] is tough love – accept the treatment on offer or face custody," said Mr Blunkett.

The strategy, updated from 1998, uses every opportunity in the criminal justice system to intervene and treat drug abuse, from arrest, to court, sentence and parole. Offenders can be tested having been charged with certain offences such as shop lifting and given the opportunity to opt for drug treatment instead of a prison sentence. This strategy also increases support for treatment programmes in prisons and Young Offenders Institutions, as well as support post-release to help ex-prisoners stay off drugs.

The strategy supports GPs in prescribing heroin to drug users who would most benefit from it – those who have a long-standing addiction, clinical need and have not responded to methadone.

The 10-year strategy emphasises prevention, combating dealers and treating addicts. A new advertising campaign aimed at educating young people about the dangers of drug use will start this spring.

● For more on drugs and offenders, see page 5.

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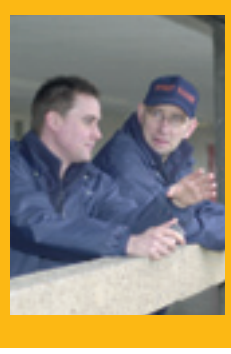

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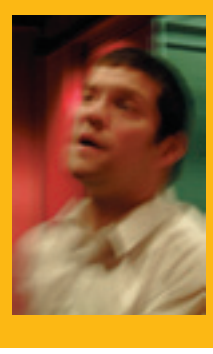

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PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS BELOW

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inclusion

Welcome

In the Autumn edition of Inclusion, I said how pleased I was that my department secured a £1.5 billion settlement from the Chancellor to build strong and inclusive communities.

This extra money will be used to tackle some of our most acute housing problems from low demand and abandonment in some parts of the north and midlands to the difficulties created by a shortage of affordable housing in London and the south east.

But we all know that building sustainable communities takes more than bricks and mortar. A housing estate on its own isn't a community. You can't have vibrant, thriving communities without jobs, shops, schools, parks, public transport and all the other facilities and services that enable and support people to live life to the full.

That's why, in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, we've been working on a plan that covers a whole range of programmes necessary to build and sustain communities. Housing, yes, but also jobs, transport, education, health and so on.

We are developing a comprehensive, long-term programme of action to build thriving, sustainable and inclusive communities that meet everyone's needs.

Nowhere is the need for this crucial work greater than in our most deprived communities, and in the lives of the many excluded people that you, the readers of *Inclusion*, are doing so much to help.

Communities simply cannot thrive unless they are supported by decent public services that everyone can access. That means high quality schools and healthcare, safe streets, and good quality housing for all. And good quality public transport is critical too, so people can access services they need, get to the shops and to work, or visit their friends and family.

This edition of *Inclusion* covers some examples of our approach and how it is working to make real change to people's lives.

Neighbourhood wardens, for example, are already making a difference in some of our most deprived communities. There are now 207 neighbourhood warden and street warden schemes up and running across the country. Rates of crime and anti social behaviour in many of those areas have come down sharply as a result. The street wardens scheme in Sheffield, featured on pages 6 and 7, is no exception.

Page 4 describes some the help being targeted on of the most vulnerable groups in our society, such as the Department of Health's work with teenage parents. Work like the Teenage Pregnancy Initiative in Leeds is contributing to the national decrease in teenage pregnancy rates: down six per cent since 1998 and on track to meet our challenging target of a 50 per cent reduction by 2010.

It's people like you who make the difference. Wherever you are and whatever your job, I encourage you in your work to continue to help build strong, thriving and inclusive communities.

John Prescott
Deputy Prime Minister

Cutting red tape

PROJECTS to help community regeneration are to be streamlined to reduce bureaucracy and give easier access to funding.

The move follows a year-long review of these programmes or Area-Based Initiatives (ABIs) which concentrate on tackling deep-seated problems in areas of particular need.

The Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU), which carried out the review, consulted with groups bidding for funding, and found that these projects have been making a real difference to communities in areas of deprivation. However, it also indicated that what was most wanted was a simplification of the various funding streams. The Government Offices also found that ABIs have been too complex and have not always been co-ordinated with other programmes with similar objectives.

Announcing plans to take forward the review's recommendations, Barbara Roche, Minister for Social Exclusion and Equality said: "From Cornwall to Sunderland, people have been asked what improvements will help them most and we have listened. We have simplified the access to funds by cutting the number of funding streams by about a half whilst maintaining the same funding levels."

Barbara Roche, who has responsibility for homelessness, rough sleeping and social exclusion issues as well as neighbourhood renewal, said her guiding principle was to improve the delivery of services which tackle poverty. "Area-based initiatives can make a real difference in areas of greatest need, and these recommendations, which have the full backing of all government departments, can make this happen more effectively."

The review will result in a number of changes. It advises that some of the best work by ABIs are rolled out and mainstreamed nationally, for example the successful Sure Start schemes. The recommendations also include bringing together schemes such as Education Action Zones with Excellence in Cities and merging Neighbourhood Wardens and Street Wardens schemes.

These developments prompted the praise of Sir Jeremy Beecham, chair of the Local Government Association. He said, "The review makes significant progress towards the aims of streamlining and reducing bureaucracy, and we recommend that the RCU continues its work in this area. In terms of making a real difference on the ground, the sooner these recommendations are acted upon the better."

Children on a Sure Start project in Cornwall

Information

www.rcu.gov.uk/abi
✆ **020 7217 3124**

Safety net for runaways

Former runaway Nastascia Williams told ministers about her experiences at the launch of the SEU's report

THE SOCIAL Exclusion Unit (SEU) has published a report on young runaways aiming to prevent vulnerable young people from running away and to keep them safe if they do.

Seventy-seven thousand young people run away for the first time every year – 20,000 of these are children under the age of 11. A quarter of runaways sleep in unsafe places and many resort to stealing, begging, drug dealing and prostitution in order to survive.

The report, launched at the Step Forward Youth project, part of Safe in the City's Tower Hamlets scheme, follows on from a consultation paper that was published by the SEU last year. In preparing the report, the SEU worked with an advisory group of experts from across government, voluntary, public and community sectors, consulted with parents and young people and visited over 30 projects working at local level.

The report shows that running away is a likely indicator that a young person is experiencing family problems and that they aren't receiving the help they need. It also outlines the links between running away and social exclusion – detailing how just under half of prisoners ran away as children and that runaways are more likely to experience long-term unemployment or become homeless later in life.

