



# Developing Communities



South Downs  
Council for Voluntary Service

## Project News

Issue 2: Summer 2007

This is the newsletter for the Developing Communities Project, which aims to support individuals to have a voice by building partnerships, providing training and support and empowering community involvement

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### Your voices

As Developing Communities is all about individuals having a voice, we have included in this newsletter two 'stories' from people who have gone through difficult times and life-changing experiences or who feel passionate about an issue, either of which has impelled them to create change in their community.

Many people face problems where they are cut off from society, making it even harder to deal with; and, isolation can also be the creator of problems in itself. If people's issues could be heard, they can then be challenged in order to create change, and more people could receive the support they need. By sharing individuals' stories about how they themselves have become actively engaged in issues, the barriers they have had to overcome and their achievements, it can be an inspiration for others to also become active about an issue of concern and join an already existing group or start a new one! The Developing Communities Project can provide individual support to achieve this.

The project can also help to set up groups too, such as the Lone parent family support group highlighted on page 9. Also check out the Coffeehouse Challenge on page 8 of which we are really keen on supporting - what better way for people to meet and talk comfortably about important issues than over coffee and cake!

Janice Mitchelson  
Project Support Worker

Large print version available on request.  
For an electronic version, please ask to join our e-mail list.

issue  
**2**

We welcome you to  
**contact us**

**Tel** 01273 483832  
**Email** [developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk](mailto:developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk)  
**Address** South Downs Council for Voluntary Service  
66 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XG

# Developing Communities Project Update

**By Pam Mitchell,  
Developing Communities Manager**

The Developing Communities Project is going from strength to strength. We have completed our initial research and are now beginning to identify individuals from a variety of communities across Lewes District to work with. The project's remit is to enable individuals to have a voice around issues of importance to them or their geographical community or community of interest. This could be around increasing skills, organising training or providing individual support and I set out below various ways you or your organisation can become involved in the project:-



We are exploring partnerships with a variety of groups and organisations which support people with special needs, such as carers and young carers, disabled people, older people, transgender people, travellers, brain injury survivors, mental health service users, lone parent families, etc., around projects such as awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy projects, user forums, local networks, training, etc. **If you would like us to come and talk about a partnership to benefit your client group, please get in touch.**



We are happy to fund a coffee and cake event in your local area or at your local group to give people a chance to talk to us and find out more. We are also happy to arrange a user consultation event to give your service users a chance to talk to us. **If you would like to use your venue to host one of these events, please let us know.**



We are considering providing some confidence building training, with modules around communication, assertiveness, listening skills and decision-making. **Please let us know if you know of any individuals or groups who might be interested in this training.**



There are national initiatives that could benefit individuals in Lewes District (for example, please see the articles in this edition about working with us to set up a Coffee House Club or a local Time Bank initiative). **If you are interested in working with us to set up one of these initiatives, please contact us.**

The newsletter aims to inform you of local and national initiatives, highlight achievements by local individuals and raise awareness of the needs of different sections of our community. We would be grateful for any stories you would like us to include or issues you would like to raise.

## project team contact details

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Developing Communities Manager

**Email** [pam.mitchell@southdownscvs.org.uk](mailto:pam.mitchell@southdownscvs.org.uk)

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**Tel** 01273 483832

# Your Voices

These pages feature personal accounts of individuals tackling issues through overcoming barriers, finding a voice and engaging with others in their community to create change.

## The “Heaven On Earth” Project

In the words of Vanessa Kirby - founder

In 2002, after laying on the floor for two days, I was found and rushed to hospital. I had suffered a brain haemorrhage and for the first two years after having an emergency brain operation, I was left to fend for myself. Most of the time was spent in ambulances, hospitals and the doctor’s surgery. I remember spending a lot of my time crying until I finally realised that I wasn’t going to be able to fight this alone!

A friend of mine, who’d also had a stroke, was attending a day-care centre and her carer suggested I go too. I phoned them up and they agreed to help me with my rehabilitation and I have been going there ever since.

I fitted in well with other disabled members and a handful of us set up a weekly group in a community centre to help us get back some independence. We did a bit of cooking but mostly we talked. Unfortunately, the group was soon disbanded through lack of funds. Sometimes, if we got there early we went into the church’s coffee mornings and had a free cup of tea and we wondered whether we could set up our own group in the community.

In May 2006, I wrote a letter to local newspapers and asked the churches if they would reach out to the community and help the lonely. I found that lots of churches already had coffee mornings that were mostly half-empty.

