

The newsletter for those involved in tackling social exclusion

Meet the family champion

Nahar Choudhury knows better than most the obstacles facing a Bengali woman in London. "My mother came to England in the early 1970s," she says. "She didn't speak any English and services which the Hopscotch Centre offers today would have been so helpful to her."

Nahar, 29, is the dynamic project co-ordinator of the Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre in Camden, North London. The centre, open 9-5 weekdays, offers a friendly and relaxed environment where women, mainly from the 11,000 strong Camden Bengali community, can drop in for information and support.

"It's like a Bangladeshi village sometimes!" says Nahar. "I speak Syhltei, a Bengali dialect, which helps in communicating with the people I work with."

Hopscotch has 15 full and part-time staff and 20 sessional workers and receives its funding mainly from Camden Council, Sure Start, Learning Skills Council and, up until recently, London Development Agency.

Many of the centre's clients are young mothers living in overcrowded accommodation; Hopscotch offers them a space where they can take their children and learn parentcraft skills and play with



Nahar Choudhury in Camden - London.

Photography: Vicki Couchman

educational toys.

"We run ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, which remove barriers and are very empowering for ethnic women. Even being able to visit a doctor and explain a problem without a translator means they regain some privacy. My staff are my main asset, they come from

similar cultural backgrounds which is important, because although we want to empower women, we do have to do it sensitively and delicately.

"I have had a father come to the centre and accuse me of corrupting his daughter because she felt strong enough to reject his choice of an arranged marriage. I dealt

with him respectfully - we don't want to alienate people. We look at whole families, we deal with women from the cradle to the grave and our doors are open to

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- Hopscotch tel: 020 7388 6200
- nahar.choudhury@hopscotchawc.org.uk

New offenders service to launch

The new National Offender Management Service (NOMS) looks set to launch in June, with much work in progress this month.

Latest developments include the final preparations for a pathfinder project that will seek to integrate the management of all offenders - both those in custody and under supervision in the community. This project will be the cornerstone of the new service, ensuring that offender managers have clear responsibility for changing behaviour and cutting crime.

Plans for the creating of the new body were announced in January as part of a radical reform of correc-

NOMS will be responsible for:

- **improving the enforcement and credibility of community punishments so that prison is not the first resort for less serious offenders;**
- **ensuring that both custodial and community punishments make offenders address their behaviour and offer a path away from crime; and**
- **raising educational standards among offenders in order to break the link between low educational attainment and criminality.**

tional services to cut re-offending rates and increase rehabilitation and pay-back to the community.

NOMS is designed to provide 'end-to-end' management of all offenders, whether they are serving sentences in prison, the community or both.

A National Offender Manager will

report to the Chief Executive and manage ten Regional Offender Managers, with directly responsibility for reducing re-offending. The regional offender managers will be responsible for reducing crime in the nine English regions and Wales and will source prison places, community punishment, supervision

and other interventions through contracts with public, private and voluntary sector providers.

- The Government's plans to reform correctional services was set out in 'Reducing Crime, Changing Lives' published by the Home Office.
- www.homeoffice.co.uk

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Welcome



What shines out the pages of this issue of Inclusion is how a sense of local pride can make a real difference to a community's success and long term sustainability. Regeneration means more than bricks and mortar. It means creating a social and physical network that can pull people out of social exclusion and into opportunity.

Take Nahar Choudhury, featured on the front page, talking about the community spirit in her area of London. The energy and vitality in her 'London village' is unmissable. Or the people of Oldham determined to build a community from a troubled past on page 10. It is upsetting to read 72-year-old Richard Waldorch's story of a viscous race-related gang attack. But, it's good to hear how people like him are being helped to rebuild their lives and sense of security in their homes.

I know it's the people at the front-line who have to deal with the kind of problems that can tear a community apart. I pay tribute to you.

A thriving business community can also make a real difference - which is why this issue of Inclusion also focuses on business and regeneration. I have seen for myself how a healthy business sector can transform a run-down area. I have also seen what happens when the jobs and social life disappear and when shops, offices and small firms go.

It's as Roger Cowe says on page 6 in the first of his series of articles on business and regeneration, 'just as businesses and communities can suffer together, they can also prosper together'.

That joint success exactly what has happened in Harlem and I am pleased that Bill Boler has come over from the U.S. to join Business in the Community and share some of the lessons he has learnt on urban regeneration with us. Read his journey from the Harlem jazz scene to the British high street on page 11.

There's still a culture gap between the business world and the regeneration and social exclusion sectors. Sometimes it takes an intermediary to make the connection - which is why we are investing in business brokers to engage business in neighbourhood renewal. Brokers are beginning to make a real difference by helping existing small firms, encouraging start-ups and getting people into jobs in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

I want many more local people to benefit from this kind of business link and I hope you'll find inspiration and support in this edition of Inclusion.

Working together we can create truly sustainable communities.

John Prescott
Deputy Prime Minister



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☎ 020 7944 8133 e inclusioneditor@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

For access to an on-line version of Inclusion:

www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

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Bill prompts children's services reform

The new Children's Bill, published on 4 March, sets out new duties and responsibilities for everyone working with young people. The bill also outlines the Government's vision for both protecting children and preventing social exclusion in the future.

The bill will put a new duty on agencies to cooperate with other local partners to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. It will place a tighter focus on child protection through a duty on key agencies to safeguard children and promote their welfare through new Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

Publication was broadly welcomed by children's charities and public bodies. The Local Government Association said: "we are excited about the opportunity to improve the way we deliver services for children and families".

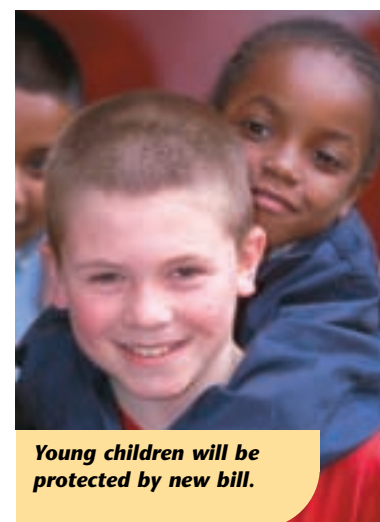
Children's Minister Margaret Hodge said: "The Children's Bill is the most radical reform of children's services that we have seen for a generation. It will ensure that children are better protected and have more opportunities to achieve their full potential".

There will be clear lines of accountability for the improvement of children's services through a Director of Children's Services who will be accountable for local author-

ity education and children's social services. And there will be a Lead Council Member for Children's Services. A single inspection framework will be introduced, and if services fall below minimum standards, there will be new powers to intervene. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children welcomed this integration as "placing a focus on the needs of a child".

The Royal College of Nursing emphasised the need for close working between sectors. They said: "one of the many failings recognised by Lord Laming in his report into the death of Victoria Climbié was the failure of different agencies to share information. It is imperative that this joined up approach is adopted."

The bill also creates a Children's Commissioner for England - a new voice for all children and young people. The Commissioner will draw



Young children will be protected by new bill.

on children's views and make sure they are fed into policy-making and service delivery - both locally and nationally. The job will be independent of Government and the Commissioner will report annually to Parliament via the Secretary of State.

Find out more...

The Children's Bill is available at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills.htm

Every Child Matters: The Next Steps, the Government's response to the Children's Green Paper is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

Meet the Family Champion

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men for welfare advice. Many of the centre users are restricted by their culture and subsequent limited education so it is important for us to deal with taboo subjects sexual health and child abuse which they might not find out about otherwise."