The report's action plan sets out a wide-ranging package of practical measures to strengthen responses to the needs of runaways and their families. The aim is to ensure that young people get help before they reach crisis point, somewhere safe to stay if they do run away and someone to talk to.

PHOTO ABOVE AND RIGHT: THE CHILDRENS SOCIETY

The key measures in the report are:

- Better local co-ordination for young runaways across the country
- New flexible approaches to emergency accommodation, including better access to foster care placements
- Better information for teachers to help prevent young people from running away and
- Guaranteed follow-up support and advice for the most vulnerable young runaways.

The report announced funding of up to £3 million from the Children and Young People's Unit to test what works for runaways. This development funding will support over 25 flagship projects (see case studies, right) across the country to build up a better understanding of how to help runaways and prevent young people from running away in the first place.

Update

The Department of Health is taking on national responsibility for runaways and has guidance for local authorities about children running away.

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The Connexions Service will also be following up the report with guidance for their personal advisers.

Information

www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk
For a copy of the report contact: the Social Exclusion Unit

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✆ **020 7276 2641**

✉ **7th floor, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 6DU**

Casestudies

The following are among the projects that have received funding:

Bradford Metropolitan District Council – Support Care

Bradford's Support Care project currently offers a series of planned breaks with specialised part-time foster carers to help ensure that children and young people who are experiencing difficulties in the family do not need to go into care. The development funding will lead to a new Crisis Care scheme that will give young people instant access to foster carers when problems within the family have reached the point that they may run away. The placements will be time limited to 48 hours to allow time for a cooling off period and to resolve the immediate crisis so that young people have an alternative to running away. The service will aim to negotiate a return home and give an opportunity for young people and their families to access future involvement with Support Care's planned breaks.

Contact: Joy Howard, Bradford Social Services

e **joy.howard@Bradford.gov.uk**

✆ **01274 435836**

Base 51, Nottingham

The Base 51 Outreach/ Streetwork project offers support and advice to young people under 16 years on the streets of Nottingham City centre, who have run away, are homeless, or who are spending a lot of time in the city centre.

The development funding will be used to increase the level of outreach support available to young people and to provide home visits to those who have returned home after a period of being missing. The home visits will enable outreach workers to establish why a young person ran away and support young people in accessing services to prevent further periods of running away.

Contact: **Janet Lewis**

e **jlewisbase51@hotmail.com**

✆ **0115 952 5040**

Bristol BASE (Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation)

Bristol BASE was set up to meet the needs of young people who are being abused through prostitution or who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

With the development funding, the project will expand its work to offer a direct service to young people who go missing from home or care or who are at risk of being drawn into exploitative situations and street culture. Work will include a rapid response to young people on their return to home or care, the establishment of a follow-up plan, and a tailored response to the parents and carers of young people who are missing or in crisis. The project will also train staff to work effectively with runaways and increase inter-agency responses.

Contact: **Pam Hibbert**

e **Pam.Hibbert@barnardos.org.uk**

✆ **020 8498 7746**

Going full term

A unique project in Leeds is keeping teenage parents in education. **Helen Stear** reports

Jenny Midwinter (centre) with one of the teenage girls and midwife.

"I knew from the start I wanted to keep my baby but I wanted to carry on with my education." This was the dilemma that 16-year-old Vanessa faced when she found out she was pregnant. Fortunately for Vanessa, and others in her position, a unique project in Leeds is making her wish possible.

Leeds-based Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Initiative (TPPI) was set up as part of the Government's strategy to ensure that all school-age parents get an education.

Teenage pregancy rates in England are high by European standards – one in every 14 babies born in England is to a teenage mother. The risk of teenage parenthood is greatest for those from the poorest backgrounds, and those who truant, are excluded from school or leave with low educational attainment.

TPPI uses a specially designed curriculum to keep girls engaged in education during pregnancy and to re-engage girls who didn't attend school before they were pregnant. Its approach is working: more and more teenage mothers are returning to education.

What makes this project really different is the extent to which it has developed the role of specialist learning mentors. These are professionals who support the young parents back into learning.

Jenny Midwinter oversees development of TPPI, which was set up through a Teenage Pregnancy Reintegration Grant from the Department for Education and Skills' standards fund. This funding enabled TPPI to appoint a specialist learning mentor to each of the five Excellence in Cities areas in Leeds.

Practical advice

Specialist learning mentors have a demanding role. They work in schools to develop preventative projects for pupils at risk of unplanned parenthood. And they give day-to-day, practical support for young parents going back into education, by helping them access transport and childcare when they want to return to education or training or by contributing their expertise during courses the girls attend at college.

> **"We are all about creating initiative, not dependency."**

During the 2001-2 academic year, 76 girls and 13 boys were known to TPPI as young parents, aged 12 to 16. This is an increase on the previous year and an encouraging sign that the proportion of pregnant pupils and school-age parents being appropriately referred is increasing, according to Jenny.

By working with a range of partner organisations – including Thomas Danby College, Cape UK and Derek Fatchett Learning Centre, different courses are run for the young parents which complement their mainstream schooling if they are currently in school, or act as a bridge back to school or on to college for those previously not attending. Classes include childcare, drama and information and communication technology. 25 hours of education a week are now available to pupils on maternity leave, compared to only three hours a week just two years ago.

Confidence booster

Basing some of the courses in a further education setting raises aspirations – it's often the first time the young parents have been inside a college, as Sarah Williams, a specialist learning mentor explains: "Just going there on a regular basis reduces the mystery and intimidation of college. Hopefully, when the time comes they will feel more confident about going there full-time post-16."

The approach appears to be working. Around 50 per cent of school age mothers leaving Leeds schools in 2002 have applied for college courses, compared with just 24 per cent in 2001.

Overall, the number of pupils who failed to engage in any educational activity fell from 42 per cent in 2001-2 to 25 per cent the following year.

Sarah believes schools have an important role to play. The TPPI team at Education Leeds is currently producing a guide for schools on the education of teenage parents. "This is largely a response to the fact that although there is good practice, it is by no means uniform, and there are lots of issues that schools aren't sure about," she says.

One of Sarah's recent successes was a girl who truanted for two years before she got pregnant. After intervention from Sarah, she attended alternative curriculum classes and has now gone on to college.

