

groundswell

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exchanges

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what is this rough guide to exchanges?

Exchanges are an opportunity for homeless people to visit other homeless people and projects, to share ideas, skills and experience. An exchange gives those involved ideas, inspiration and renewed energy to create solutions to the problems they face.

Going on an exchange and visiting other projects and individuals, is a great way to learn about what other people are doing and to witness different approaches and different ways of doing things. Some of what you see and hear will seem immediately relevant, other experiences take time to filter through and make sense. You decide whether the solutions in the community you are visiting will work for you.

In this 'rough guide' you will find information about what an exchange is, how to host one and how Groundswell can help you...

who does Groundswell support?

Groundswell encourages and supports people who have first hand experience of being disempowered and excluded from decision-making. We work with these specific groups:

- ★ homeless people, including rough sleepers, asylum seekers, users of homeless services, ex-homeless people and those recently resettled.
- ★ 'hidden homeless' people, particularly people from ethnic minorities, women, young people, elderly people.
- ★ community groups, including Tenants Associations, Residents Groups, Local Action Groups and co-ops.
- ★ people with health problems, particularly those with mental health problems, people with drug or alcohol dependencies, people with physical disabilities.
- ★ squatters
- ★ travellers and ex-travellers (traditional and new age).
- ★ people living in poverty.

The term 'homeless people' in this travel book has been used as short hand for all these groups.



Wendy Cooper, Isle of Wight

"The contacts I made on the exchange to Birmingham were excellent. It gave me ideas of how I could use people's skills in the future. I wouldn't hesitate to call any of the people I met when I need their ideas or practical help."

in context

what are exchanges?
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what are exchanges?

a bit about exchanges...

People 'exchange' every day, passing information between each other in a myriad of formal and informal ways. Professionals organise 'exchanges' in the form of conferences and other events as a matter of routine. Decision-makers meet on a local, national and international level to exchange information and further enhance their projects and initiatives, to take 'time out' from the normal routine, to gain new perspectives and fresh approaches. But what about homeless people? What if they met on a local, national and even international level? Wouldn't their lives and their aspirations be enhanced? The answer is obvious so at Groundswell we have been actively developing and carrying out a process we call 'exchange'.

Groundswell came across the idea of exchanges when we came into contact with groups of homeless people from India and South Africa. These people, members of the National Slum Dwellers' Federation, Mahila Milan (meaning 'women together') and the South African Homeless People's Federation have, for some years, been involved in local, regional and international exchanges. Our contact with these groups of people inspired Groundswell to develop our own exchange programme.

Groundswell exchanges are a collaboration between homeless and ex-homeless people, service providers, project workers, statutory services and all sorts of people all over the UK and beyond. They involve people meeting up, exchanging stories and experiences, meeting people and professionals running projects and services, discussing, debating, listening and informing. Touring cities, touring rehab units, river trips and hostel visits, vindaloos and video. Exchanges are involving, lively, energetic and ultimately exhausting as inspiring events always are.

But it doesn't end with the visits. Exchanges create an informal network of people who have met and who know each other. People contact each other, help and advise each other, make things happen. Exchanges are just the beginning of a process of homeless and excluded people coming together and creating change.

Groundswell has learnt many lessons from co-ordinating our own exchanges and this guide is an attempt to pass on this information. Exchanges are an investment of time and money and we're keen to pass on the principles, ideas and lessons we've learnt in organising them. As you read this guide it will be obvious that exchanges are a growing and evolving idea. Perhaps you may want to become involved in an exchange...?



a bit about Groundswell...

the Groundswell network...

The Groundswell network is a loose collection of groups and individuals with diverse interests coming together around a common set of values:

- 🌐 Homeless people are not the problem, they are part of the solution.
- 🌐 Homeless people have a right to access information to make informed choices.
- 🌐 Homeless people must be involved in creating practical solutions to tackle homelessness.

Groundswell...