Nahar's particular passion is the field of education, training and employment.

"Our visitors often have no concept of writing a CV or preparing for a job interview. We can give them practical help to do that. We have an IT suite - it's great to see them use it comfortably. Many of the staff who work at the centres were once visitors themselves and it is inspiring to see how they have progressed.

"My job is different every day but I would love to secure more private fundraising so that we can concentrate on services and open longer hours.

"It's inspiring for me to be able to deliver a service that I or my mother would have taken up. To be able to inform a woman about how to stand up for her rights - that's all you can ask for."

Renewal facts at your fingertips

A new resource - essential for anyone who has searched for facts for presentations, proposals or funding bids - was launched this month.

Floor Targets Interactive (FTI) brings together key information on health, employment, crime, education and housing at a district level. With a particular focus on the 88 most disadvantaged areas it will enable all those involved in neighbourhood renewal to identify priority areas, monitor progress, and compare themselves with others.

FTI makes existing data much more accessible and provides charting and mapping tools so the user can create visual aids. Maps, graphs and tables can be produced without any technical expertise.

It is likely to be of particular interest to those involved in setting baselines and identifying priorities at the local level. Users can draw a picture of performance on a variety of indicators - allowing for quick and easy interpretation of what is happening in their area.

Find out more...

For further information on the FTI system e fti@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

Floor Targets Interactive is available via the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit website www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

Turning the tide on social exclusion

Claire Tyler, Head of the Social Exclusion Unit, discusses the latest research and future challenges in tackling social exclusion.

Gather 100 of our foremost social researchers and thinkers in one room and there are bound to be questions. In March the Social Exclusion Unit brought together leading researchers and practitioners, with Minister Yvette Cooper, to look at the past, present and future of social exclusion.

Opening the Conference, Yvette Cooper spoke of the dramatic changes seen since the 1990s when child poverty, unemployment and social exclusion reached breaking point. Many in the room shared her view that "this Government has halted and started to reverse deep-rooted and powerful trends".

Key facts from 'Tackling Social Exclusion'

- The number of children living in relative low-income households has fallen by half a million since 1997.
- 18 per cent of pensioners and 16 per cent of children are living in persistent poverty.
- The number of people sleeping rough has dropped 70 per cent since 1998.
- 200,000 lone parents have moved into work since 1997 – but still only 53 per cent of lone parents are in work.
- Last year saw a 66 per cent reduction in the number of families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are three times more likely to be on a low income.

When the Social Exclusion Unit was born back in the 1990s it was not just that unemployment was rising – rather that life without work had become a way of life. In contrast today, we have the lowest unemployment in a generation and significant investment and reform has turned round the life chances of thousands of people.

Life expectancy for men, however, differs 7.4 years between the highest and lowest social classes. The Minister and our other speakers at the event, Professor John Hills of the London School of Economics, Patrick Vernon of Brent Primary Care Trust and Alex Freen of The Times, raised questions about the challenges ahead – from supporting children in care to tackling poverty and inequality.

The discussion document we launched suggests that some groups remain cut off from opportunity. For example, ethnic minority groups continue to fare worse across many indicators.

In the future, new pressure points are likely to emerge alongside economic, social, technological and demographic shifts. We are likely to see a decline in skilled manual labour, the UK population will continue to age markedly, single person households are on the increase and by 2010 almost one in five pupils will be from an ethnic minority group.

We have yet to see the full impact of these trends and the Social Exclusion Unit will publish final reports on the issues



Claire Tyler - Head of Social Exclusion Unit at the London seminar

Photography: UNP Pictures

alongside new reports on mental health and jobs and enterprise later in the year.

“The scale of the problem remains large.”

*Yvette Cooper
Minister for Social Exclusion*

So what do we know? It's clear that continued investment is needed to sustain progress and to prevent development of a 'new excluded'. The way we deliver public services is crucial.

We know individually tailored approaches work, such as personal

advisers for job seekers. And joined up services such as community one-stop shops put a range of facilities under one roof and draw in excluded groups without stigma.

I am pleased that our document and the seminar have prompted

debate, but I know that the final test will be on whether we deliver to the excluded. Already I see really effective local delivery both in the pages of Inclusion and out there in the field. The challenge remains to take that work to the many and not the fortunate few.

Find out more...

The Social Exclusion Unit's discussion document, Tackling Social Exclusion – Taking Stock and Looking to the Future, can be found at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

Call to take action on debt

Local managers across the public and private sectors are being called to take action on debt. The call came from Regeneration Minister Jeff Rooker as a new government report and fact-pack, Action on Debt, was published. Jeff Rooker said "Debt is damaging not just to individuals but to communities, the public sector and the wider economy".

The pack shows how decision-makers can take practical steps to cut the crippling personal,

“My illness, depression and stress have been exacerbated by my debt problem. As a result I cannot get well enough to go back to work to earn money to pay the debts.”

In too deep, Citizen's Advice, 2003

economic and social costs of debt.

The publication follows an announcement in the March budget that the Government will work in partnership both with the financial services sector and with voluntary and community bodies to achieve a step change in the availability of free debt advice for those who need it.

The pack gives practical advice and guidance for people working in seven different sectors – communities; housing; health; business; children and families;

the justice system and employment. The fact sheets are tailored to each sector to give quick access

to relevant information. They include case studies, best practice tips and contacts.

Find out more...

The Social Exclusion Unit's Action on Debt pack is free and can be obtained by contacting:

✉ ODPM Publications, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7NB

☎ 0870 1226 236

e seu@twoten.press.net

Read more about debt on pages 8 and 9

Imagine...there's no labels

Inclusion visits a project in Liverpool that helps people with mental health problems fulfil their potential in the mainstream of society.

The Mainstream project in Liverpool doesn't look for mental health workers with the usual clinical credentials when recruiting new staff. In fact, they don't look for mental health workers at all - but 'Bridge builders'. Mainstream is an organisation that has a radically different approach to helping people with mental health problems. They recruit only people who can see past a client's label and to the person beneath. It's a new approach that's working.

"When I came along to Mainstream I was told I'd be able to re-start my hobby of photography and, if I wanted to, a degree in politics. At first when I went out with my bridge-builder I was annoyed when they gave me the choice of where to go, what to photograph and even where to go for coffee! I kept thanking her for talking to me 'like a normal person'. Coming from a background of being labelled a 'psychiatric patient' I was not used to this approach. I was very grateful."

Mainstream is run by a Liverpool-based mental health charity, Imagine, and each staff member is responsible for making links with a particular sector such as education, employment or volunteering. The aptly named bridge-builders give dedicated support to clients using their specialist knowledge of the area. Over time their clients develop the confidence to use mainstream services and gain opportunities for learning, recreation and socialising outside of the mental health sphere.

Nicki is one such client. She has had schizophrenia and depression since she was 14 years old. Until Nicki got in touch with mainstream her confidence was very low confidence. She'd been used to more typical day centres where she felt constricted by rules and uninterested by the activities. And she spent her time surrounded only by mental health workers and other service users.

But luckily for Nicki Mainstream offers something very different. The move was prompted when Liverpool Area Health Authority decided to look again at investment in day centres and try 'something different'. Mainstream was born and the project is now funded largely by the local Primary Care Trusts in Liverpool and Sefton and Sefton Local Authority.

