



End of Project Review 2006-2020



INTRODUCTION

In January 2015 the Building Bridges Management Group, supported by the United Reformed Church (NW Synod) and Church Related Community Ministry, commissioned a Review of the project which had run for 14 years, from 2006 until 2020. The Review aimed to:

“To reflect on the lifetime of the Building Bridges project and the role of the Church-Related Community Worker in order to:

- * **Celebrate the Achievements** - and the journey made by this innovatory partnership
- * **Identify** - the successes and challenges through the years
- * **Highlight the Legacy** - to the Tonge Moor community



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to Pat Oliver and Alison Dalton as the two Church Related Community Ministers overseeing the project. Also to members of the Building Bridges Management Group and everyone who agreed to participate and reflect on their experiences of the project since 2006.

HOW THE REVIEW WAS DONE

PROCESS

The main method for collecting information regarding the impact of the project over that 14 year period was to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with people who had been involved with the project in a number of different ways.

In order to capture the greatest range of views in a relatively short time, a series of individual interviews were carried out, as well as by contact by telephone. The interviews and group session lasted between 60-90 minutes.

- 13 interviews/telephone calls with 16 people
- 1 group interview with 4 people
- Observations and chat at Generation Reunited and Lunch and Leisure

CRITERIA

- People who had been on a personal journey with Building Bridges
- People who were involved in community groups and residents associations which Building Bridges had supported
- People who worked for partner organisations and had worked with the project and/or the Building Bridges Management Group
- People who were involved in the United Reformed Church or the local Christian community and Building Bridges

Innovation and evolution of church at the centre

Early 2000s – dilapidated church building over 100 years old, no longer fit for purpose and suffering from vandalism.



Church at the centre evolved at the heart of the new Tonge Moor children's centre.



A MODERN CHURCH AT THE HEART OF FAMILY SERVICES

'It is a small church, friendly and welcoming, not overpowering. It really feels like a family'.

'It works hard to keep everyone included and not just the stereotypical churchgoer, it welcomes everyone. I believe that church is like a library, it should be a place that welcomes a mix of people of all types. Welcoming and genuine'.



Church at The Centre

THE CHURCH FAMILY IS SEEN AS INCLUDING ALL WHO WORK IN OR USE THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE.

OVER TIME THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND BUILDING BRIDGES HAS BECOME ALMOST SEAMLESS, THEY ARE ONE AND THE SAME. BUILDING BRIDGES HAS BECOME PART OF CHURCH AT THE CENTRE'S PHILOSOPHY.



Tonge Moor was identified as a priority for the creation of a Sure Start Children's Centre which opened on may 11 2006

Tonge Children's Centre

It quickly became the only Children's Centre in Bolton to be open seven days a week, with the Church responsible for the building on Saturdays and Sundays.



REACHING OUT TO THE TONGE MOOR COMMUNITY

Located within 2 miles of Bolton Town Centre.

Throughout 2005 the Church had been exploring the possibility of calling a Church Related Community Worker to work as part of the future Children's Centre Team.

After a successful application Church at the Centre (Tonge Moor URC) was accredited as a Church-in-Community in 2006.





BUILDING BRIDGES WAS DEVELOPED AS A VEHICLE FOR CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY MINISTRY AND TO SUPPORT THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE IN LINKING TO FAMILIES IN NEED

IN THE BEGINNING – BUILDING BRIDGES SIMPLY STARTED FROM A CONVERSATION BETWEEN A FEW PEOPLE.

The Concept

A project was developed to meet what was then seen to be the primary need in the area – building bridges between younger and older people.

Aims

To foster mutual respect, trust, support and kindness between generations, faith and cultures

To develop Tonge Children's Centre into a hub for the community

By working with other groups, to support other community activities addressing needs in the area

That (by 2020) everyone in the local community will feel that Church at The Centre is available for them.

How

The Church-Related Community Worker would be well placed, with their particular training, to work with the community and the church, to address fears and misunderstandings, and seek to create networks that enhance the possibility of community being created, and good relationships being formed.

CRCW – PHASE 1 2006-2013

PAT OLIVER



KEY STRENGTHS

Pat helped to re-establish the church in the local community, a long-standing 10+ year aspiration of the church, which, prior to Pat's arrival, the church had lacked the resource to achieve.

Pat was very good, a connector and networker, making the Church at the Centre part of the activities of the emerging Children's Centre. She put in place the building blocks and foundations for latter phases of the project.

'We gelled and worked well together. We were a great team'.