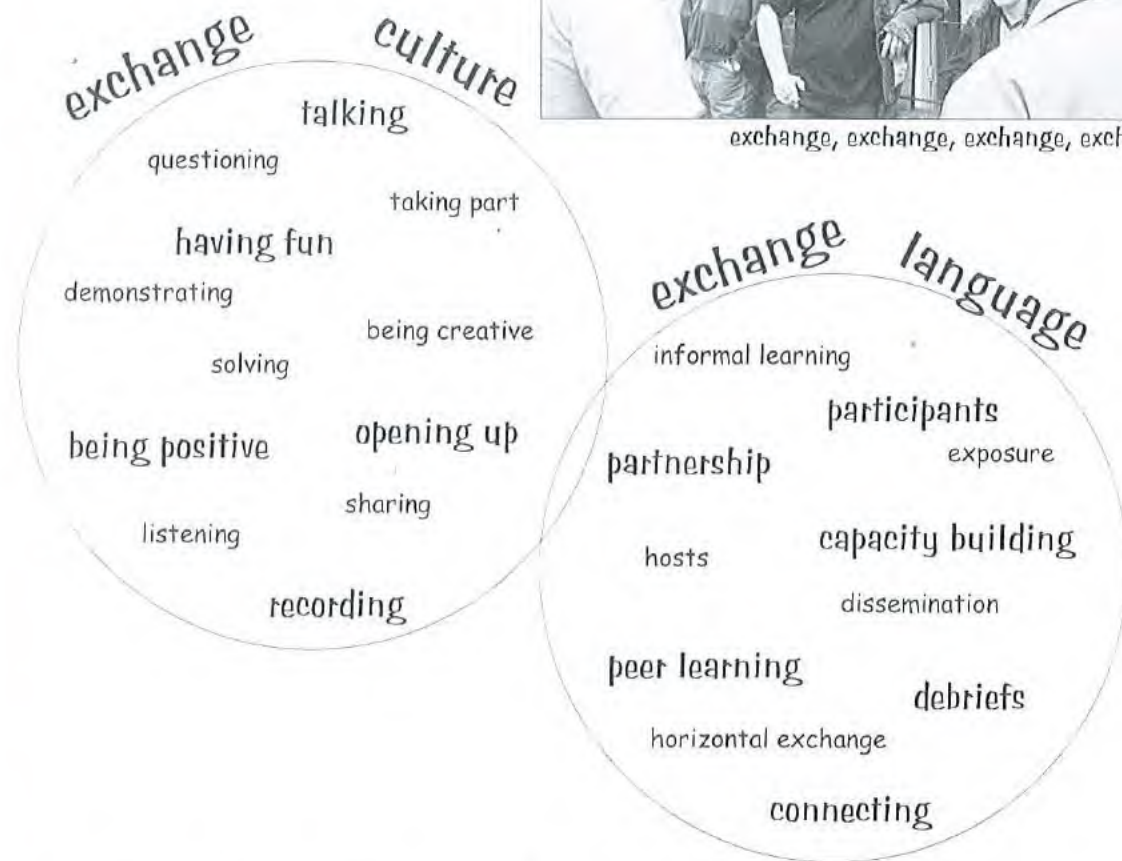
Groundswell supports a process which puts homeless people at the centre, helping them to develop their own solutions based on their own experience and expertise. By encouraging people to make informed choices about their lives, we hope to support them in finding solutions to their own problems.

Groundswell believes that homelessness can only be tackled by involving homeless people and by supporting people taking control of their own lives.

Groundswell offers training, advice, networking and resource development, working to achieve a community-led approach to tackling homelessness and poverty across the UK. Groundswell aims to support and sustain the projects it works with and encourage new ones to be established.

the Groundswell network includes...





Pavement and slum dwellers in India have been involved in an exchange process through Slum Dwellers International (SDI) for some years now...