Mainstreaming

Joanne Seddon was fundamental in setting up the project and felt there was traditionally a 'ghetto' culture in mental health services. "We prefer to use day centres just as a venue where lots of activities can spring from. Activities that link users to wider social networks and mainstream services. For example, we have a women's group that meet all over the place and set their own agenda - they just use the day centre as an occasional base. We also encourage the wider community to use the centres as a resource for themselves



Photography: Matt Goodfellow

Nicki Howard (left) talks to Mainstream manager Joanne Seddon (right)

as well - it's all about not isolating those with mental health problems."

"At Mainstream people are seen outside of their label - they are seen as people with interests and a life outside their illness. Often this can be forgotten and people become their illness. They only talk to other people who are ill too. Services have traditionally been provided around what the professionals wanted and not the preferences of the users of the services. We don't do that."

Exploring interests

"We've had doctors, dentists, teachers, people from the armed forces... many with exceptional backgrounds. We take this into account. To us, they're not a faceless service user with no skills or talents to offer," says Jo. "If a service user would like to explore the arts or theatre, for example, they will be offered a bridge builder who really knows that arena and can link them with solid opportunities and offer sound advice."

Sometimes people only need a little bit of help to get their lives on a new invigorating path. Take, for example, the recent client who was an Iranian asylum seeker. Mainstream discovered that in he had been a highly skilled painter and decorator. They set him helped the client to get working again - sorting out his tax, national insurance, getting him a bank account and helping with a driving licence.

As Jo explains, when service users get skills and training it can turn around their standing in the local community: "They are suddenly seen as not a nuisance any more,

but as people who are actively contributing to their community."

Negative perceptions are one of the biggest problems to overcome when integrating mental health service users into the mainstream.

Stigma is something Mainstream has been tackling head on.

"I was asked if I would like to talk to tutors at Southport College about mental health. I jumped at the chance," says Nicki. "The first time I

did it I keep my head down and my voice wobbled, but very quickly I became confident. After that I was asked to do the same thing for the students. This was the best week I've ever had in my life. I was so confident that I spoke without notes and even got a standing ovation from one group. Since then I've done numerous mental health awareness days, plus talks in schools and I'm on two committees."

"When I ask students what they think a person with schizophrenia is like they often say things like 'an axe murderer'. It gives them a shock when they realise its people like

me. There's no training for teachers in mental health issues - I think we need more service users like me to go and tell young people the truth about mental health."

Jo says she has been overwhelmed by the

reaction the project has received: "The staff here have a real commitment to breaking down barriers and a belief that we can really change things. The people that we thought would be our enemies - the officials and those in authority that we deal with in Liverpool - actually have been keen and inter-

ested and willing to adapt."

And Mainstream does really give their clients the opportunity to live beyond their label: "I now feel like I'm on cloud 22" says Nicki. "My friends and family can't get over the difference in me now with the confidence I've got. Mainstream helps you become the person you want to be - by giving you the support to develop your interests and self-esteem. At Mainstream I've learnt that people should see Nicki first and then the schizophrenia. Now I feel like I'm flying through life filled with joy and enthusiasm."

“ At Mainstream people are seen outside of their label. Too often people become their illness. They only talk to other people who are ill.”

Find out more...

✉ Joanne Seddon, Imagine, 25 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9BQ
☎ 0151 709 2366
🌐 www.imaginementalhealth.org.uk

Playing your part

Chicken Shed theatre company based in north London is working with schools to create an inclusive ethos, enabling all children to fulfill their potential. *Inclusion* met two people who are closely involved.

Jane

I teach at Danegrove primary school in Barnet. It's a large school of 600 pupils from Foundation to year 6, with around 30 staff. The school has a very diverse make-up in terms of ethnicity and economic background.

I've worked with Chicken Shed, broadly on what you'd call an "inclusivity programme". People from Chicken Shed come down here once a term if possible and run participatory workshops called Tales

and feel comfortable and confident.

The really confident children learn that they can't always dominate. They learn to take part, to have a group mentality and to care for each other. Really assertive ones may learn to become good leaders. The less assertive ones can learn to come out of their shells and find things they can be really good at.

One girl was very lively and always at the front, taking charge but she started to take



Jane Trevette is a Foundation teacher at Danegrove primary school, Herts

Photography: Tas Kyprianou

from the Shed. When they are here, they spend all day in the school and work with pupils across the whole school and go into all the classrooms.

I think my children gain confidence through the work with Chicken Shed. The ethos behind the whole thing is to include everyone and children learn a huge amount through that.

Our biggest issue is money. We have cake sales to raise the bulk of the cost. We also ask parents for a small contribution. But we get so much out of it that it's worth it. My colleagues at the school learn a lot and

take on board some of the things they have seen demonstrated and can go on to embed this in the curriculum. We all need stimulation from fresh sources and Chicken Shed provides that.

The personal and social element is very important in the Foundation years. This sort of inclusive work can encourage children to learn to listen, share, help each other, help them find their place in their peer group

“This sort of work can help tackle all sorts of very deep problems.”

Jane

on responsibility for other children, leading and helping them.

This sort of work can help tackle even the very deepest self-esteem problems.

Year 5 did some work with Chicken Shed recently and they were all paired with

children from non-mainstream schools. The work took place at the Chicken Shed site and they all worked together without any issues over differing physical abilities.

I think every school should have the chance to do this sort of work. It's truly inclusive - they're not paying lip service to it. They are a true

inspiration and can show you new ways to work with each other and with the children.

Find out more...

Jane Trevette
 Danegrove primary school,
 Windsor Drive, New Barnet, Hertfordshire



Photography: Rachel Yates

Louise Perry is Children's Youth Theatre director at Chicken Shed

Lousie

Chicken Shed's overall aim is to produce excellent, original and creative theatre, which demonstrates that the performing arts belong to everyone. We have always had an inclusive philosophy and have found that working inclusively benefits everyone.

Chicken Shed started work with mainstream schools 14 years ago. We felt that the work we were doing at the theatre was going really well so we wanted more people to be able to access it. With 2,500 people on the waiting list, the best way to do that seemed to be to take it out to schools. We've already established nine satellite Chicken Sheds which can each do outreach to local schools, so we are growing.

We started off with a huge project that culminated in a performance at the Royal Albert Hall. We worked with one mainstream and one special school in 22 boroughs across London, and finally brought them all together for a performance.

We now run a National Training Programme in Lambeth, Southwark and Islington as part of the DfES London Challenge. At present neither the boroughs nor the LEAs are involved financially, though they are providing support in kind in the form of the premises we use. The London Challenge has promised one third of the money for these projects and the rest will come through our own fundraising efforts.

We offer all sorts of programmes in the field of education from training for teachers, to summer schools to an MA in inclusive performing arts.

But too many children are made to feel that they can fail when they should be realising their potential. We tackle issues of bully-

ing and low self-esteem and other personal and social issues. We create an environment where young people are given the responsibility to make each other feel included.

We did some work in Havering and during one of the [introductory] sessions the teacher wanted to withdraw a couple of the children who had made comments, but we insisted that they had to join in - kids like that have to be included otherwise you won't get anywhere.

When we're working with teachers who are restricted in terms of what they have the freedom to do, we need to remember how lucky we are to work in a less restrictive environment.