In 2008 Church at the Centre was awarded the URC 'Community Project Award' given annually to innovative community projects – and Pat Oliver and John Evans received the award at the URC General Assembly in Edinburgh.

CRCW – PHASE 2 2015-2020

Alison dalton



KEY STRENGTHS

Alison consolidated the work that Pat started with wider groups, external partnerships and networks. Alison has helped to bring different parts of the community under one roof at the same time. She has done this all the while not pushing church and faith, but a sense of community. The project feels more community than church.

‘Building Bridges has become part of the fabric of the community and inter-woven into it’. Over her 5 years in post Alison has been responsible for bringing in over £12,000 of funding, alongside other resource support, often in kind, to support the various streams of work undertaken by the Building Bridges project.

WHAT BUILDING BRIDGES DELIVERED

2006-2013



FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

- * **Our Back Field** – Led by Entwistle TRA, developing public open space
- * **FUSION** - was formed by bringing together different community groups and the church, with Pat being the voice that 'brokered agreement between groups.
- * **Lunch Box Project** – An initiative set up to provide over 1000 free lunches to children who receive free school meals during the summer holidays. The Children's Centre became a distribution point
- * **Flower Festival** - The Bolton Floral Art Group designed displays which illustrated the life of the Children's Centre. People came to the Festival from over a mile away and provided one of the first platforms to promote the work of Building Bridges to a wider audience
- * **Community Café** as a Focal Point – Mosaic Project and Spiritual Display Space and Prayer Box
- * **Friday Friends** – Monthly intergenerational project which set the seeds for Generation Reunited
- * **Lunch and Leisure** – The initiative aims to reduce isolation for older people and to improve health and wellbeing. About 25 – 30 over 50 year olds are welcomed each week to exercise, eat a meal and play together.

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

Monthly Assemblies and Citizenship Awards



FLAGSHIP PROJECTS 2006 - 2013



- **Our back field**
- **Work with Entwistle Street Tenants and Residents Association to develop an area of open green space.**



- **Lunchbox project**
- **The Centre helps to service the Bolton Lunch (BL) project over the summer holidays in partnership with Urban Outreach.**



- **Lunch and leisure**
- **Developed in partnership with Age UK, Church at the Centre and the Children's Centre. Aimed at the over 50s to eat, celebrate and exercise together. This project still continues to run every week.**

“

A lunchbox can seem a small thing, but eating properly and not being undernourished can make a difference in preventing children crossing boundaries into ‘street families’, petty crime, drugs and grooming. The impact of this project is immeasurable.

”

CHILDREN IN NEED

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

GOING HUNGRY

LUNCHBOX

Children watched for the Bolton Lunches van to come onto the estate, and then ran out, shouting:

“Our lunch is here, our lunch is here!”

“

I also come along to the Luncheon Club on Fridays. The club is great, there are social benefits, I am single and live alone. People really do connect. People will share their lives with you and you can support each other when you are happy or sad.

”

SANCTUARY

LIFELINE

SUPPORT NETWORK

PLACE TO MEET AND CONNECT

- ‘I live on my own, no family. Ended up here in Bolton by accident with my wife, we got divorced then I ended up on my own. I needed somewhere to go and meet people. I enjoy coming here. Nice friendly group. The Luncheon Club has made a real difference to my life’.

WHAT BUILDING BRIDGES DELIVERED 2015-2020



RAISING AWARENESS OF HATE CRIME

Project strands were developed in response to changing demographics in Tonge Moor and a concern that tensions could develop at any time.

The aims of the Building Bridges project were adapted in the light of these changes:

‘To foster mutual respect, trust, support and kindness between generations, faith and cultures’

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FLAGSHIP PROJECTS 2015-2020

CELEBRATING THE CHANGING FACE OF OUR COMMUNITY EVENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ST. ANDREWS CHURCH



POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION WITH LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS DURING HATE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK



FLAGSHIP PROJECTS 2015-2020



- The Trail incorporated 3 visits to differing faith buildings (Christian, Hindi and Muslim).

• LETTER WRITING AND INTER-FAITH TRAIL



- Young people created a drama piece on hate crime which was performed at community events and videoed by Box TV.

• CHURCHES TOGETHER FAITH TRAIL



- Tonge Moor Community Faith Trail. A chance to be challenged and experience spirituality

• ALTRU DRAMA PROJECT

“

‘I have learned that if you see hate crime in the streets report it to the police or anyone nearby!’ ‘In drama group I have learnt to not be racist to people!’ ‘I thought that some people at the library, these people might be the ones targeted’.