After reading my letter, a pastor from a local church wrote to me and said her church

wanted to help the community. Together, in October 2006, we opened a ‘drop-in’ in a community centre near me and slowly we are getting people to come along.

**Getting the information to isolated people has been the hardest task.**

We drink tea, eat cakes and laugh a lot and it’s free. It is a safe place to go to get support and local information and people keep coming back. Some have even moved on to part-time work.

After suffering a major illness such as depression, road traffic accident, acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, etc. disability or bereavement and also living alone, getting back into the community and making new friends is equal to climbing Mount Everest!

The “Heaven On Earth” Project aims to provide a network of drop-in centres throughout the Crawley area so that there is somewhere for people to go for a cup of tea and a chat, sometimes a low-cost meal, and for information about local services and events and to help them get back into the community.

Many people, young and old, live alone nowadays and we need to cater for this. This is not a religious group -

**it is a community project run by the community for the community.**

### contact details

You can contact Vanessa by writing to her c/o Maidenbower Day Centre, Harvest Road, Maidenbower, Crawley RH10 7RA or through contacting the Developing Communities team.

## **Transition Town Lewes**

**In the words of  
Adrienne Campbell -  
member of the core  
group**



My dad is American and he brought me up to believe that our life is what we make it. So whenever I meet a problem I tend to think that I can also find a solution. This inbred optimism is probably one of my greatest resources. Last summer I left a busy job and, as our four children are now mostly teenagers I decided to take some time off work to take stock. What I did not plan for is suddenly waking up, along with many other people, to our planet's crisis; the message is increasingly clear: we are heading for mass destruction unless we all change our habits – and fast! I immediately started to change my life: I gave up our car, decided to consume less, and more locally, to waste less and generally to live more simply. And it occurred to me that if we could do things together, in Lewes, our actions could add up to more than the sum of the parts.

I heard about the Transition Town movement and, along with a group of other ordinary people, helped start Transition Town Lewes in November 2006. It's now grown very big, in only six months, on thousands of volunteer hours (none of us is paid) and we were recently interviewed for a feature on Radio 4's You and Yours programme.

**I've had to deal with many personal fears, including public speaking, but I got some training and managed to speak confidently at our launch, in front of over 400 people!**

'Feel the fear and do it anyway' is one of my favourite sayings. I believe that almost any individual has the power to change the world

and encourage readers to have a go!

Transition Town Lewes is a community response to climate change and peak oil. Over the coming year a large number of people will work, in groups such as transport, food, housing, textiles, to come up with an Energy Descent Action Plan, a year-on-year pathway to help us make the transition away from fossil fuels over 20 years. We are also organising a series of talks and, in the autumn, we are starting the Great Reskilling of Lewes – look out for the programme, which is also available from our office at 66 High St. You are warmly welcomed to join in the volunteer groups, help start some actions and come to the events.

### **contact details**

For further information, you can contact Transition Town Lewes on 01273 476779 or email [hello@transitiontownlewes.org.uk](mailto:hello@transitiontownlewes.org.uk) [www.transitiontownlewes.org/Lewes](http://www.transitiontownlewes.org/Lewes)

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**If you would like to tell your story, the Developing Communities team would love to hear from you so please do get in touch**

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## **Accessibility of information**

The Developing Communities Project team aim to make our work as accessible as possible so that the highest number of people can benefit from the opportunities available and greater awareness of issues can be achieved. To this end, we would welcome your comments, whether it is to express your liking of the newsletter or to suggest some improvements...all will be appreciated!

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### **Disclaimer**

Notices of publications, events and services do not carry any endorsement by this organization and the information contained in this document does not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the Developing Communities project or any member of South Downs CVS staff.

# Community Involvement Network

Forum for local groups and individuals to share information and encourage involvement in communities

**Sussex Interpreting Services (SIS)** is a charity and social enterprise that has worked across Sussex since 1994 to help people communicate.

We are inspired by a vision of an inclusive and diverse society where people of all cultures and linguistic backgrounds are able to live in harmony, play a full and valued role and enjoy the same rights.

Our staff team of 7 employees and 150 community interpreters and translators work passionately to make sure that people with language needs have full access to publicly funded services.

Many clients have social care and health needs and lack accessible information about who can help. Whilst some people are part of established communities many lack social and family support. Others are newly arrived refugees who have suffered trauma and poor mental health. In some situations, we literally offer a lifeline.

Using trained community interpreters means we can ensure clean, direct and confidential communication. This helps people to feel reassured, confident and understood and less vulnerable, afraid and isolated.