"We're all about creating initiative, not dependency, and I think this has really worked for her," says Sarah.

The biggest problem for Jenny is funding, as it's all on a temporary basis. "We lost experienced specialist learning mentors because of the uncertainty," she says.

Meanwhile, Vanessa is another success for TPPI. She took full advantage of the courses on offer at college while managing to keep up with her schoolwork as well. In August 2001, just before the birth of her son, she received her GCSE results, along with a letter from her teachers congratulating her on her 10 A*-C grades. Just after her 17th birthday she was given an award by the school for outstanding achievement. Vanessa says: "It was a great honour and I finally got to show off my baby."

Strategy

- **The long-term goal is to halve the under 18 conception rate between 1998 and 2010 and for 60% of teenage mothers to be in learning or employment by 2010**
- **Under 18 and the under 16 conception rates have both fallen by over six per cent since 1998**
- **33.5 per cent (2002 figures) of teenage mothers are now in education or work, compared to 17 per cent in 1996**
- **The department for education and skills has now announced funding for 2003/4.**

Information

Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Initiative

Contact: Jenny Midwinter

e **jenny.midwinter@educationleeds.co.uk**

✆ **0113 395 1213**

Standards Fund

www.dfes.gov.uk/standardsfund

Teenage Pregnancy Unit

www.teenagepregnancunit.gov.uk

✆ **020 7972 5309**

✉ **Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH**

Grassroots

The Government is introducing new strategies to treat more drug-using offenders and keep them out of prison. Drug abstinence orders are one approach.

The Service User

Steve* has a long history of drug abuse and offending. He is now on an 18-month drug abstinence order.

I work with a whole load of people. Lynne is great. She totally understands the real situation you're in. There's a drugs counsellor, Geoff, from ADSIS (Alcohol and Drugs Services in Staffordshire) who is really good as well. They listen to you and help in real ways. They basically got me off drugs and helped me get a prescription. The drug abstinence unit is good.

I've had some problems with some of the medical people because they have their own way of doing things sometimes and I think they've reduced my methadone too much and that's causing me some problems. People need to really understand what it's like and not just read books about it.

I have to keep loads of appointments and that means I've got a routine, which is different. Before I had no routine at all and this led to problems. Now I know I have to get up, go and get tested, go and get a prescription, see Lynne or Geoff. It keeps me quite busy.

The day I tested negative for the first time was quite a celebration. It's years since I've been off drugs and I suppose I wanted to tell people. I can't even remember how I started now. I was about 15 and wanted to be part of the gang really.

Things are a bit better now – I've got a place to stay, I get breakfast and a place to wash. I've not seen much of my family for the last couple of years but I've just started seeing my mum a bit.

** Not his real name*

"The day I tested negative for the first time was quite a celebration."

The Service Deliverer

Lynne Elliott, a probation officer in Staffordshire, works with both health professionals and the police to help offenders with drug problems.

I honestly see a positive future for Steve. It is the first time he has gone this far and I think his maturity is increasing. He is beginning to want what we all want – a bit of security and stability. He hasn't ever really worked so he needs education and training skills but that will come later on in his probation.

At the end of the 18 months he will move to a lower risk programme with gradually less reporting, first fortnightly, then monthly. He will have access to ADSIS (Alcohol and Drugs Services in Staffordshire) and will be helped with re-housing but he certainly won't be left in a black hole.

The drug abstinence order (DAO) is a time intensive order to manage and I recognise that some of my other cases may not be getting as much attention as they could. I have a case load of 56, most of whom have a drug problem and half of whom are very high risk. DAOs do make more work for me because when offenders breach the terms of the order, there is more court work for me. But it does mean that the courts get more involved with the individual as they see their progression.

What's good about it is that I can share the decision making about Steve with other probation professionals with whom he has weekly contact at the drug abstinence unit. I also talk regularly with the police. To be honest, they are sick and tired of him re-offending and they are as anxious as we are about breaking his cycle of offending and drug abuse.

Some users say the order is setting them up to fail as they think they'll just breach it immediately. There's not a lot of leeway and the order is asking a lot. These are long-term drug habits they're trying to give up. But I don't think failure is inevitable – attending appointments, showing willingness and motivation, making gradual progress is enough to keep them within the bounds of the order.

"These are long-term drug habits they're trying to give up. But I don't think failure is inevitable."