”

YOUTH

UNDERSTANDING

TOLERANCE

DIVERSITY

- ‘This performance has helped the children empathise and have a greater understanding of issues rarely broached by their generation’.

GENERATION REUNITED

The project concept that symbolised Building Bridges from the outset. The Children's Centre gave a solid base for inter-generational work to happen easily without knowing it by bringing together early years provision, parents and grandparents together in one place as part of the target audience.

To foster mutual respect, trust, support and kindness between generations, faith and cultures

- ***Aimed at countering alienation in younger people and fear in older people or those of other cultures or faiths.***



GENERATION REUNITED



“ It’s what parents need today. Many people are struggling with their children, stuck in the house and they need somewhere to go. Parents need a support network, people used to get a lot of support from within their community which is no longer there.”

GENERATION REUNITED INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY STAY AND PLAY SUPPORT NETWORK

Many parents are struggling and trying to cope with daily life and not saying anything. Mental health problems are a big problem, they can only do so much alone and especially when kids are off school, a small amount of support would help. Somewhere to come for an hour, somewhere to go away from the house and chat and have a cup of tea’.

BY THE END OF THE PROJECT

Well developed community infrastructure and social capital

- Sound partnerships developed between Church at the Centre, Tonge Moor Children's Centre and local schools. Both Mark Bates and Alison are or have served as co-opted Governors.
- Monthly assemblies continue during term time, whenever possible. Approximately 72 Pupils have benefitted from Citizenship Award.
- The Lunchbox (BL) project has been running successfully since 2015 During that first year 40-50 lunches were being distributed Monday – Friday throughout the 6 week holiday period, approximately 1, 200 -1, 500 meals distributed to who would otherwise be hungry. This year we have distributed 100-110 lunches per day, which means in 2019 3, 000 – 3,300 children have been fed!
- Lunch and Leisure has been running since 2006 with an approximate weekly attendance of 24 – 30 individuals over 50's coming together to enjoy a two course meal, chair based exercises and fun with friends.
- This gives an annual footfall of roughly 1,080 – 1,350 utilising the centre's resources for support by offering the opportunity to enjoy social connections, to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Since the children from Moorgate Community Primary School have attended the group, half termly, roughly 160 Children have come along to eat their lunch and lead activities with the members of the group.

BY THE END OF THE PROJECT (CONTINUED)

- Over 2000 people have benefitted from Hate Crime Initiatives
- As a snapshot of some of the outputs of Generation Re – United we have analysed our data. This shows that since February 2018 – May 2019:
 - We have delivered 33 sessions
 - Leading to a footfall of 884
- This breaks down to a footfall of 203 over 50's and 453 under 18's
- 433.5 staff hours have been given to support this project

THE SUCCESSES OF BUILDING BRIDGES

- When considering feedback from the Evaluation, what was most striking was the overwhelmingly positive feedback, whether from those connected to Church at the Centre, Children's Centre, schools, other partner organisations, residents associations, smaller community groups or individual members of the community. All had much that was positive to say about the very real differences Building Bridges and the Church-Related Community Workers had made in Tonge Moor.

Developing community events to celebrate the diversity of Tonge moor

- Over the course of the 14 years of Building Bridges many hundreds of people have attended events in Tonge Moor. Many of these were organised in partnership by Church at the Centre, Children's Centre, local churches, FUSION, Bolton InterFaith, BIG Local and volunteers. The community here is strong, rich and vibrant.



Community building

The Project is about human relationships, bringing different ages, faiths, cultures and communities together.

“ALISON IS A GREAT AMBASSADOR AND THE HEART AND VOICE OF THIS PROJECT”.

- “Key relationships in this area would never have happened without Building Bridges. The work has achieved a lot in terms of breaking down barriers and stereotypes.”
- “Alison has helped to bring different parts of the community under one roof at the same time. She has done this all the while not pushing church and faith, but a sense of community. The project feels more community than church.”

Alison has great visibility and ‘presence’ in the community. A ‘hands on’ approach. Linking and signposting to services that people might need support with. She is incredibly knowledgeable, bringing a range of skills e.g. governance, fundraising, capacity building. Often the role involves wearing ‘multiple hats’ working in partnership, which can conflict at times with church hierarchy and decision making. Risk taking and change can be challenging.