But personally I can't believe that people wouldn't want to do this because the benefits for everyone are so great. One boy, who had come to this country as a refugee, came up to one of my colleagues after a session and said "Don't think I'll ever forget this, it will stay in my heart forever."

Find out more...

Louise Perry,
 Chicken Shed Theatre Company,
 Chase Side, London N14 4PE
 020 8351 6161
 info@chickenshed.org.uk

DfES, London Challenge
 0870 000 2288
 info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
 www.teachernet.gov.uk/whole-school/london/

Not business as usual

Roger Cowe opens a series of articles for *Inclusion* on business and regeneration.

The Sheffield district of Burngreave is not obviously a hotbed of business. In fact it is more likely to be described as a run-down inner city neighbourhood. But it surprised itself recently by discovering that it boasts no less than 200 enterprises. They are now listed in a directory which was launched by a new Business Forum which has been created to support and grow local businesses.

Saghir Ahmed is the Local Strategic Partnership's Business Champion for the area. His job is to encourage start-ups and attract investment. He said gathering information for the Directory had been a revelation, and the extent of local enterprise demonstrates the potential for economic regeneration.

Understanding markets

"I'm sure that most people, even those who live or work here, are not aware of the breadth of business activity going on in Burngreave. Just imagine what Burngreave will be capable of with improved support and more investment for local businesses. That's what we're determined to bring about through the Business Forum," Saghir says.

Enlisting business in the task of regeneration is a relatively recent development. But it is central to the government's strategy for reviving disadvantaged areas, as the head of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Joe Montgomery, explains: "Fundamentally, disadvantaged neighbourhoods are about the way that markets have worked – it may be labour markets, housing markets or retail markets, but in planning regeneration it is as well to have somebody who clearly understands how markets operate."

Many areas have suffered because of the decline of industries such as coal, steel and textiles, which has led to concentrations of unemployment and people finding themselves not only redundant but also with redundant skills. New employers may have set up in the area but they often require different or higher skills which are not available in the unemployed population. In any case, people who have been made redundant from traditional industries often lack the confidence to apply for new jobs even if they have appropriate skills.

This kind of scenario has fuelled disadvantage and widened the gap between rich and poor neighbourhoods. Traditionally the answer was to pour in government money to support these communities. But people will not be lifted permanently out of poverty unless they can find work which will bring in a



Illustration: Dominic Li

steady income. And that's where business comes in.

"You either embark on an exercise in redirecting large amounts of government money for long periods, or you seek to normalise neighbourhoods by getting public services to meet the immediate difficulties in a way that invites private sector investment back in", Joe Montgomery says.

The government has provided the encouragement through initiatives such as the Phoenix Fund, which has provided nearly £100m over four years to encourage support for entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities. It is run by the Small Business Service and includes money to attract private sector investment funds.

Business Brokers

Local Strategic Partnerships are engaging the private sector in helping to deliver regeneration strategies. They are being

supported by a Business Broker initiative, jointly funded by the NRU, the Phoenix Fund and the Home Office. Business in the Community (BITC) – an organisation of companies committed to operating responsibly – has been central to this, and many other, developments – including a Partnership Academy to support

the Business Brokers.

BITC has more than 700 members around the country, who support communities in a variety of ways, from employee volunteering to mentoring and direct support for local organisations. It has a

regeneration Leadership Team which is led by John Spence, a senior executive at Lloyds TSB, and includes the managing director of Jaguar Cars among other senior business people and representatives of government.

But why should businesses get involved in the task of regeneration, which has traditionally been seen as government's responsibility? Joe Montgomery says there may be an element of duty, but self-interest also plays a big part: "Many business leaders are intensely conscious of the journey they have made from modest origins, and may want to contribute to the neighbourhoods they came from."

"But for big businesses, there is a growing sense that their treatment of social responsibility is a part of their licence to operate. And smaller, local businesses are likely to be suffering alongside the residents. If they live and work in areas of real decline, they not only feel it as residents, but their livelihoods are also at stake."

The reverse can also be true – just as businesses and communities can suffer together, they can also prosper together. Firms which find it difficult to recruit suitable labour, for example, can benefit by helping to build the skills of the local labour force, which in turn benefits the individuals and, more broadly, the communities. For example, Marks & Spencer is currently working with young homeless

people in its Marks & Start scheme, which can address the retailer's recruitment problems as well as helping homeless young people into work.

There has also been a growing awareness that poorer communities like Burngreave can be rich sources of business. The individuals who live there may not have much money, but collectively these communities can represent significant markets, not least because high population densities offset lower individual wealth. This kind of awareness has been growing among banks, who now recognise that they have failed to serve what are actually attractive markets, and some retailers who see that they could miss out on opportunities to profit from serving local needs.

Social responsibility

Greggs, the bakery chain, is an example of a firm combining social responsibility and business nous. It helps to run breakfast clubs with local primary schools, supplying free bread and other food. The schemes help get kids to school on time, reduce truancy, stimulate parental involvement – and ultimately bring in business.

The UK is seeking to learn from experiences elsewhere, such as in Harlem and the Bronx in New York, which have shown that new retail investment can spark a virtuous

circle of rising living standards, rising demand and more investment. Bill Boler, interviewed in this issue on page 11, is seeking to transfer his New York experience into the UK.

Harlem and the Bronx have demonstrated that businesses can bring the investment necessary for regeneration. And to those who are sceptical

of the value of a business approach, Montgomery says: "Try telling that to someone on an isolated estate who has to get three buses to do the weekly shopping, whose kids can't get to the cinema, whose neighbourhood doesn't have the range of services you expect, and where there is deeply ingrained joblessness."

Roger Cowe is a freelance journalist specialising in business, regeneration and social responsibility.

“ For big businesses, there is a growing sense that their treatment of social responsibility is a part of their licence to operate. ”

Joe Montgomery

Find out more...

www.neighbourhood.gov.uk
www.bitc.org.uk

Case study

A partnership made to measure

Graham Readfern meets staff at the Leeds firm that's showing long-term unemployed does not mean unemployable

When Dave Foxtton spotted workmen from his office window building a giant warehouse, his thoughts were absolutely clear. "I saw this steel frame going up and I thought – there are jobs there," says Foxtton. Six months later, more than 70 jobless local people had been given training and employment thanks to an innovative and dynamic Job Guarantee programme.

West Leeds Family Learning Centre (WLFCL) is one of five council-run adult-learning bases in the city which help people to learn new skills. This could mean anything from improving reading and writing, learning to fill in application forms or even studying advanced management techniques.

After a little investigation into the origins of the new warehouse, WLFCL manager Foxtton and his team arranged a meeting with the company behind it – Elite Forwarders.

The Elite Group is a rapidly expanding transport and logistics company working in the fashion industry. The warehouse would have 400,000 sq feet of floor space and was going to help Elite deliver two huge contracts. Both would involve sorting millions of garments each month for leading retail and mail-order companies.

But as Elite's operations manager Craig Hemingway explains, the company had a serious staffing headache. "We needed to find hundreds of staff and we needed

them within months. We only had one personnel officer so we needed to find a different way of recruiting.

"Dave Foxtton suggested a Job Guarantee scheme. We told him that if he could find me people who knew their alphabet and could count to 100, then I would give them a vocational interview."