Over time our work supports stronger communities with more confident and knowledgeable members. Our trustees are drawn from these communities and our partnerships help us to be accountable to them.

At the moment our community commitment is most vividly seen through support for the 79 Ethiopians who arrived in Brighton and Hove

from appalling conditions in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. We are active in the successful multi-agency partnership that is supporting this community through its first year and will continue to provide communication support beyond this.

You can find out more from [www.sussexinterpreting.org.uk](http://www.sussexinterpreting.org.uk) and subscribe to our free newsletter by calling Ella Nicol on 01273 234 832.

If you think we can help you, your community or someone you know please call us on 01273 702005. Messages can be left in any language.

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## **SPIN Sussex**

**Single Parent Information Network Sussex** is an information and sign-posting service run from home by single parent volunteers. Most of the networking is done via a yahoo group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SPINBrighton>

SPIN provides advice in different formats, befriending and has administered funding on behalf of members such as Sport Relief. SPIN sends information to members about training opportunities particularly if free and/or with childcare; events that are low cost/free for both the parent and children; sporting activities; out of school leisure activities; holiday clubs etc.

The majority of the information is locally based with information from national single parent organisations such as Gingerbread and agencies such as the CSA, changes in legislation etc. SPIN holds databases of local and national organisations and a funding database with details of how to apply for financial assistance for school trips, white

goods, holidays.

SPIN provides opportunities for volunteering with free training and expenses. Join SPIN for free via the yahoo group or call 01273 675773 or text 07821 974009 or look on the website [www.SPIN-sussex.org.uk](http://www.SPIN-sussex.org.uk)

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## **ESDA brings internet access to all in Lewes**

The volunteers of the Lewes committee of East Sussex Disability Association have given longstanding support to disabled people in and around Lewes. Their support for a Lewes project to internet enable their member's homes has also brought low cost wireless internet access to neighbours and friends.

Using small, low power, state-of-the-art units it is now practical to share internet connections within communities, neighbourhoods, housing developments, streets and blocks of flats.

The Lewes Wireless Broadband Project (LWB) came about from Lewes ESDA's commitment to pro-actively assist change for its members by an initiative entitled the Oyster Project, as in 'the world's your oyster'. Internet access, equipment and technical knowledge is delivered to ESDA members on a one-to-one basis, as is training tailored to suit the member's needs.

**The unique aspect of the project is that the delivery of this facility is undertaken by disabled and able bodied volunteers.**

So successful has the project been following financial support from Lewes Town Council that the delivery model has been deployed at Age Concern's House of Friendship, School Hill where House of Friendship members benefit from training delivered in a custom built computer suite with broadband supplied by LWB Project. A similar scheme is running

at Greyfriars Court where residents have free access to communal PCs, training and low cost access in their flats.

**For many older people having access to the world via the Net can be a liberating and enabling experience.**

It's not only disabled people and local charities/projects which benefit. The system is used by many residents, students, low-income families and visitors and people who themselves volunteer. By sharing resources, the costs are also shared, making broadband internet access more affordable for all.

The project also has under way similar social enterprise schemes in and around the town and full details can be obtained from the project's web site at <http://www.lwbnet.org.uk>

ESDA's Oyster Project itself continues to generate new ideas and to promote opportunities for disabled people who themselves wish to volunteer and give their skills and knowledge back to the community. Its goal is to initiate positive change in the lives of Lewes ESDA members and details of its latest project can be seen at [www.dits.org.uk](http://www.dits.org.uk)

The WiFi internet access is available to groups booking the South Downs CVS meeting room. You will need to have your own WiFi enabled laptop and there is a small charge to use it. For more information on this and to book a meeting room, please contact South Downs CVS on 01273 483832 or [enquiries@southdownscvs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southdownscvs.org.uk)

### **For more information:**

Contact John Russell, Chair Lewes ESDA and Administrator, Lewes Wireless Broadband Project. Telephone: 01273 470042 Email: [admin@lwbnet.org.uk](mailto:admin@lwbnet.org.uk)

Lewes Wireless Broadband Project  
49b Cliffe High Street, Lewes BN7 2AN

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## **Gypsies and Travellers are part of our community too.**

Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) is a small charity based in Brighton that works on behalf of Gypsies and Travellers. The small team of nine staff, mostly working part-time, operates at national, regional and local levels in casework, policy and planning work.