Information

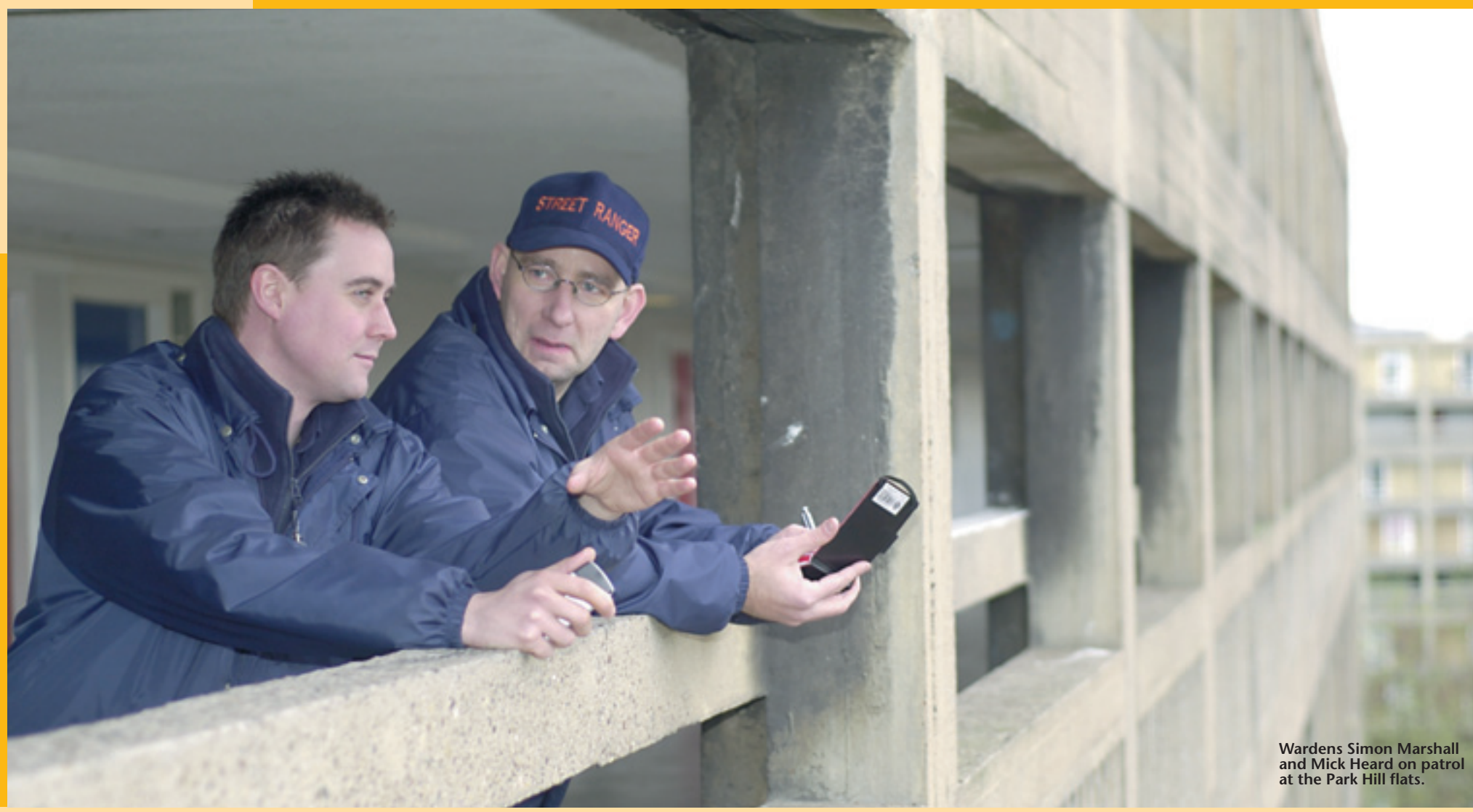
Drug abstinence orders and Drug treatment and testing orders

● Drug abstinence orders (DAOs) are an alternative to custody for drug-using offenders. Under these orders, offenders must be tested for drugs regularly and undergo rehabilitation. This approach is being piloted in nine areas by police and probation services. Everyone who is convicted of a trigger offence (shop lifting, pick-pocketing, burglary) and tests positive on arrest is given a DAO. The DAO should stop drug related offences escalating – it is recognised that left to their own devices, these minor offenders will quickly end up at the drug treatment and testing order (DTTO) stage.

● DTTOs are one step removed from prison. They are handed down to people who have committed significant drug related crimes. They are administered by a multi-disciplinary team including police, GPs, psychiatric treatment and drug rehab professionals. Offenders must go to a treatment centre five days a week and spend a minimum of 20 hours per week engaged in activities there.

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/atoz/drugs.htm

Spotlight on Sheffield wardens



Wardens Simon Marshall and Mick Heard on patrol at the Park Hill flats.

The word on the street

Mark Smulian, a freelance journalist, goes out and about with a group of neighbourhood wardens in Sheffield to discover more about what they do.

There are 13 signposts walking around parts of Sheffield. They are the Manor and Castle Development Trust's neighbourhood wardens, and their own most common description of their work is that they 'signpost'. Sometimes the wardens can solve a problem themselves. Usually, they guide members of their communities through the often intimidating thickets of bureaucracy and point them towards those who can help.

The wardens can look, listen and advise, but have no special powers. But for many residents, just them being there is enough.

On the estates of Woodthorpe, Manor, Arbourthorne, Wybourne and Park, a visible presence on the streets is what residents want. Local applicants were encouraged and nine wardens live in the area.

The scheme started fully only last September. It covers an area of 40,000 people, most of whom live in 1960s' deck access flats or in post-war council houses. Operations manager Gary Smelt, a former psychiatric nurse and probation officer, oversees the wardens, who work from 12 noon until 8pm on weekdays and 10am to 2pm on Saturdays. As his boss, scheme manager Debbie Matthews, points out: "One criticism made of the council and other agencies is that they don't see what goes on after 5pm, but our wardens are there in the early evenings.

"We reduce the fear of crime just by having a physical presence on the streets."

A pair of wardens patrols each area. Two more staff do the vehicle patrol that supports the service and takes wardens' reports every 30 minutes. The remaining warden covers holidays, sickness and provides back up. Wardens travel free by bus between patrols, under a deal with First Mainline Buses, and communicate by mobile phone. "We decided that radios looked too police-like," says Gary.

Out on the streets and decks in all weathers, what do they actually do? Gary explains: "About one third of their work is on housing issues, including advising old people on home security. The rest concerns drug use, antisocial behaviour, and abandoned vehicles. We assist in breaking deviancy cycles among young people."

> **We reduce the fear of crime just by having a physical presence on the streets.**

The wardens are involved in anti-drug work with children aged under 10 and their parents, since Gary believes that older children are less likely to be receptive. The team tackles antisocial behaviour, and tries to reward responsible youngsters with trips and football matches. But a major problem is that one person's antisocial behaviour, is another's innocent activity.

"One of the most difficult parts of the job is defining antisocial behaviour," Gary explains. "We have complaints about kids playing football, or people find groups of 20 or 30 kids outside. They are just playing football or hanging around, but older people see it as nuisance. A lot of our job is getting older people to accept what young people do and getting young people to understand what concerns older people. Young people just congregating together is not in itself antisocial."

While the wardens cooperate with the police, the difference between the two services is fundamental, and Gary rejects the charge sometimes made that wardens are 'cheap police'. He says: "Some residents find it very difficult that we talk to kids who are causing problems instead of dragging them off, but eventually the kids will start talking to us and we build relationships with them."

Gary would like the wardens to have powers to get abandoned vehicles removed, but sees no need for any police powers. This approach is supported by local police crime reduction officer Eamonn Larkin. He admits: "Like a lot of bobbies I was sceptical when the wardens started. Now I know what their role and remit is, and what they do is different from us.

"The big thing is they are there all the time and have time to get into problem solving. Police deal with an incident then move on to the next one."

