

9 March
2011

Newsletter

Scandal We Must Tackle Together!

Perhaps it's no surprise, in an inner-London borough where being hard up is nothing new, that some children live in poverty.

But over a quarter of our children? If that's not a surprise then it's an outright disgrace!

In a recent report from 'Save The Children', researchers quote figures from the Department for Work and Pensions showing Tower Hamlets in joint **worst** place, at 27% of children in penury. Not much better are the nearby boroughs of Newham (25%), Southwark (21%) and Lewisham (20%) – all of them, with Tower Hamlets, full of voluntary organisations supporting what the state offers to struggling families and children at risk.

Come the end of the month (and governmental year) many state provisions will be under pressure – and funding for voluntary groups cut back or even cut out.

How should we attempt to tackle this scandalous situation? Let us know your views so we can plan together.

Census Day 2011

Tumbling through letterboxes all over Britain are forms asking us all to give details about who's in each home on Sunday 27 March 2011, and about the home itself. Once all the forms have been returned – it's an offence not to return one – the Office for National Statistics can start to put together a grand 'snapshot' of the way we are now.

Whatever people may suspect, the information **doesn't** go to the Government, and **none** of it can be traced back to any individuals. Once the figures have been put together, they are used to settle what policies and funds are put behind all kinds of services. So it's essential that everybody completes the census – especially those from ethnic minorities.

One word of caution – leaders of community and voluntary groups while encouraging their members to fill in the census form, must **not** actually write in the answers themselves. This is against the law!





Consultation – Community Rights

The Localism Bill includes new rights for local communities, including the Community Right to Buy and the Community Right to Challenge.

Community Right to Buy - Under the Community Right to Buy important local amenities and buildings - such as old town halls, community halls or the last village shop or pub - can be nominated for listing by the local authority as assets of community value. If listed assets come up for sale, communities will have extra time to prepare a bid to take them over, making it easier to keep much-loved assets in public use and part of local life.

Community Right to Challenge - Under the Community Right to Challenge, voluntary and community groups, parish councils and local authority staff will be able to challenge to take over the running of local public services.

Consultation

The Localism Bill sets out the proposed framework of the two rights. The detailed approach will be established through regulation and guidance. To assist in developing the detail we are consulting on both Rights. The consultation documents were

published on 4 February and the consultation will close at 5pm on 3 May. Copies of both consultation documents and response forms can be accessed from the highlighted web addresses below .

Additional ways to get involved

Throughout the consultation period the consultation team will be speaking to a wide range of interested parties about the Community Right to Buy and Community Right to Challenge. It will be holding the following consultation events in London:

15 March (10am - 1pm)

13 April (10am - 4pm)

If you would be interested in attending a consultation event to discuss both or either Right, please email

crtchallenge@communities.gsi.gov.uk or

crtbuy@communities.gsi.gov.uk or write to:

Community Rights Consultation Team,
Department for Communities and Local Government, 5/A3 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU

Good news – but not much of it!

Government proposes to relax the rules on CRB checks for those who work occasionally with children and vulnerable adults. This will save a few useful quid – but not quite enough to pay for the extra training new volunteers may need.

And Mayor Boris Johnson announces the ‘Team London’ initiative, with £4m funding designed to ‘engage people in volunteering strategies that address the areas of most need’.

Well – **ours** is the area of most need. And £4m will be a good start even if it won’t cover everything!

Collecting for the future

Just at the moment it's tricky to separate facts from opinions – cut back affects the work we do and how we do it. When we realise how much we may be called on to achieve with how much less, critical opinions are, naturally, close to the surface.

The harsh reality is that opinions, however strongly held, loudly voiced and carefully argued, probably won't change many decisions – yet. But facts and evidence are always at the heart of good plans for the future. We need to be collecting them now.

At a recent gathering of advice centres and law firms accessible to ordinary people, delegates were told of severe funding cuts and proposed drastic changes to legal aid provision. It's not hard to work out that these will hit poorer people much harder than those who can afford professional services – but, in the end, once the campaigning is over and decisions are finally made, it may be wiser to observe their effects than to go on complaining after that.

Most of us are familiar with monitoring data and accept the necessity for collecting it. But are we equally 'clued up' about how these and other forms of data can best be used to further our purposes? Do we use information in a 'business-like' way - and learn from analysing achievements? As time isn't an infinite resource, we probably don't.