“ALISON USES WORSHIP TO COMPLEMENT WORK SHE IS DOING ON THE PROJECT. IT IS CONTEXTUAL. SHE IS ABLE TO MAKE A CHURCH MESSAGE RELEVANT TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ON THE EDGE AND VULNERABLE”.

HELPING TO DEVELOP THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE AS A HUB FOR THE COMMUNITY

Through the promotion of community support projects and developing volunteering opportunities.

- * Partnership Celebration
- * Café area as a focal point for the community
- * Community artwork
- * Flower Festival
- * Lunch and Leisure
- * Friday Friends and Generation Reunited



BY 2020 PEOPLE WILL FEEL THAT CHURCH AT THE CENTRE IS A RESOURCE FOR THEM



Building Bridges is an outstanding example of Church working as one with the community. The project has transformed the life of Tonge Moor URC's life, worship, ministry and mission, consolidated as an integral part of the Children's Centre offer. The church has become, both spiritually and ecumenically, 'Church at the Centre'.

People are now attending church because of Building Bridges and Children's Centre links who may never have come along before. The work has achieved a lot in terms of breaking down barriers and stereotypes.

'Church at the Centre' has been successful because of a non-threatening environment, location of ease and access. Attendance has increased, with people coming from the immediate locality, so a greater proportion of the congregation live within walking distance than used to be the case.

“

A CRCW is a community development worker who enables the church to work within its local neighbourhood, rather than someone employed by the church to work on its behalf or only with church members.’

”

“The Church has been a lifeline. It has made a big difference to our lives.

Alison saved our life, before Christmas I was at a very low point. She spoke to us and spent 3 days talking to us and sorted things out.

One good thing now is that we are meeting people. We are both enjoying life a bit better”.

APPROACHING THE FUTURE

It is 5 years since Bridging Communities and Alison Dalton, as Church-Related Community Worker, first began to work with individuals and the communities of Tonge Moor. Those who were touched by the project in so many ways are very clear as to the importance, need and distinctive value of community development work.

The Evaluation indicates that community development is still very needed in Tonge Moor. The area will continue to need intervention and there will be a role for this work keeping links in the area alive.

People want to see a Community Development Worker post. Other funding could be found for this in the future. This may be outside of URC structures completely.

APPROACHING THE FUTURE – CHURCH AT THE CENTRE

The church needs to think how it can continue to build itself around people using the building and making it relevant to any new context. Being a part of 'creating cohesion'.

Because Church is based in a Children's Centre there is a mindset that everything is seen as early years or lower ages. Work could potentially be extended into older age groups more, expanding on youth work.

More work could be undertaken around tolerance of difference; tolerance of faith, age, civic and community pride. More inter-faith events, awareness raising of cultures building on the Hate Crime project.

Wider work perhaps around tolerance of disabilities and people who are vulnerable in society. People/children need to be accepting of difference so that they can respect.

APPROACHING THE FUTURE – COMMUNITY HUBS

Building Social Capital. Work is likely to be spatially concentrated around the Children's Centre and the satellite hubs – FUSION, UCAN, St Andrew's Methodist Church, St Augustine's Anglican Church, the Sea Cadet's Building, Castle Hill Youth Centre.

Need to be resident led. One failing of Building Bridges is that it could have had more laypeople from the community involved. The Partnership was perhaps too top-heavy with organisational representatives and professionals.

Any future Partnership could become more resident-led, looking at things from a true community perspective which is not necessarily a church or organisational perspective. Allowing the people of Tonge Moor to access groups that they might not otherwise have access to. Building on successful partnership approaches already developed.

The project has shown that there is great potential for this to continue and expand.

APPROACHING THE FUTURE - EMPOWERMENT

Community in the Lead

Austerity measures mean that public sector will not be the driving force in any future investment. This is likely to be the community and voluntary sector. Community will continue be the ones in the lead and driving seat.

Alison has always advocated learning, work shadowing and knowledge transfer, which is now successfully bearing fruit with the Luncheon Club self-bidding for £2000 of Ambition for Ageing funding.

We need to continue to challenge people to step outside of their comfort zones and grow.

BUILDING BRIDGES MANAGEMENT GROUP

With grateful thanks to the Building Bridges Management Group in the undertaking of this Evaluation.

Age UK, Bolton Inter-Faith, Bolton at Home, Bolton Borough Council, Church at the Centre, Families and Babies, Entwistle Street Residents Association, FUSION, North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church, St. Andrew's Methodist Church, the Benefice of St. Augustine's and St. Aidan's Church of England Churches, Tonge Children's Centre, Tonge with the Haugh BIG Local Partnership.