The wardens say that as yet there is no evidence that antisocial behaviour is being displaced from their area to adjacent unpatrolled ones. It is not just residents who are finding out what the wardens can do. So are the tearaways. Gary recalls: "We had two wardens out one evening when some kids pushed a car down a hill, tipped it over and set light to it, then walked up to the wardens and said, 'What are you going to do about that?' The answer was, 'Call the police and give them your descriptions'. The problem is, the community wants things to happen

Warden Phil Hirst talks with local children.

Warden Phil Bullivent takes a look inside a burnt out car.

straight away."

The wardens' community role has made residents more willing to come forward with information on those acting antisocially. Helping to curb the vandals might expose the wardens to threats, but the worst that has happened so far has been verbal abuse. Warden Christine Richards, formerly in social work, says: "There is abuse but you just ignore it. Often it is just kids being kids, but you can't just say that to a worried elderly person. You have to say you will keep an eye on it, and then use common sense and experience."

Philip Bullivant, an ex-miner, became a warden because, "I wanted to work with people and I enjoy being in touch with the community. I help people and it is a real buzz. People can get a bit in your face, but once people get to know you they calm down. The majority of the kids are great."

Simon Marshall, who became a warden after two years' travelling the world, works in Park, where many refugees and asylum seekers live: "They can be totally excluded by fear of crime or because of language barriers. We will get to know people, go round to where they are, meet parents and children and get them talking to us," he says.

"One person's antisocial behaviour, is another's innocent activity."

Debbie Matthews says: "We are beginning to see an impact on the community in that people are more ready to provide information. We do preventative work, and that starts to give local people some control over their area. Our scheme focuses on people, while local authority ones elsewhere tend to be an extension of the housing service."

The wardens are helping a community that was hit hard by the collapse of the steel and heavy engineering industries, where unemployment remains high, and those with the means to do so tend to move away.

Problems such as these cannot be solved overnight but as warden Mike Heard says: "I'm putting something back into the area. Twenty years ago there were a lot of older people in Manor Park, then they started putting in young tearaways and other people moved out. Now, I can see the community spirit building back."

● *Mark Smulian is a freelance journalist.*

Gray Smelt (right) with wardens Richard Oxley and Pat Slingsby.

Fast Facts

Under the recent ABI review (see page 2) street wardens and neighbourhood wardens have been merged.

What do wardens do?

- They care for the physical appearance of an area. They tackle environmental problems such as litter, graffiti and dog fouling.
- They also help to deter anti-social behaviour; reduce the fear of crime; and foster social inclusion.
- Wardens provide a uniformed, semi-official presence in residential areas with the aim of improving quality of life.
- Wardens can promote community safety, assist with housing management, and also contribute to community development.
- Wardens may patrol, provide concierge duties or act as 'super caretakers'.

Wardens not only boost the well-being and confidence of residents in disadvantaged areas, there is also hard evidence of their success in terms of:

- Reduced crime
- Fewer empty properties
- Improved local services

Following the introduction of Hartlepool's 'super caretakers' scheme, recorded crime fell by 35 per cent over three years. In Middlesbrough, wardens have almost totally eliminated graffiti in their area. Sheffield wardens' fast track response to abandoned cars has reduced removal time from 30 to 10 days.

Information

The New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: A National Strategy Action Plan was launched by the Prime Minister on 15 January 2001. The Strategy sets out the Government's vision for narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, so that within 10 to 20 years, no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live.

At national level, the Action Plan is implemented by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) which is part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Part of that action plan is the work of neighbourhood and street wardens:

www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/nswardens.asp

Contact: The Neighbourhood Wardens Team at the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

e neighbourhoodrenewal@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

✆ 020 7944 2537

✉ 3rd Floor, C/5, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU

Perspectives on Sure Start

On the starting blocks

A significant number of children face a combination of problems which will lead to low educational attainment, limited employment opportunities and poor health in later life. Many children and young people are at risk of social exclusion at some point through factors such as poverty and poor parenting. The Government's approach to tackling child poverty is to raise incomes and deliver better public services. However, despite increased investment in services for children, many services are not having the desired positive impact on the most disadvantaged children.

Sure Start goes some way towards helping parents-to-be and families to give babies and young children the best start in life. The project is aimed at those particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, to help them get the most out of home and school. Local Sure Start programmes have been set up to improve services to families with children under four. The scheme also passes on good practice from local programmes to everyone who provides services for children. This year, the programme has been radically changed, as a result of the merger of Sure Start with early years and childcare programmes. "Sure Start's original programme is now being spread out across the whole of the early years field," Naomi Eisenstadt, acting director of Sure Start, and the Early Years and Childcare Unit explains. The programme is now being run jointly by the DfES and the Department of Work and Pensions, to emphasise the government's view that a key route out of poverty is through employment.

A key part of the scheme is to improve health, to improve children's ability to learn, and to strengthen families and communities. This means involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain Sure Start. Naomi says, "We want to ensure that capacity building is not just voluntary, but provides parents with skills for work. We also have a lot more money for childcare in disadvantaged areas."

Perspectives

Michelle Ackroyd, Health Visitor, Sure Start – Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich

"This project was one of the trailblazers for Sure Start. I am one of the extra health visitors funded by the project, and we visit everyone in the geographical area with children under four. All the people who are visited also have access to us, because we are based locally in the middle of the area.

"One of the main thrusts of this Sure Start project was to provide good quality play facilities. Now, a shop has been converted to provide play sessions four times a week, and a baby group twice a week.

There is also a midwife involved in the project, Michelle explains. "Mothers initially come in for post-natal sessions. After a couple of months, they move on to the baby club. At the club there are health education sessions."

Sure Start has been operating for two and a half years. "We can already see the difference it has made to people's lives. Parents say how much it has helped them – if people are feeling isolated, they have somewhere to go. Our parenting groups are really well attended," says Michelle.

Health visitors have more contact with their clients because of Sure Start funding. "Our success has a lot to do with the time we can spend with people. People open up and because we give them quite a lot of time in the early months, they will come back to the team with any problems later on.

"We all work closely as a team," Michelle says, adding that working in a multi-agency environment is "health visiting as it should be."

> **"We can already see the difference it has made to people's lives. Parents say how much it has helped them."**

Karen Turner, Parent

"Sure Start is such a brilliant thing, I wish it had been around when I had my other children," says Karen. She is active in the parents' group of Sure Start, Thorpe Hamlet in Norwich. She has three older children, and an 18 month-old daughter. "The first I knew of Sure Start was when the health visitor came after my baby was born," she explains. "It was not my normal health visitor, but Michelle, one of the two Sure Start health workers. She is now my best friend."