In the near future, THCVS plans to run courses, for organisations large and small, about gathering and using information. For all the talk amongst the 'high and mighty' about big societies, powerful publics and our sector, very few of them know how many people we benefit every day, how much each item of



'service' costs in cash and volunteers' time – and what difference voluntary work makes to the lives of those who receive it.

A CVS ambition – supported by the local authority, our partners and our members – is the creation of a database to serve as a 'reservoir' of useful knowledge about voluntary and community organisations. We know that many groups guard details about themselves, probably from fears that the facts may reach the wrong hands and be used against them in some way. We are aware of this and understand it – but we're also aware that the future will be built on foundations of facts, not out of strong beliefs and feelings alone. Sharing must not be confused with giving away secrets!

Make a start towards better use of information by joining a network of organisations giving similar service, by joining THCVS, and by talking to our Information Officer, Nasrin Patel on 020 3286 3630 or at nasrin.patel@thcvs.org.uk

Upcoming Training and Events

Assessing Risk in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

Lunchtime Seminar: 10th March or 16th March
12pm - 2pm

The session is aimed at practitioners from all services and agencies who work with or assess families experiencing domestic violence and who need to know about our local process for ensuring risks to children are effectively considered.

Substance Misuse and Safeguarding Training

6th April 2011 - 9.30 - 4.30pm

Focus on Sexual Abuse Training

11 - 12th April 2011 - 9.30 - 4.30pm

To book a place on any of the above courses, please email Kobita.Begum@towerhamlets.gov.uk for a booking form. Places are very limited, therefore apply early to avoid disappointment.

Care Matters Across Faiths Conference

A One Day Conference: 16th March

9am - 4.30pm

Multi-Faith Conference on exploring the relationship between faith and social care. For further information, or to book a place, contact cuan.mccarogher@towerhamlets.gov.uk

'Who Runs London Event' - 31 March 2011

With the extraordinary financial climate the country is in, now more than ever, people might be asking themselves: WHO RUNS my city? How do I influence and shape the debates taking place? How can I communicate effectively with those that make decisions on my behalf?

'WHO RUNS LONDON' event on 31 March will answer these very questions.

In what is set to be one of the most important dates in the 2011 calendar, the WHO RUNS event organised by Operation Black Vote will give the communities of London the chance to listen, contribute and engage in a debate with those decision makers that affect all of our day-to-day lives, and find out how they can get more involved in the important decisions being taken in their local areas.

Speakers and Q+A session will include leaders from across the political spectrum, as well as high-profile civic leaders from national charities, the grassroots third sector and the media. Special guest to be announced.

Details: **Central London** location. Places are limited. Please register here for a place: ashley@obv.org.uk
6.30pm start on 31 March 2011. To find out more contact: 0208 983 5474

Attention Young Music and Radio Enthusiasts!