**‘We are particularly proud of the local outreach work that we do in East Sussex and in Brighton & Hove, which we are currently in the process of extending into West Sussex’.**

**Chris Whitwell, Director of FFT.**

Zoe Matthews, FFT’s Health Improvement Manager, who manages the local Health and Social Care outreach work considers Gypsies and Travellers to be the most marginalised and socially excluded minority ethnic group in UK society today. Zoe and her team, like the rest of the staff of FFT, are fighting to redress the appalling injustices that Gypsies and Travellers experience on a daily basis - for example the woefully **inadequate access to healthcare, education, housing and social care** and other basic services that most of us take for granted.

Since starting out as an informal group, FFT became a non-profit making company in 1996 and achieved charitable status in 2005. Chris Whitwell says ‘We believe that all the various travelling communities need to work together to protect a way of life that has existed for centuries. We have won the trust and confidence of the traditional Travellers so that today around 80% of our work is with Gypsies or Irish Travellers’.

Avril Fuller, one of the outreach workers with FFT, herself a Gypsy, says ‘I think a lot of it is about lack of understanding. The newspapers feed people with a lot of false information about Gypsies and Travellers and this fuels

their fear about us. But when you meet us we are really no different from other people; we are all human and care about the same things. **Part of my job is getting people from the different communities to know each other a little better so that we can all live together in peace and harmony’.**

The FFT team is located at Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3XG and can be contacted on 01273 234777 and [fft@gypsy-traveller.org](mailto:fft@gypsy-traveller.org)

## **Health Inequalities**

**Health inequalities between Gypsies and non-Gypsies are vast, even compared with other socially excluded groups and other ethnic minorities.**

**‘Modesty’ rules and codes mean that many Gypsies and Travellers avoid sexual health screening, fearing that it will be a sign of promiscuity. Many Gypsy and Traveller women will not attend breast and cervical screening.**

**29% of Gypsy and Traveller women have experienced miscarriage compared to 11-20% in the whole population.**

**Most Gypsy and Traveller women receive a substandard level of care during their pregnancies.**

**17.6% Gypsy/Traveller women have been found to have suffered the loss of a child compared to 0.9% of the population.**

### **Methods for accessing Gypsy and Traveller groups:**

Partnership working with G/T organisations  
Consultation with Gypsies and Travellers  
Dedicated Health Visitors  
Cultural training for health professionals  
Audio/visual health promotion  
Gender sensitivity

# National Initiatives

This section focuses on what is happening in other regions of the UK that could be developed in Lewes District through local people with the help of Developing Communities Project

## Coffeehouse Challenge

Already a positive and popular way of addressing local issues in communities around the UK, the 2007 Coffeehouse Challenge is an informal way of bringing people together from all parts of the community to take action for local change.

Since the Coffeehouse Challenge began in 2004, more than 3,500 people have been involved in some 350 events in communities across the country. This year, there's over £20,000 in awards to help some of the best ideas generated from discussions to get off the ground, and to date more than 20 projects have been set up, changing communities for the better.

The informal discussions are hosted by local people, RSA fellows and take place in Starbucks coffee houses and other community venues.

"What starts as a simple discussion over coffee can spark ideas that change whole communities" says RSA CEO, Matthew Taylor. "People taking part have been so inspired by the discussions that they have come up with fantastic projects from running cars on vegetable oil to setting up a health food business".

The 2007 Coffeehouse Challenge is a great chance for the community to come together and discuss the issues that actually matter to us and where we live. The meeting promises to raise some really interesting ideas and will hopefully inspire us to think about how we can all make a difference locally".

The 2007 Coffeehouse Challenge will be taking place throughout June, July and

August 2007. To find out how you can get involved, visit [www.coffeehousechallenge.org](http://www.coffeehousechallenge.org) or email [Lauren.chc2007@rsa.org.uk](mailto:Lauren.chc2007@rsa.org.uk)

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## Getting to know you

Mencap has launched a new project aimed at helping people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) to get their voice heard.

'Getting to Know You' is a small project run from the National Centre in London that aims to empower and encourage self advocates with learning disabilities to act as peer advocates for those with more profound disabilities.

It involves training self advocacy groups in including people with PMLD through an understanding of the issues and applying a more creative approach. Participants are asked to think about how to get to know someone without words, with workshops potentially encompassing music, dance or using personal objects to indicate what is meaningful to an individual.

For more information, please contact **Victoria Neil** at [victoria.neil@mencap.org.uk](mailto:victoria.neil@mencap.org.uk)

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## for more information

on any of the groups or projects mentioned in this newsletter, you are welcome to contact the Developing Communities team or the group or individual running the project itself if contact details are given.