Karen was encouraged to go to the Sure Start postnatal group. "I've been to baby massage sessions, then baby club and now play sessions three times a week. They like things to be parent-led," she says, so that when Karen and a friend suggested a craft group for parents, the centre helped them set it up. New premises are being built for Sure Start, and the parents have had a lot of say in what they want in the new building.

Through Sure Start, Karen went on a parenting course: "I learnt how to play with children and get the most out of it, and how to deal with behavioural problems."

Karen says that Sure Start has given her a lot of confidence. She is now studying for six GCSEs, with crèche facilities provided, through Sure Start Extra. She also attended courses to register as a childminder, and now looks after other people's children too.

"There is more and more going on, and loads to do," Karen says. "I can't praise Sure Start enough," she adds, "It is a way to give your children the best start in life."

> **"Sure Start is such a brilliant thing, I wish it had been around when I had my other children."**

Clare Aspinall,
Youth Worker, Merseyside

Clare Aspinall was employed as a youth worker when a Sure Start post in the region came up two years ago.

"It is a young women's teenage pregnancy project," she explains. "The idea is to support young women about to be sexually active, or pregnant at an early age, to stop them being excluded."

Different sessions are held every day, on topics that have been chosen by the young women themselves. "It is an important way of getting basic information to them. Normally in parent classes we would see eight people every six months. But in the eight-week pilot for these sessions, we have seen 35 young women."

One hugely successful session is 'Time for me' days, where in addition to pampering sessions, topics like teenage pregnancies or post-natal depression are discussed.

"Up to 130 women of all ages have come along, and it means that we have engaged with a lot of people that we would not have reached normally," Clare explains.

Participants in the Sure Start project have produced a lot of information themselves: "They have published a leaflet with a step-by-step guide on what to do if you think you are pregnant, and a credit-card sized information card with many local contact numbers young people might want. They have also set up a local web site and take part in many local forums."

Sure Start has made a huge difference in the area. And Clare loves her job: "It helps because I am local and was a young mum. As a single parent, the young women see that I have my own house and car. And if I can do it, anyone can."

> **"It means that we have engaged with a lot of people that we would not have reached normally."**

Pauline Naylor,
Early Learning and Childcare Co-ordinator, Sure Start Barkerend, Bradford

Pauline Naylor is team leader for Sure Start Barkerend, in Bradford. "I was the deputy family centre manager for Bradford social services, I am a qualified teacher and I have done youth and community work," she says.

Coupled with her experience in early years education, this meant that the multidisciplinary approach of Sure Start appealed to her – and she is now seconded to the project.

"My experience shows that this approach is better for children – and it gives families more understanding. More management input is needed when people work in teams, and there needs to be a lot of communication and a lot of feedback among staff," Pauline says.

"Barkerend is a particularly impoverished part of Bradford," Pauline explains. "And there are many children under four. The project has to cater for twice as many children than originally planned.

"A key need is for infrastructure. In order to secure a main centre for Sure Start, a partnership has been formed with a neighbourhood private sector nursery. The plan is for Sure Start to provide the accommodation and the nursery to provide the childcare."

Sure Start also provides parent/toddler playgroups, and a playbus. "Due to the lack of space, it is a way of getting to hard-to-reach children," Pauline says.

Like others involved in Sure Start, she also stresses the importance of community involvement. "I feel that we are working in an environment where we are trying to do things in a different way," she says. "The feedback we get is that we have already made a significant difference to quite a lot of families that are hard to reach."

> **"My experience shows that this approach is better for children – and it gives families more understanding."**

Facts

Figures

- Between 1999 and 2002, the government invested £452 million in Sure Start
- For 2001 to 2004, a further £580 million is being made available
- By October 2002, 342 Sure Start programmes were approved
- By 2004, at least 500 programmes will be helping up to 400,000 children living in disadvantaged areas

Targets

- By 2004, the government wants to reduce the proportion of children aged 0-3 in 500 Sure Start areas on the child protection register, by 20 per cent
- By 2004 the programmes should reduce the proportion of mothers who smoke when pregnant by six per cent
- By 2004, for children aged 0-3, to reduce the number of children with speech and language problems that require specialist help, by five per cent
- To reduce the number of children aged 0-3 in Sure Start areas that live in households where no one is working, by 12 per cent

Information

www.surestart.gov.uk

e **info.surestart@dfes.gsi.gov.uk**

✆ **0870 000 2288**

✉ **Level 2, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA**

How do they do that?

Opposite: Laurence Clark, Amit Sharma and Karen Spicer in The Trouble with Richard by Jamie Beddard. Below right: Graeae actor Laurence Clark.

Graeae theatre company are working with young people to raise awareness of disability and inclusion issues. **Helen Stear** reports on their latest venture.

Play for today

Richard,15, wants to be a music journalist. But things have been going wrong for him ever since he moved schools; he feels he doesn't fit in. He's bullied and the teachers don't understand him. His school work suffers and he begins playing truant. At the same time he starts shoplifting, smoking and experiencing problems at home.

This is a fictional story, but something like it is probably happening around the country on a daily basis. Perhaps this is why the Graeae theatre company has found that its play, *The Trouble with Richard*, from which the story comes, rings true with a wide range of audiences. The company is touring the country with the play and has visited over 25 schools, performing and engaging young people in interactive theatre.

Richard faces these common teenage problems from a wheelchair and at the heart of the play lies his struggle to deal with the issues that surround disabled people in mainstream education. "Stared at, prodded, talked down to, given labels. So this is mainstream education," says the character Richard, played by Laurence Clark.

Drawing from experience

The inspiration for this play was director Jamie Beddard's own experiences as well as the experiences of other members of the company.

Richard endures teachers either being awkward around him for fear of saying the wrong thing, or talking about him to the class and making an example of him, calling him 'special'. Other pupils call him names or argue over the rights and wrongs of certain names, but totally ignore him. He suffers terrible embarrassment at a youth club and is then told he should be friends with Stewart because he's disabled too.

> **"It's very powerful for a mainstream audience to see disabled people taking control. It takes the challenge very directly to people."**

Finding solutions

"The aim is not to tell anyone the answers to any of these problems, but to make them think about solving them," says Jamie.