The Elite West Leeds Partnership was born. WLFCL agreed to put candidates on a four to six week bespoke training programme to give them the skills they needed. Elite agreed to give them jobs at the end. "We were not asking Elite to buy a pig in a poke," says Foxtton. "What Elite would have at the end would be a dedicated and loyal workforce."

Foxtton and his team then had to get the message out to the area's long-term unemployed. Some 4,000 letters were sent to anyone on the city council's advice and benefits centre database close enough to travel to the Wortley area of the city. Foxtton set up

meetings to get referrals from Job Centre Plus and produced flyers to go through local letterboxes.

Elite was keen to see the long-term unemployed back in work and saw this as an opportunity to forge strong links in its own community. But both parties knew many of the people they wanted had been failed by personnel departments that judged applicants on their ability to fill in forms or impress in interviews. "They would be scared about coming here for a formal interview – we had to view things from their side," says Hemingway.

Candidates were asked instead to attend briefings at WLFCL where benefits staff, trainers and Elite representatives could answer all their questions at once. Candidates had a skills assessment to find out their reading and writing abilities and to check they would physically be up to the job.

As part of the training, Elite set-up a mock packing room in the centre so candidates could get used to the job before they were even taken on. In place of a formal interview, applicants went for a half-day "work assessment". On the rare occasion that people were not ready to start, they were sent back into the loop to do more training.

By July 2001, just four months after the initial meeting between Foxtton and Elite, the first group from the centre began work. Two months later there were 74 new staff members including 43 long-term unemployed, six lone parents and two

“ We were not asking Elite to buy a Pig in a Poke. What Elite would have at the end would be a dedicated and loyal workforce. ”

Dave Foxtton



Loyalty at Elite improved with the new training

Photography: Claire Lim

refugees from Azerbaijan.

Hemingway said: "The preconception was that long-term unemployed means unemployable. But once we started talking to them we realised this was a great chance for them and for us – it was a marvellous time."

Father-of-three Martin Jenkins, 32, had not worked for four years when he got one of Foxtton's letters through the door. "I had a real confidence problem when it came to work – I didn't know what to say in interviews and didn't really know how to fill in an application form. When the letter came through, I had been

knocked back for jobs so many times that I thought I had to grab this chance.

"Elite gave me a chance when no-one else

would, and I respect them for that. Now I don't have to receive housing benefit any more – have you any idea how good that feels?"

Staff turnover is a major issue for Elite

but of the 120 in total who have joined through WLFCL, only three have left the company.

Hemingway adds: "If you invest a bit of time in people, the rewards you get through loyalty are tremendous. The staff we get through the centre would die for Elite if you asked them to."

“ Elite gave me a chance when no-one else would, and I respect them for that. Now I don't have to receive housing benefit any more – have you any idea how good that feels? ”

Martin Jenkins

Graham Readfern is a freelance journalist specialising in regeneration issues and a former BBC producer.



Tailored training at WLFCL

Find out more...

Read more about employment and regeneration in the next issue of *Inclusion*.

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Elite Group was a National Finalist in the 2003 BITC/NRU Awards for Excellence. Find out more at www.bitc.org.uk

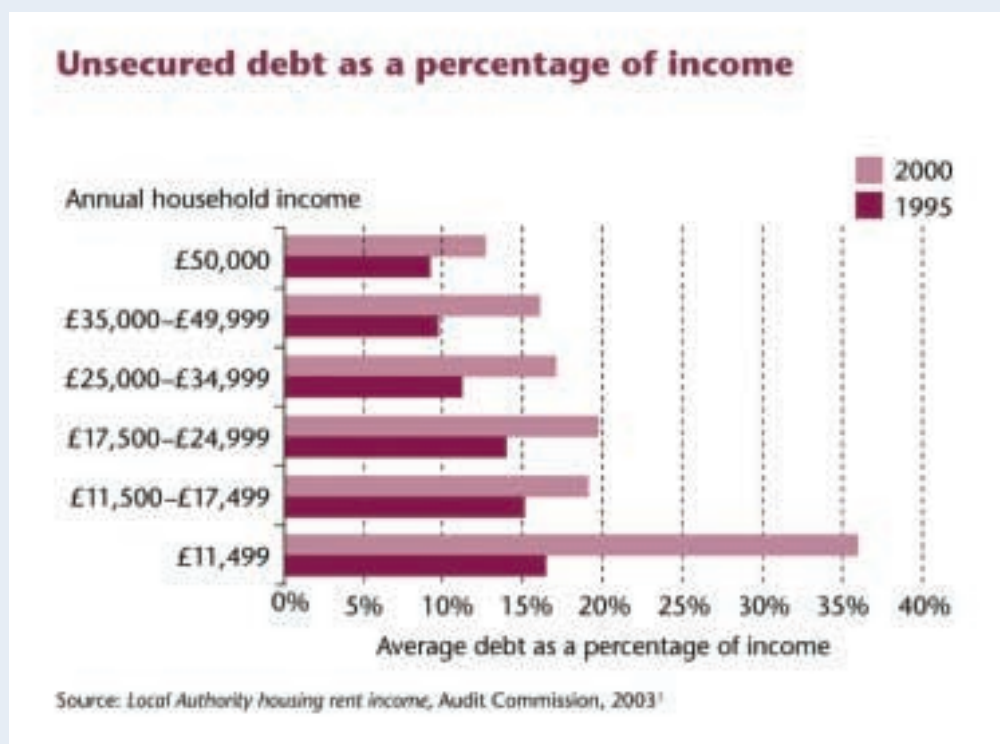
Cutting debt costs

Adrienne Margolis investigates the growing problem of debt and talks to four people working in the field with different approaches to tackling the problem

Debt is a growing problem in this country, and it is affecting low income groups more than others. Recent figures show that over half of all households with worrying levels of debt are on incomes of less than £7,500 a year. Debt is not just a personal problem. It has repercussions for families, communities, jobs, health and housing.

To help tackle these problems, the Social Exclusion Unit has just produced a Debt Fact pack, listing organisations that can help people in debt. It looks at the wider effects of debt, and provides examples of recent initiatives designed to improve the situation.

Adrienne Margolis is a freelance journalist.



THE CREDIT UNION MANAGER

Rick Plewa

"With a background of 24 years as an area manager for a high street bank, I recently joined Newham's Community Credit Union, Newcred, as its manager. The scheme was launched in July 2003 with backing from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to provide facilities for saving and borrowing to the thousands excluded from the banking system.



In some of the areas in East London covered by the credit union there are no banks at all, often because they have shut down due to the number of raids. Even where there are banks, they are not geared up to cater to people who are unemployed or on very low incomes.

"The concept of credit unions came to the UK from the Caribbean, and they have been operating here for some time. The aim is to encourage people, however small their income, to save a little, and help them to become more self-sufficient. If they do need loans, the rates are lower than those from high street banks.

"My background means that I can give financial advice to the scheme's members, who qualify by living or working in the borough. As Newcred develops, we hope to provide online banking facilities so that people can access their accounts easily, and cash points, so that people can withdraw money without having to go to the one Newcred office in Stratford. As benefit offices and post offices close down, this need for access to funds becomes even greater.

"The response to Newcred shows how much demand there is for these facilities. The business plan anticipated 1,000 members by the end of year one, but that has already been achieved. Numbers are about to be boosted by a merger with the Forest Gate credit union that has been running for 30 years, which will bring in another 300 or so active members. The credit union needs to pay its way over four or five years, and will do this through lending. But it will also distribute dividends to its membership.