## **New Voice for Lone Parents -**

### **Gingerbread & One Parent Families merge**

The three million children being brought up by a parent on their own have won a new voice following the merger of Britain's two leading lone parent organisations, Gingerbread and the National Council for One Parent Families. The new organisation aims to deliver a better standard of service to the thousands of lone parents it will help every year, providing advice and helping them into work. And it will mean a louder and more effective voice for Britain's two million lone parents and their children.

'Being a parent is tough at the best times, but when you're bringing up children on your own, the challenges are even greater. Lone parents often find themselves trying to make ends meet on a low income, juggling work and family responsibilities and facing social isolation and stigma. Nowadays, lone parents also have to put up with being labelled as workshy if they stay at home with the kids, or as bad parents if they go out to work. We'll be trying to make sure that lone parents are seen as the heroes they are and not the villains that they are sometimes portrayed as.'

Chris Bond, leader of the new organisation and former Work and Pensions Minister.

### **Lone parent family support groups**

Developing Communities is looking to start one or more support groups for lone parent families in Lewes District.

If you are interested in becoming involved or taking part, please contact the Developing Communities team.

**Tel** 01273 483832 or **email** [developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk](mailto:developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk)

### **contact details**

Gingerbread - The National Council for One Parent Families runs the Lone Parent Helpline on 0800 018 5026.  
Open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday and 9am-8pm on Wednesday.

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### **Timebanks UK**

Time Banks UK is an umbrella charity which supports the development of time banking; championing existing time banks and helping individuals or groups who want to set up a time bank.

Time banking is about developing communities and helping people to feel healthier and happier in their lives by becoming active citizens using time instead of money as the currency. Everyone's time is equal: one hour of your time earns you one time credit to spend when you need.

### **contact details**

For further information about time banking, visit our website [www.timebanks.co.uk](http://www.timebanks.co.uk) or contact Jim Rollinson, Co-ordinator Older People's Project, City Works, Alfred Street, Gloucester GL1 4DF or tel 01452 541027.

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### **Did you know...?**

**1 in 4 parents is a lone parent**

**1 in 10 lone parents is a lone father**

# Training and Events

For individuals to develop their skills, increase access within an already formed group or in order to form, join or give input to a group or forum.

## Solar powered party!

### Transition Town Lewes

To celebrate the arrival of TTL.

Bring food and drink to share.



Tel 01273 479779

or Email [hello@transitiontownlewes.org.uk](mailto:hello@transitiontownlewes.org.uk)

Sat 7 July  
3pm - 10pm  
Market Lane  
Garage, Lewes  
  
FREE event

## Mobile Information and Advice

### Service

#### East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre and Adult Social Care

Outreach service for deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and deaf/blind people living in East Sussex to provide individual information and advice on all aspects of hearing loss. The mobile unit/bus has wheelchair access.

Thurs 19 July  
10.30am-3.30pm  
Ringmer  
(outside shops in Springett Avenue)



#### For further information:

Contact Teresa Davis (ESHRC)

Tel 01323 722505 (and voice/text/fax)

Email [mail@eshrc.org.uk](mailto:mail@eshrc.org.uk)

## Carers' Skills

### Care for the Carers

Providing a programme of sessions:

Reflexology, aromatherapy, herbs for health,

shiatsu, Indian head massage, tai chi, pilates, managing medication, extend (gentle exercises), massage with sense, arts and crafts, salsa dancing, five-a-day made easy (nutrition), scrap-booking, flower remedies.

Sessions are running at various locations around the county.

#### For further information:

Contact: Linda Turner (Care for the Carers)

Tel 01323 745776

Address Braemar House, 28 St Leonards Rd, Eastbourne BN21 3UT.

## Ongoing Events and Meetings

### Communication Group

#### East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre

For deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people and their families.

Opportunity to meet other people; explanation of communication tactics, display/demonstrate environmental aids; and for advice, information and support.

Every 3rd  
Monday of each  
month  
10.30am-12pm  
Age Concern,  
208 High St,  
Lewes

#### For further information:

Contact Teresa Davis (ESHRC)

Tel 01323 722505 (and voice/text/fax)

Email [mail@eshrc.org.uk](mailto:mail@eshrc.org.uk)

## Next issue copy deadline:

### Wednesday 5 September 2007

If you have anything you would like to be included in the next issue of the newsletter, whether it is your own experiences of being active in the community, increasing awareness of issues of disadvantaged groups, or to let us know of relevant training opportunities, we would love to hear from you. **Copy is preferred to be received in electronic format and to be sent to:**

[developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk](mailto:developingcommunities@southdownscvs.org.uk)

A maximum of 200 words per article is requested where possible, unless for Your Voices section.