Graeae, founded in 1980, is a leading theatre company of people with physical and sensory impairments. Its aim is to "redress the exclusion of people with physical and sensory impairments from performance". But the company's work also includes training, young people's theatre, outreach, education, and raising awareness of disability issues.

The play incorporates performance by a cast of three with British Sign Language for deaf audience members and is followed by an interactive workshop that the company describes as 'forum theatre'. During this session the company asks the audience to take part on the stage to help Richard overcome the barriers he faces and to help other characters realise he's just another 15-year-old working out how to become an independent adult.

Laurence says: "Since we've been on tour no-one has ever stood up and shouted 'Hallelujah I've seen the light'. But they might go away and next time they are in a situation with a disabled person, the penny might drop and they might behave differently."

Working together

Annie Bowie, head of drama at King Edward VI Community College in Totness, invited Graeae to work with her Year 10 and 12 drama and theatre studies students. She was impressed. "It worked brilliantly," she reports. "My students engaged with the workshop and were happy to discuss the issues in play. All the actors and facilitators were wonderful – really accessible and willing."

"I think it was incredibly important for my students to see a play with a disabled lead actor like Laurence. They are already quite sensitive and aware young people but that was probably something they had never seen before."

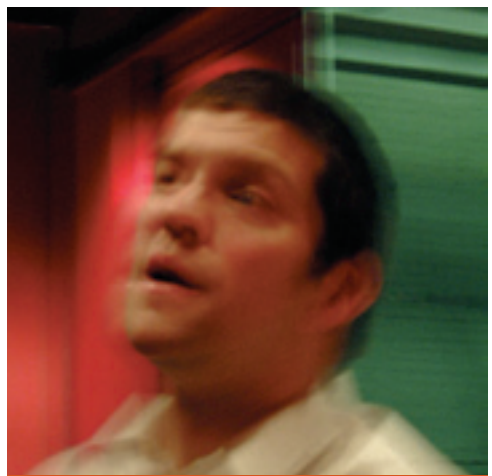
Laurence also recognises this: "It's very powerful for a mainstream audience to see disabled people taking control. It takes the challenge very directly to people."

As a teacher, Annie values groups like Graeae enormously but says the difficulty is to keep up enough to challenge young people: "Education and schools are changing and developing so much and so fast that, to be relevant, to really make you stop and think, they almost need to be one step ahead."

Laurence agrees. "A play like this can only do so much. Actually having disabled people around will change attitudes – there needs to be more inclusion."

Having written part of the teachers' pack explaining the origin of terms associated with disability, Laurence is quite particular about his choice of words.

"Integration is about people changing to fit into society but inclusion is about society changing and embracing everybody."



Information

Graeae is funded by the Arts Council of England, London Arts and the Association of London Government
www.members.lycos.co.uk/graeae/

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e **annette@graeae.org**

✆ **020 7681 4755**

✉ **Interchange Studios, Hampstead Townhall Centre, 213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP**

Heading for success

William Atkinson leads the team which turned around a school once described as the worst in Britain. He talks to us about reducing truancy and exclusions.

I believe every student has an entitlement to participate in the national curriculum in an environment that is both supportive and safe; where it is possible for students to learn and teachers to teach. Any fracturing of that environment needs to be addressed.

It is my firm belief that all schools, irrespective of the composition of the student body, should be focussed on maximising the achievement of every single student. This imperative is especially relevant in schools containing disproportionate numbers of students drawn from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society. Here, inclusion means ensuring full entitlement to individuals and groups who have traditionally faced exclusion and marginalisation.

In order to support our drive to create a learning culture we have developed a broad range of opportunities outside the time-tabled school day aimed at engaging as many students as possible. A wide provision is necessary because it is not always possible to know what is going to work for each individual. To this end we put on a range of extra curricular activities that take place before and after school, during lunch, on Saturday mornings and some holiday periods.

> **“At the moment the government is spending a fortune on the cost of failure. What they need to do is start spending a fortune on creating success.”**

Parents

We actively support and involve parents because, in my experience, nearly all of them want the best for their children and they can have great influence over their children. But increasingly we find that those youngsters who have low commitment to school have backgrounds that place little value on education and indeed some families appear to operate within a belief system that is an inversion of society's dominant values. In many instances these parents have had checkered experiences at school and this is reflected in their youngsters' values. Simply saying, 'that action is wrong', isn't enough. You need to sit down and try to understand why the young person thinks that their behaviour is acceptable when it is quite clearly at odds with the values of school and the wider society.

Attendance at school is vital if students are to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude that will allow them to compete in an ever increasingly competitive world. It is therefore sad to note that some parents collude in the non-attendance of their children by taking them out of school for trivial reasons. We are concerned about parents legitimising what is effectively truanting.

At Phoenix we have sought to give a real voice to the students through participation in activities such as the school council, key stage council, year council, senior prefects, junior prefects, high achievers club, peer mentoring and other such schemes. We aim to empower young people, giving them the capacity to not only help themselves but also to be young citizens who can contribute to the development of the institution. As the Prime Minister said at the Technology Colleges Trust conference in October last year, 'A good education is the best anti-crime measure I know of.'

People often say 'if only we could stop schools excluding, then we would solve the major part of the problem associated with youth offending.' In reality what would happen is that a small minority of youngsters would disrupt and undermine the education and life chances of students already suffering disadvantage and in the process make it more difficult for hard pressed teachers to work in these schools.

Engagement

It is counter-productive to deal with issues of exclusion by saying that the answer is to keep all children in school. Unless these children can be profitably and constructively engaged in the school, then not only will they fail to achieve but they will ensure that significant numbers of deserving young people, for whom education represents a ladder out of poverty, fail to achieve too.

But highly challenging pupils have an entitlement too. We should better recognise the absolute need to provide quality alternative provision that is full time and staffed by highly qualified, able and enthusiastic teachers who believe they can turn these kids around. These institutions need to be well resourced because we are talking about re-engaging some of the most disaffected youngsters who have had a series of very negative events in their lives. I am talking about a new kind of 'Advanced School-Plus' not a random set of 'support units'. At the moment the government is spending a fortune on the cost of failure. What they need to do is start spending a fortune on creating success.