"I was looking for a job where I could utilise my skills and this is fabulous. It is very different and very hard work, but you can see straight away the value that you are putting in."

Debt - Key facts

- 6.1 million families report some difficulties meeting their debt repayments. (The Financial Services Authority, 2004)
- More than half of the households with serious debts are in the lowest income group - less than £7,500 a year. (Elaine Kempson, Over-indebtedness in Britain, 2002)
- 1 in 8 debt advice clients start treatment for stress, depression, anxiety when debt problems occur. (Citizens Advice Bureaux, 2003)
- The banking and credit card sector spends £3.4 billion every year chasing, recovering and writing off debts. (Deloitte & Touche, 2003)
- Personal debt averages £4,426 per adult in Britain. (Datamonitor, 2003)
- In 2002/03 mortgage and rent arrears were the major causes of homelessness for over 5,000 households in England and Wales. (ODPM, 2003)

Find out more...

The debt fact pack is available from www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/nrfund.asp

Single Regeneration Budget www.odpm.gov.uk
Look under urban policy > regeneration programmes

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux www.nacab.org.uk

Over-indebtedness in Britain, 2002 by Elaine Kempson www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/overindebtedness.htm

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e seu@twoten.press.net

NEWCRED
☎ 020 8555 5388
e info@newcred.co.uk

THE EDUCATION MANAGER

Pauline Sanderson

"I worked as a primary teacher and then in family education before applying here. This is a pilot project run by the council's new Children, Schools and Families Service. The idea is to improve schools and neighbourhoods, so parents, local people and children are being targeted. Nine primary schools and two secondary schools are participating



in the scheme, which is funded by a mixture of Neighbourhood Renewal and Single Regeneration Budget money.

"It is funded until March 2005, but we hope to get an extension and become embedded, particularly since the extended schools programme is high up the central and local government agenda. We hope to eventually make the school the hub of the community, where no other facilities exist.

"Before starting the project, we spent three months consulting local people about their concerns; debt was high up their list. Kids want the same things as everyone else, and parents get into debt as a result. The schools in the pilot are in areas of deprivation, where a lot of loan sharks operate.

"We decided to work with the existing King George Credit Union, and pay for a person to set up access to it in the schools. This started in June 2003 and people have responded really well. Within a few weeks we had more than 30 parents joining at each school.

"A big difference is that we have involved the children too. They can use the credit union like a savings bank, and become junior members. The schools have international links, giving the children the opportunity to go on school trips abroad. It is one example of providing an incentive towards saving for a goal. The children are encouraged to save small amounts, and they are trained to do the banking and bookkeeping within the school for themselves. This feeds into the wider curriculum – it's about responsibility and citizenship as well as handling money.

"In the future, we want to set up financial management courses through the Basic Skills Agency, so that people can get accredited for training, and perhaps get interested in picking up more skills."

Sefton Schools
☎ **0151 934 3315**
✉ pauline.sanderson@csf.sefton.gov.uk

THE FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Peter Tyson

"I first got involved in this area as a Citizen's Advice Bureau volunteer in 1997. I then applied for a job as a financial adviser, funded by the national lottery. I became a community financial adviser but the funding ran out. Now the job has slightly changed, to financial skills training.



The aim of the project is to provide financial skills for life. It is a three-year programme, involving workshops and casework, on topics like opening a bank account, and dealing with debt. It is run as a partnership between the Prudential and CAB nationally.

Lone parents, young men, ex offenders and refugees are among those targeted. The idea is to work with young adults moving from unemployment to employment and also to work in schools. We try and encourage young people to take up skills like IT, building, catering and so on. We teach them about budgeting, the responsible use of credit and debt management.

The courses are proving so popular that we had to double the number we were offering from nine to 18. We have been working with groups like Walton Young Mums tackling their problems with credit, and discussing awareness of debt. We also run sessions to help older workers trying to get back into work, and with Sure Start. We received a glowing report for the work we did with Sure Start - in fact, the feedback is very positive from everyone we reach.

Some of the work in schools involves discussing the responsible use of credit, budgeting, and how to manage finances as a student.

I have had a lot of positive response to the courses, especially when I use the kind of material that everyone gets through their door offering credit, as examples. I also use quizzes and case studies, and work with local youth drama groups, to make delivering the message much more fun."

CAB/Prudential scheme, North Liverpool
☎ **0151 287 1300**
✉ fsw@norrisgreencab.cabinet.org.uk

THE COMMUNITY WORKER

Liz Chadwick

"In the recession in the early 1990s, it was recognised that people in rural Northumberland were having great difficulty managing debt. The Northumberland Distance Debt Unit was set up by the Citizen's Advice Bureau to refer debt problems to a separate office. I managed the project from 1996 onwards, and by



Photography: UNP

1998, funding was running out. We became an independent charity called DAWN – Debt Advice Within Northumberland - to help vulnerable people deal with the problems created by debt.

Research by DAWN and local health agencies had shown that money and debt worries cause stress that takes its toll on health. It can lead to problems like mental breakdown, or people turning to drink, drugs or self-harm. We set up a three-year 'Money Matters' programme that recruited volunteers from the target group in the community, and trained them to help other people with financial difficulties. It has been a huge success.

As a result of training the trainers, people who have experienced the problems themselves are helping others in similar situations. When you are trying to manage on a small budget, you need to feel in control, and it helps to have support from people who have been through it. The project has been very empowering for everyone involved and has resulted in some of the trainers going on to find jobs.

One element of the Money Matters programme is a series of financial literacy workshops that deal with problems like access to credit and how to budget. The sessions are designed for people to participate, play games and have fun. There is also a telephone help line that assists around 150 people a month, and a county court project, where a DAWN worker goes to court on repossession days and helps people at repossession hearings.

Our programme is ending in June because the funding is running out. It needs picking up by a statutory agency. It has been so successful, that we believe it could be replicated up and down the country."

DAWN
☎ **01665 714387**
✉ debt.unit@virgin.net

“ Before starting the project, we spent three months consulting local people about their concerns; debt was high up their list. ”

Pauline Sanderson

“ When you are trying to manage on a small budget, you need to feel in control, and it helps to have support from people who have been through it. ”

Liz Chadwick

how do they do that?

initiatives in practice

Hope from the flames of Oldham

Simon Birch meets a community rebuilding itself in the North West

Phoenix Street is an apt address for the group helping to rebuild Oldham's fractured race relations that were damaged by the disturbances of three years' ago.

The Community Cohesion Agency was launched one year ago by Oldham Housing Investment Partnership in response to the Ritchie and Cattle reports into the disturbances. The reports highlighted the long-standing problem of Oldham's housing which is segregated along ethnic and cultural lines.

Oldham is a deeply segregated community with many people living in neighbourhoods that are almost entirely made up of either white or Asian residents.

These divisions are then compounded by similar levels of segregation within the schoolyard and workplace and are even within social activities.

"Research carried out on behalf of the CCA suggests that both Asian and white communities hold serious reservations about moving outside their 'traditional' areas," explains Zoe Smith, Community Development Co-ordinator at the four team-member CCA.

Supporting racial integration

"Our main aim is to support and encourage social and residential integration between people from different communities and backgrounds," states Zoe. "While race and ethnicity are clearly a major consideration in Oldham," "community cohesion is about openness, respect and tolerance to enable people to live side by side."

