

**TRANSFORMING  
COMMUNITIES  
TOGETHER<sup>+</sup>**

# Helping people and communities thrive and flourish

Review of 2018





David Primrose  
Chair of Board

### David Primrose

During 2018, Transforming Communities Together has consolidated its core ministry alongside colleagues in the voluntary, statutory and business sectors in the Black Country, and worked closely with churches and community groups across the diocese. Looking back over four years, it was apparent that our work clustered around three emergent themes.

Our growing involvement in Social and Financial Inclusion reflects the concerns of our Joint Venture within the Church Urban Fund's Together Network, for groups vulnerable to and living with poverty. Wolverhampton Poverty Truth, running from early 2017 to mid 2018, was an exciting opportunity to put our core values into practice, seeking endorsement from key funders. James Henderson's earlier work around basic budgeting and Universal Credit set the scene for Just Finance Black Country; with the start delayed whilst we put together a package of local and national funders. Meanwhile, we continue to be involved in asylum, modern slavery, hate crime, and homelessness.

In our involvement with Health and Wellbeing, we have been able to build on earlier work within the Diocese of Lichfield on disability, dementia and more recently, mental health. Adopting a community-based approach we have pioneered dementia-friendly churches, harnessing resources through the wider church. This work has matured, becoming embedded in parish-life. It serves as a model for engagement with the wider area of mental health, combining the expertise of Mental Health First Aid, with community support.

From the start, Community Cohesion and Integration have been at the heart of Transforming Communities Together. Near Neighbours is funded through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, whilst Places of Welcome has increasingly relied upon small grants through local authorities. Such funds release significant voluntary contributions from the groups who become involved.

In the latter part of the year, TCT's staff and board were supported by the Church Urban Fund to develop a five year strategy, with associated plans for sustainability. We have explored a second base for core development to facilitate additional fully-funded work in the north and west of the diocese, as well as the option to consolidate new grant-funded initiatives around our base in the Black Country.

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## Our dedicated team



James Henderson  
Development Work



Ruth Burgess  
Near Neighbours



Cassius Francis  
Just Finance Foundation



Evelyn Williams  
Poverty Truth



Helen Titterton  
Places of Welcome



Judith Parry  
Places of Welcome



Gulsoom Aslam  
Places of Welcome



Sarah Thorpe  
Dementia Friendly  
Churches



Su Parker  
Dementia Friendly  
Churches



Mike Bridgewater  
Dementia Friendly  
Churches

## Core development



TCT's core development work links together churches, communities, and organisations in the voluntary and statutory sector around areas of common concern. Out of these links, distinct projects emerge for which we then seek dedicated funding, adopting an asset-based approach. During 2018 our lead development officer, James Henderson, has been working with those impacted by challenges such as mental health, food insecurity, modern slavery, homelessness, asylum and hate crime. He is involved nationally with the Clewer Initiative, and regionally with projects covering the Black Country and the West Midlands.

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# Case study

*"I've learned how to build relationships. The rest of the world is leaving out relationships and going straight to the tasks, but building relationships gets the very best out of everyone. The answers can be simple, if people would only spend time together."*  
(Rachel – Grassroots Voices)

*"Learning to 'take a back seat', and a re-emphasis of the fact that listening is one of the best supports that people can give. Many of us, in our professional lives, rush in with 'solutions' and 'ways forward' but we have to remember that these are solutions from our own perspective and that is not what matters when others are sharing their stories with you."*  
(Heather - City Shaper)

*"Even when homeless people are placed into accommodation, they go into houses with problems such as money management, family breakdown, mental health and addiction...you need to be savvy enough to access the correct services. If not, you can get left to cope and can potentially end up back on the streets."*  
(Kevin – Grassroots Voices)



## Wolverhampton Poverty Truth – extract from Break Through Summary, and up-date

Wolverhampton Poverty Truth (WPT) brought together eight 'Grassroots Voices' and eighteen 'City Shapers'. The former had lived experience of poverty and want to reduce inequality in the city. The latter were civic and business leaders; people who make decisions about how Wolverhampton is run. The project was facilitated by Evelyn Williams, with support from colleagues and from other Poverty Truth Commissions across the UK. Our Grassroots Voices and City Shapers built relationships and together identified three priorities which will help make a difference to people living in poverty within the City. These issues are Mental Health; Support Networks; Housing. The Mental Health priority focused on how employers can help to prevent the downward spiral of mental health in the workplace. This had the active support for the Chamber of Commerce. Employers, who are willing to support members of staff affected by mental health issues, sign up to an Employer's Pledge. The Support Network priority looked at ways of making it easier for people in poverty to access reliable information and support through Wolverhampton Information Network. The Housing priority looked at priority housing for homeless young people exploring the Co-operative housing model, as well as welcome packs for people when they first receive accommodation. Other welcome initiatives included promoting greater understanding towards people in poverty within places such as Job Centres. The commission showcased the progress made by Wolverhampton Poverty Truth in June 2018, with subsequent work to consolidate implementation and disseminate learning. TCT is supporting the cascade of diocesan Mental Health First Aid training, and promoting Time to Change Mental Health Employer's Pledge.