In recent years we have had a number of setbacks at this school, mainly to do with recruitment and retention of staff. The demands that a place like this make on teachers are huge. So why do it? In this school you have the capacity to change people's lives in a very significant way. How many professional people are able to say that? Working at the sharp end is where you make the biggest difference. But the extra effort should be reflected in enhanced salaries, the best resources available, strong networks of support and recognition from the community and government.

● *William Atkinson is headteacher of Phoenix High School in West London*

Facts and figures

- 7.5 million school days are missed each year through truancy;
- 1 million children miss at least one day of school without permission;
- According to OfSTED 80% of pupils found on truancy sweeps are with a responsible adult;
- In a co-ordinated exercise of truancy sweeps in 83 LEAs in May 2002, 12,000 children were stopped by over 900 truancy patrols.

We work together

All round service

Library manager Roberto Cioccari and employment adviser Faruk Noor work together at Queens Crescent Library in Gospel Oak, north London.

"This library acts as a street-corner university," says Roberto Cioccari of his domain. Looking round Queens Crescent Library it's easy to see what he means.

Gone are the old-fashioned regimented corridors of books; in their place bookstands encouraging readers to browse. At one end of the building is a learning centre with 14 well-used computers linked to the Internet by Learndirect – a government initiative to promote online learning. Over the last six months, 600 residents have completed courses there. Partnerships have been established in the library with youth services and colleges such as Westminster Kingsway, to offer training, advice and support to local residents. Elsewhere in the library is an after-school homework club for local kids. Basic skills courses for adults are also on offer.

Advice flying squad

But learning doesn't stop at gaining qualifications. That's why Faruk Noor is also based at the library. He's one of a team of employment advisers set up under an initiative for London boroughs with high unemployment. He works on a 'flying squad' principle, taking his professional guidance and advice right into the communities where his help is needed.

As he explains: "What I offer is different to other employment advice services because it's all done on a one-to-one basis. Everyone is different and responds to different things. I try to boost people's confidence, help with CVs, do interview practice and basically cover everything they need to move them from A to B."

Help with employers

"The aim is keeping a job, not just getting it. A high number of people who come out of long term unemployment lose their jobs in the first three months of employment. I've gone to employers when there's been a problem and tried to smooth things over."

How does the arrangement work? "We decided Faruk would come in once a week and just be in the library and available to people in an informal way," says Roberto. "And I think it is the informality that helps people gain confidence. Faruk fits perfectly in to the larger picture of what we are already doing. I briefed all the other staff in the library about Faruk and we also let library users know about him by putting up some publicity posters in the library introducing him and the service.

Holistic view

"Faruk completes the cycle of the services we provide – the information services, the adult learning services and now the employment services. He's extremely flexible: he fits into the other activities going on in the library, but is also professional in terms of knowing what he wants for his clients.

"We are successful because we talk and communicate regularly. We need to make sure that the partnerships we have here work to improve services. We are at a point of departure now, not arrival. We can't sit back and think we've arrived. This is where we start."

● Faruk is part of Getting London Working, a £6.1 million programme from specialist charitable trust Tomorrow's People, in partnership with 15 other public, private and voluntary sector organisations.
www.tomorrows-people.co.uk

Roberto Cioccari and Faruk Noor: "Faruk completes the cycle of the services we provide."

> **"We need to make sure the partnerships we have here work to improve services. We are at a point of departure now, not arrival."**

Information

Queens Crescent Library is an online learning pilot.

www.camden.gov.uk/libraries
queenscrescentlibrary@camden.gov.uk
020 7974 6243
165 Queens Crescent, London NW5 4HH

Get in touch

We want to hear from you. Have you been involved in a project that could share good practice? Have you come up against challenges in your work that others could learn from? Do you want to nominate someone or a project for one of the sections of the newsletter? Write and tell us.

If you would like more copies of this newsletter, or if you no longer wish to be on our mailing list, contact us at the address below.

inclusioneditor@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

020 7944 4614

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Noticeboard

Do you have any resources or sources of information that other people working in the social inclusion field would find useful? Please send your ideas for the noticeboard to: Inclusion Editor, Social Exclusion Unit, 7th floor, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU. Email: inclusioneditor@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Where to look for help – a guide for parents and carers of teenagers

This user-friendly guide provides a comprehensive range of organisations that offer help to parents. The guide is split into two sections, firstly helping parents identify the problem and secondly listing the organisations available to provide information and support.

Areas covered include: abuse; bereavement; bullying; counselling/mental health; disability and special needs; drink, drugs and addiction; eating disorders; education; fathers' support; gay and lesbian issues; legal issues; parent support; parenting courses; sex and sexual health; suicide. Author: Brigid McConville, published by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, 2002 ISBN: 1 871504 39 2 Price: £14.95.
www.tsa.uk.com

Capacity building training

A range of courses for tenants is on offer at Trafford Hall, home of the National Tenants Resource Centre between now and March. This charity offers training and support to all those living and working in low-income communities around the United Kingdom to develop their skills, confidence and capacity to tackle problems

The current programme includes residential courses on making partnerships work for you; building a positive image – using the media; monitoring and evaluating a funded project; setting up support groups and helplines for families affected by drug misuse; the people's jury – the future of council housing. Tel: Barbara Watson 01244 300246 Email: b.watson@traffordhall.com.
www.traffordhall.com

Active Community Unit website

Information for voluntary and community organisations about government grants is now available on a new website. The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants website provides information on grants available from the Home Office, Department for Education and Skills, Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the Department of Health.

This site is the first stage of a larger project to develop a Voluntary and Community Sector portal which will provide an online source for all information relating to grants that are available from government to the sector, including access to grants through electronic applications.
www.volcomgrants.gov.uk/ho_templates/templates/home_page

Changing towns and cities: the challenge for urban leadership conference

The LGA's annual urban conference provides an opportunity to take stock of the issues facing towns and cities in the months after the government's own Urban Summit.

This year's conference, which takes place on 29 and 30 January, will look at a number of the major strategic issues local authorities need to address in the context of urban renewal, from diversity and community cohesion, through to the role of culture and the new housing and planning challenges. A range of workshops have been devised which will enable participants to examine the issues in more detail. Tel: 020 7664 3131. Email: info@lga.gov.uk Address: LGA Conference & Event Team, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ.
www.lga.gov.uk, then go to Events