The CCA aims to create a situation in which people aren't limited in their choice of home because of their race or ethnicity. To achieve this, the CCA works with all of Oldham's residents, be they social landlord tenants, private sector tenants or owner-occupiers. However, Zoe is quick to dispel any accusations of an authoritarian agenda to the work of the CCA.

"We're not looking to socially engineer perfectly mixed communities by forcing people to move to different areas. It's all about creating opportunity at all levels and helping tenancies become sustainable in the long-term."

In its first year the CCA has successfully supported 20 families and individuals with issues ranging from racial harassment and anti-social behaviour to helping people view properties outside their traditional areas and settling them into these new communities.

Zoe describes the case of one Asian woman living in a predominantly white community, who initially felt unwelcome in the area. "We identified neighbours who were prepared to meet her and introduce her to the community. They have helped her



Photography: Claire Lim

Zoe Smith meets local residents in Oldham

forge new networks where she's living," says Zoe. "When I first met her she wanted to leave but now she's saying that she will stay for a year or so."

One thing that has struck the CCA team during its first year is that the issues involved are far from straightforward. "It isn't just about integrating Asians into white communities," it's much more complex believes Zoe. "We're working with white communities to welcome Asian families and support white residents in predominantly Asian areas so they don't move out."

While the CCA places great emphasis on intensive support work with small groups of

people, equally important is its broader approach to community development work with the aim of dismantling the barriers that exist between Oldham's different communities.

"Many people's fears come about because they haven't had the

opportunity to meet people from different communities" says Fakrul Choudhury, a Community Development worker at the CCA. To help Oldham's communities get to know each other better, the CCA has put in a massive effort by launching a staggering number of projects and staged an impressive number of successful community-wide events ranging from sports-days to music and arts-led festivals.

"It's important not to push the hard facts about race and diversity all the time," believes Shamus Maqsood, another Community Development worker at the CCA. "Sometimes you've got to be more subtle, which is what we try to do with these events." One of the most successful projects has been a programme of faith exchanges

where people from different religions visit each others' place of worship, involving local churches, mosques and synagogues.

Working together with local groups

Crucial to the success of the work of the CCA has been Oldham's local community groups that have been pivotal in disseminating information about the CCA and its services. "It's really important to build rock solid networks and relationships with grassroots groups and individuals working out there on the ground," believes Zoe Smith. "Once you've got these on board they can act as invaluable conduits for your message."

One of these key groups is the Westwood and Coldhurst Women's Association, a small voluntary organisation that offers courses to local women, the majority of whom are Asian. Thanks to a CCA initiative, the association is now involved in organising a women's exchange programme where women from Oldham's white and Asian communities meet up. "It's great to meet women from different backgrounds and the CCA is immensely important in enabling people to challenge their own stereotypes," says project co-ordinator Aska Begum.

Similarly supportive is Sarah Clayton, Partnership Manager at the Oldham Housing Investment Partnership. "The CCA is a great example of how the building blocks of a more cohesive Oldham can be built through linking with existing community and voluntary groups and by providing practical individual household support."

Despite this success, given the scale of the problem facing the CCA, as evidenced by the fact that the BNP is still active in Oldham, how does the team maintain its motivation? "What keeps you going is when tenants that you've been supporting tell you that they feel better for what you've done, that makes it worthwhile," replies Zoe Smith.

Case study Richard's story



In the ten years that 72-year-old Richard Waldorch has lived in his housing association flat in the Werneth

district of Oldham, the community has become more Asian in character. This has never been a problem for Richard, until a month ago when a crowd of Asian youths began gathering outside his flat. "The first time they started banging on my door and were shouting and swearing at me," describes Richard, who used to work on Oldham's buses. "When I opened the door they pulled a knife on me and then they started a fire in my shed," says Richard. "You don't know what they're going to do next and it makes you feel scared as they might break the door down and attack me."

Concerned over his situation, Richard's housing officer contacted the Community Cohesion Agency. "One of the first things we did was report the incident to the police as a hate crime and filled out a 730D form," says Sadia Akram, a Community Development worker from the CCA. "We're now trying to remedy the situation by involving the local schools and youth services."

Meanwhile Sadia keeps an eye on Richard. "I call up regularly and pop in to see Richard to make sure he's OK and to provide some emotional support," says Sadia. Despite the recent upsetting events, Richard feels more secure in his home. "I'm more relaxed about things now and feel reassured that something is being done," says Richard.

Simon Birch is a freelance journalist and regularly contributes to The Guardian on environmental and urban regeneration issues.

Find out more...

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Phoenix Street, Oldham OL1 1AN
0161 620 2992
www.ohip.org.uk

You could say that Bill Boler, director of Business in the Community's (BITC) under-served markets project, has social activism in his blood. "My mom was an executive director of a youth facility in Pittsburgh and for several years we lived above it," he recalls. "Growing up, I thought that every kid went to community board meetings with their mum and that everyone had an interest in changing the communities they lived in for the better."

It was this commitment to improving and developing the neighbourhood that prompted the young Bill to do a degree in architecture at Yale University. But during his studies, he came to the realisation that buildings play a very small part in the process of development and regeneration.

"I realised that planning had a lot more to do with how neighbourhoods function," he says, so he went on to do a Master's in City and Regional Planning at the prestigious Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. From there, he quickly secured a post with New York City, working in their economic development department. "My job was to negotiate the sale of land with developers and I did that for 10 years. But increasingly, I wanted to work with a community group."

Bill didn't have far to look. During his ten years with NYC, he'd already developed a strong relationship with many of the people involved in improving the fortunes of Harlem. At the beginning of the 20th century, Harlem had been a vibrant and visionary community at the forefront of the American Jazz and literary scene. Then in the 1960s and 1970s – in common with many other American inner city neighbourhoods – Harlem went in to a steep decline.

Rebuilding communities

"Manufacturing died, the jobs and economies went down and inner cities were vacated," explains Bill. "But in the 1980s, when I started to get involved, people were beginning to look at strategies to bring communities back."

The starting point in Harlem was a large, socially-excluded population; a lack of basic services for residents, such as supermarkets; and government reaction to deprivation.

"That last factor was probably the most important one," explains Bill. "Government help was predicated on the level of deprivation in Harlem, so you could only access money to redress it by emphasising that you were more deprived than the next guy. But that wasn't how we on the inside saw the community. It was still our home, but we ended up hurting our image to attract more Government money."

This scenario is a familiar one to anyone involved in regeneration, but by taking the emphasis away from Government funding and putting it squarely on private investment, Bill and his colleagues found a way round the impasse.

"You are never going to regenerate an area if you just keep building homes and facilities for poor people because that is what the Government is paying you to do," he says. "We had to have a neighbourhood that would make middle-income people want to come."

In both the US and the UK, the high street in run-down areas is characterised by a multitude of betting shops, Poundstretchers and the odd 24-hour convenience store. "In

Retail therapy offers hope from Harlem

Katrin Levy meets the man from Harlem charged with bringing shopping power to turn round run-down neighbourhoods.



Bill Boler is bringing his Harlem experience to the UK

in Harlem and transpose it to a different context," he concedes. One year in to the job, how does he think he's doing? "The mindset is very different here, but things have generally been going great. We've made a lot of effort to engage the private sector and get them to take us seriously because they aren't used to us coming to them. We're also doing research to help us look at deprived areas through the same lens as business. We are using investment criteria to illustrate that deprived neighbourhoods also offer viable commercial opportunities."