[james.henderson@tctogether.org.uk](mailto:james.henderson@tctogether.org.uk)

[www.wolvespovertytruth.org](http://www.wolvespovertytruth.org)

## Social and financial inclusion



Just Finance Black Country partners with churches and local community groups across the four boroughs which make up the Black Country region, to increase the supply of fair and affordable finance and to empower those on low-income by building their financial capability. We work closely with local authorities, Citizens Advice, housing associations, Credit Unions, social action charities, and debt advisors. Our development worker, Cassius Francis began in February 2018. In 2018 he delivered 5 CashSmart:CreditSavvy courses (basic budgeting training designed by us and evaluated by the Money Advice Service and Sheffield Hallam University) to 57 people. He also delivered 35 sessions of UCSavvy (preparation for Universal Credit, also designed by us) to 283 staff, volunteers and claimants. In May 2018, as part of our integral engagement and participatory approach, 65 people from churches, other faith groups, charities, councils and other civic bodies attended our Just Finance Summit: Building a Fairer Financial System in the Black Country, out of which developed the Black Country Financial Inclusion Group comprising members from local Citizens Advice, Local Councils, Credit Unions, Housing Associations, Community Volunteer Organizations, secular and faith-based charities and regional task groups. This included the formation of a ‘task and finish’ group to promote financial inclusion across the Black Country, implementing joint actions, developing partnership opportunities, widening participation, and addressing issues of social justice. We have worked with others to deliver Continuing Professional Development training for schools and partner with the Illegal Money Lending Team to raise awareness of Loan Sharks; and develop a partnership with Black Country Chamber of Commerce to promote payroll savings.

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[www.justfinancefoundation.org.uk](http://www.justfinancefoundation.org.uk)

## Health and wellbeing



Sarah Thorpe, Su Parker, and Mike Bridgewater serve as part-time Dementia Friendly Churches enablers across the diocese, supporting local churches as they embark, embed and extend this ministry. This year 32 parishes or benefices have been awarded Dementia Friendly Church status, as part of our Diocese's national recognition as a Dementia Friendly Community. Our annual conference was on Caring for the Carers. Our Dementia Enablers work across the diocese, providing training to support churches embarking on the journey to become dementia-friendly. We have networks to support the embedding of that ethos within church life. We identify initiatives and partnerships to extend that ministry into the wider community.

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Mike Bridgewater: [mike.bridgewater@lichfield.anglican.org](mailto:mike.bridgewater@lichfield.anglican.org) (Stoke and Staffordshire)

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## Community cohesion and integration



During 2018, Black Country Near Neighbours' Small Grants programme supported over twenty projects in the Black Country, including many first time applications. A high percentage of projects work with vulnerable women and new communities. We support Christian/Muslim partnerships. We are run a 'Real People Honest Talk' programme which led up to a Big Conversation in February 2018. This may lead to similar work with Walsall Borough, one of the five councils chosen nationally for the Government's integrated communities programme.

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[www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs/black-country](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs/black-country)

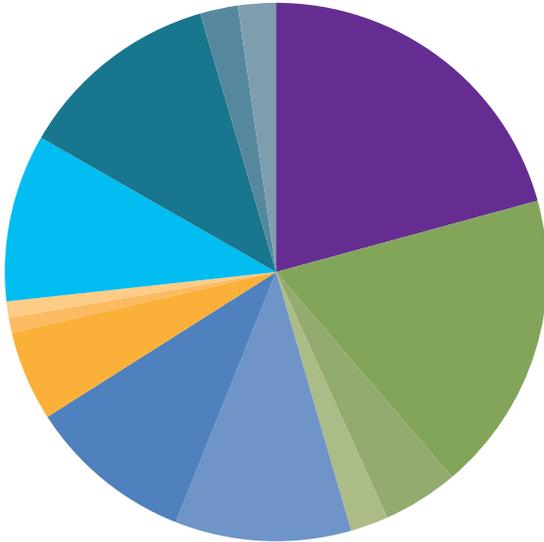


In 2018, our Places of Welcome work was concentrated in Staffordshire. It was been led by Helen Titterton, supported latterly by Judith Parry and Gulsoom Aslam in East Staffordshire. We have piloted asset-based community development linked to Places of Welcome across Lichfield District. Of 250 Places of Welcome across the country, 70 are in our diocese.

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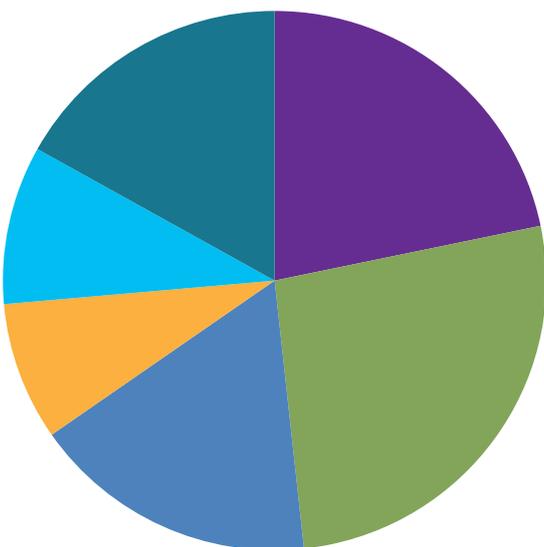
[www.placesofwelcome.org.uk](http://www.placesofwelcome.org.uk)

# Our finances



### Income (estimate)

● MHCLG	45,974.00
● Church Urban Fund	40,000.00
● Anonymous	10,000.00
● Services	5,000.00
● Diocese of Lichfield	23,280.00
● Henry Smith	22,000.00
● Barrow Cadbury	12,000.00
● Westhill	2,000.00
● Local Charity	2,188.00
● District Councils	22,300.00
● Mercers Company	27,000.00
● Diocese of Worcester	5,000.00
● Walsall Housing Group	5,000.00
Other income	2,112.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>223,854.00</b>



### Expenditure (estimate)

● Near Neighbours	45,623.00
● Core Development	55,675.00
● Dementia Friendly	35,758.00
● Poverty Truth	17,405.00
● Places of Welcome	19,945.00
● Just Finance	35,439.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>209,845.00</b>





[www.tctogether.org.uk](http://www.tctogether.org.uk)


**DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD**






The Church of England around Staffordshire, northern Shropshire and the Black Country