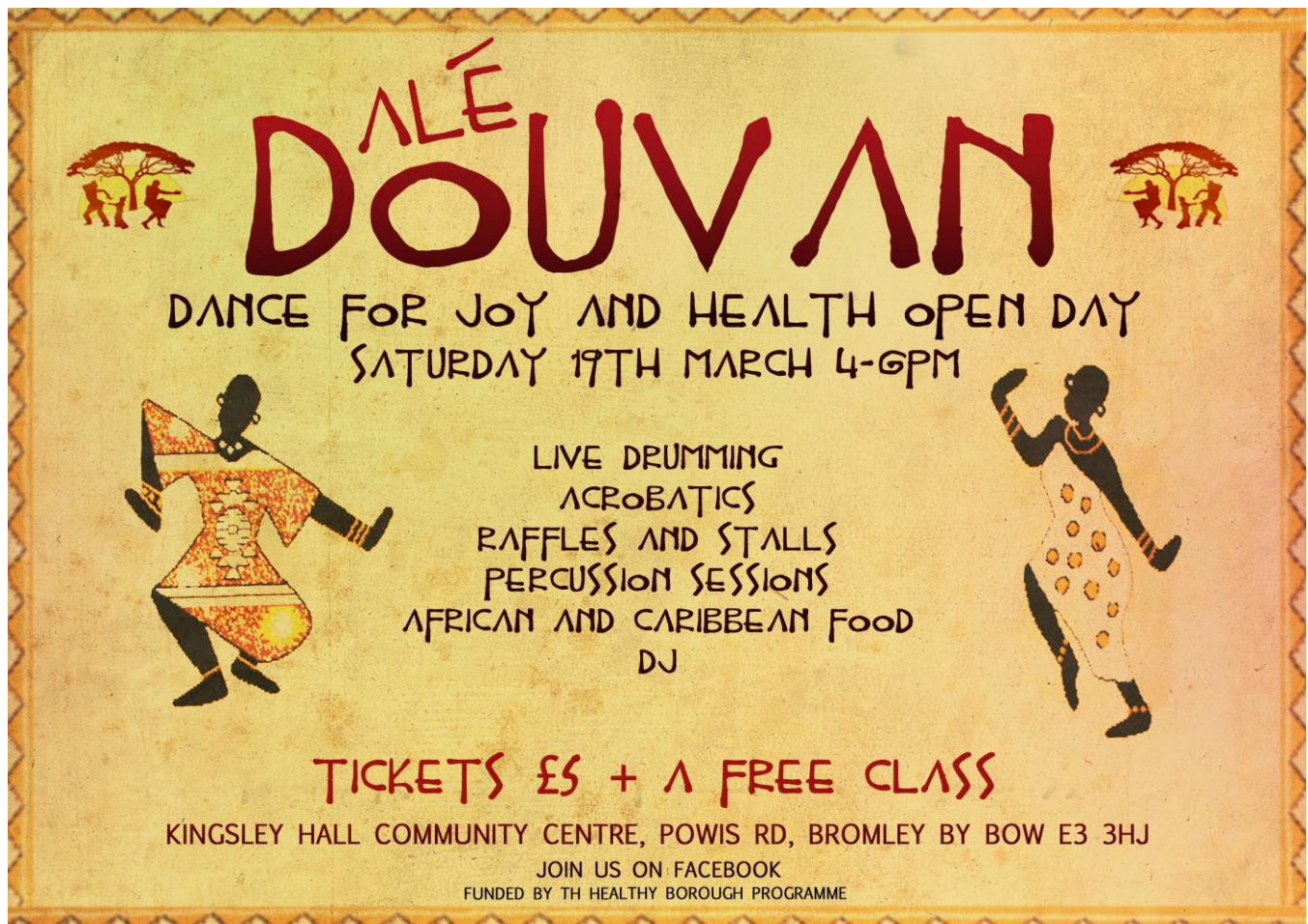
I **Have a Choice's Music Potential** programme, supported by Barclaycard Unwind, will again be giving young people, aged 16-25, especially those who are not in education or employment, the chance to try out the different roles in music and radio production, film making and vocal skills.

After the success of the first session in January, we're running another day on **Tuesday 22nd March** and young people can sign up now at: www.choice-fm.co.uk/ihaveachoice/signup

The great news is that the event will be in E1, so will hopefully be ideal for young people living in Tower Hamlets. Please pass on the sign-up link above to any young people aged 16-25 you support, and also forward to your networks. Thanks very much.

Places are limited, and **Choice** will be promoting it on-air in early March, so we're advising young people who are interested to book now to avoid disappointment.

Choice is also happy to take group bookings. Please contact Nadine at nadine.neckles@thisisglobal.com or if all else fails contact Nasrin here at THCVS on 020 3286 3630.



Alé Douvan - African and Caribbean Dance and Culture Group is holding a 'Dance for Joy & Health Open Day' on Saturday 19 March, 4.00-6.00pm at Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, E3 3HJ, and they need your support – every penny raised will be put into keeping classes and courses running.

Their Open Day will have lots of fun activities for the whole family so go along and take part in the entertainment for the day, which includes:

- African dance showcases by both the Adult and Junior Dancers – all to the accompaniment of live drumming
- Acrobatics
- Raffles with great prizes to be won and Stalls selling lovely things
- Health Advice sessions with Nurse Joy
- Drum and percussion sessions for adults and kids
- Authentic African and Caribbean food and healthy snacks on sale
- A DJ

If you would like your event to be promoted in our Newsletter or website, please call Nasrin on 020 3286 3630 or email her with details: nasrin.patel@thcvs.org.uk