Challenging distrust

Bill and his BITC project team have already whittled down the list of the 88 most deprived local authorities to focus more closely on 12 councils. After more detailed discussions, four of these will be picked to become pilot areas, with the final locations being announced some time before next year.

He recognises that there is an innate distrust of big business in Britain, Churchill's 'nation of shopkeepers', but he is hopeful that what worked in Harlem can be successfully adapted to the UK.

"My biggest struggle is getting to the voice of the people themselves instead of those who 'represent' them," says Bill. "Poor communities don't care so much about planning laws and the fact that the local butcher on the high street has shut down. They want to shop in a supermarket in a nice neighbourhood. Of course we need to understand the local context as well, but I'm not clouded by 'how it used to be'."

"I'd like to see more balance in the debate, because good and bad businesses should not be decided by who is big and who is local. If you bring in the right retail, then you bring in more people to shop and work and more opportunities for existing businesses."

It's certainly an unconventional approach, but the hallmark of Bill's career hasn't been to do what's expected, but rather to do what works.

Katrin Levy is a freelance journalist.

Harlem, the people were telling us that they needed more local supermarkets with affordable prices," says Bill. "At one of the residents' meetings, a local man came up to me and said 'all you can buy in my neighbourhood is tube socks and crack'. That stark quote did more than all the research in the world to get to the heart of the issue."

And so, the unlikely idea of 'big supermarket as social saviour' was born. "We had to work hard to convince a major supermarket to open up, then a chemist, then a bank, then clothes shops and it grew from there," says Bill.

Key to the project's success was the fact that guilt was kept out of the equation entirely. There were no big campaigns for residents to encourage them

to shop locally. Conversely, businesses were approached on the basis of profit and not philanthropy. Bill and his colleagues successfully argued that even in run-down neigh-

bourhoods, people still had money to spend and that these untapped markets could be hugely profitable.

"We found a way to engage business and recognise that it's OK for businesses to make profits," says Bill. "That set the table for what I'm doing now."

What Bill is doing now is trying to replicate the success of the project in Harlem - and his subsequent role as Vice President for Community

Investment at Business for Social Responsibility - in the UK.

"It is a challenge to take what has worked

“Government help was predicated on the level of deprivation in Harlem - you could only access money by emphasising that you were more deprived than the next guy. It was still our home, but we ended up hurting our image to attract more Government money.”

Bill Boler - BITC

Find out more...

For more about the under-served markets project at BITC, contact Bill Boler on:

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or visit: **www.bitc.org.uk**

A new beat at the heart of the countryside

Rural partnership constable *David Leipnik* explains his role.

Cleaning up litter, tackling graffiti and engaging disenfranchised youngsters are not usually matters for the police. But for PC David Leipnik, these quality of life issues are all in a day's work.

As a community policeman - or a rural partnership constable to give him his formal title - PC Leipnik deals with the sort of low-level crime that regular officers do not have the time to handle.

The role was created two years ago by Kent Rural Partnership, a joint initiative between Kent County Council and Kent Police Authority to reduce crime, deter anti-social behaviour and boost social inclusion. PC Leipnik is one of 12 rural police constables in Kent, funded by the police, council and a Home Office rural policing grant.

The 52-year-old's beat covers the villages of Borough Green and Wrotham. With a total population of 6,000, the incidents can range

from vandalism to abandoned cars and antique burglaries.

"The sort of policing I do is just as important as the higher-level stuff," he explains.

Solving problems

A key element of the job is fostering links between the county, borough and parish councils and the area's housing associations. "Rather than solve a problem alone I go to other agencies and ask what each can bring to the table." If it's a problem with nuisance, for example, the solution might be for the housing association to remind tenants about their tenancy agreement.

PC Leipnik's working day starts at 8am at Borough Green police station. "I check the overnight crime reports, share intelligence with the other officers and

visit victims of crime. I also do as much foot patrol as possible because it's important to be seen." He may work a late shift - 2pm until 10pm - if he has to check out a particular report, such as night time vandalism.

His biggest achievement was to launch a youth drop-in centre in Borough Green two years ago.

Recognising that there were no facilities for youngsters, he persuaded local businesses to donate equipment and labour free of charge to turn a disused caretaker's flat into a modern youth centre.

"The desire was there in the community to do something for the young people, but what was lacking was someone to pull it together." PC Leipnik worked with parish councillor Mike Taylor to win £8,000 from Kent County Council; £7,000 from the government's rural revival fund; £5,000 from the parish council and £250 from the police. The centre is now used by up to 60 young people every evening.

"Rural exclusion is often to do with being isolated. Before, if the young people wanted to go somewhere, they were reliant on parents or public transport. Now, the centre gives them a sense of satisfaction that something is theirs."

Like every job, says PC Leipnik, his work has its ups and downs. The most challenging thing, he says, is changing the public's preconception that policing is about high profile detective work. "Most of the calls are about

"Rural exclusion is often to do with being isolated. Now, the centre gives young people a sense of satisfaction."

David Leipnik



Photography: Rob Petherick

PC David Leipnik on the beat in rural Kent.

nuisance or criminal damage. The hardest challenge is to make people aware that if we solve these problems, they'll impact on other issues."

Tackling graffiti

On the plus side, because he operates in a small area, PC Leipnik is on first name terms with residents. "We had a spate of graffiti recently so I went to the local school and asked if anyone recognised the tag, and we got a name. How many schools would you have to go to in an inner-city to get that result?"

Patience and an enquiring mind

are vital for the job, says PC Leipnik, who was a dental technician for 25 years and became a special constable because he wanted to help clean up his community. He became a full-time officer at 41 because he enjoyed the work so much.

Ultimately, he says, the best part of the job is being appreciated by the community: "The greatest thing for me is for someone to say thank you. If I've spent half an hour talking to someone, even I've not necessarily solved their problem, if they say thank you I feel I've done my job properly. The greatest thrill is simply helping people."

get in touch

We want to hear from you.

- Have you been involved in a government funded 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?

Please note we do not accept finished articles or pictures. All our work is specially commissioned to freelance journalists and photographers so send your idea - just a brief summary and your contact details - to:

✉ inclusioneditor@odpm.gsi.gov.uk
☎ 020 7944 8133
✉ Social Exclusion Unit
7/G10, Eland House,
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Find out more...

Stephen Hansford, Chief Inspector Partnerships and Crime Reduction, Kent Police: ☎ 01622 653201 or ☎ 01622653209
✉ stephen.hansford@kent.pnn.police.uk
or
✉ enquiries@kent.pnn.police.uk
www.kent.police.uk

noticeboard

Do you have any resources or sources of information that other people working in the social inclusion field would find useful? Please send us your ideas.

SEU publications

All the Social Exclusion Unit's published reports are available to download on our website at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk. A number of the SEU's more recent publications are also available in hard copy by contacting ODPM Publications, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7NB

☎ 0870 1226 236
✉ seu@twoten.press.net

Please contact the SEU if an alternative format to a publication is required.

The TOGETHER campaign has been introduced to support front line workers who want to take action on anti-social behaviour in their local area. The Home Office has called on councils, police and other agencies to join the work to improve community life and this month launched a new web site www.together.gov.uk.

A new ActionLine - ☎ 0870 220 2000 - has also been established to give expert advice to practitioners.
✉ together@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

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