'Exchange and exposure are terms we use to describe a variety of activities which all have in common poor people visiting poor people in other places. Community leaders meet, talk, see what each is doing and begin an education which allows them to explore the lives and situation of people in other communities and to pick up any ideas which they think could be useful back home, in their own struggle for a better community. Exchange builds relationships of trust and partnerships across distances, where teaching and learning from each other becomes natural — almost automatic — and where sharing things strengthens self-worth. Exchange is the root strategy for education and mobilisation — of the poor and by the poor.'

Sheela Patel, SPARC, supporting a federation of pavement dwellers in India taken from 'Face to Face' (see directory section)



exchange, exchange, exchange, exchange

history of Groundswell exchanges

1996

Groundswell began as a project within the National Homeless Alliance to promote and develop self-help initiatives with people in the UK who are homeless, excluded or living in poverty. Groundswell came into contact with Sheela Patel from SPARC (the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in India, and found out about the slum and pavement dwellers' federations and their approach to community involvement.

September 1998

Groups from the Groundswell network met with Celine D'Cruz from SPARC; Jockin from the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) in India; and Rose Molokwane and Patrick Hunsley from the South African Homeless People's Federation.

November 1999

An initial round of regional exchanges with the Groundswell network to Cambridge, Teesside and Glasgow.

January 2000

An international community meeting between 60 UK homeless and ex-homeless people and 15 international visitors from the India, Zimbabwean, Thai and South African homeless people's federations.

2001

January Groundswell international exchange to India.

February Groundswell regional exchange to Bristol.

April Groundswell regional exchange to Glasgow.

June Groundswell regional exchange to Birmingham.

June Groundswell regional exchange to Nottingham.

August Groundswell regional exchange to London.

Mike Baker from Bristol tells his story to women from the Mahila Milan federation in India





Exchange hosted here
 Participants from here



petryszyn, luton

"Exchanges are brilliant - the amount of sharing information, support and hearing personal experiences lets you know that you are not alone. The sharing lifts the blanket of non understanding. It gives people a new and fresh approach to old situations and stops you from only seeing black and white. Even if you are not personally experiencing the problem you may know someone who is and that can be shared when you get back home."

preparing to travel

planning the trip
 elements of a successful
 exchange
 travel, bed, money
 sending the tickets out
 host's checklist
 participants' checklist

planning the trip

There isn't one 'right' way of putting on an exchange but there are some principles and ideas that can help make the exchange more exciting and effective...



Keeping it informal in London

elements of a successful exchange...

many-to-one

Try and ensure each exchange involves a number of people from different projects visiting one place together, rather than limiting it one project going to visit another. This allows for a wider range of views and experiences and more sharing of ideas. Often seemingly unrelated projects have something to offer each other.

regionally focussed

Co-ordinating an exchange within one region (eg the West Midlands) makes it more likely for groups that meet on the exchange will work together in the future. This doesn't exclude national meetings and exchanges but regional exchanges do have additional benefits.

two nights

Spending at least two nights together is very important. It means that participants see more but it also means that they are able spend more 'bonding time' together as a group, both formally and informally.

keep it informal

There doesn't need to be a 'programme' or a big structure, which means there is less work for the host. An exchange that requires a lot of organising can be a huge burden and a very real disincentive to hosting an exchange. A more informal plan means a much more 'real' experience for visitors.

pack it in

Although space and time for relaxing and catching your breath are important, there's no point wasting time when you're on an exchange. Rest and recover when you get home!

participate

Don't just watch, do it! It's important to be 'in there doing it', not just observing as an outsider. This can be tricky if we think about it too much. Much better to forget about it and just get on with it!

don't just watch it, do it!



as host, don't put on a show

When visiting guests are coming, our first reaction is to try and make sure everything is perfect - showing how brilliant we are, that there are no problems and making sure that they get the 'right impression'. That might be a wise idea if your guests are funders, cabinet ministers or the media (then again it might not!?!), but it's certainly not appropriate if you're hosting an exchange. There's nothing to be learnt from seeing something that's not real. We shouldn't be embarrassed about sharing our weaknesses, as well as our strengths, with our peers. After all, we're all meant to be working together, aren't we? In fact, there's usually much more value in discussing difficulties and lessons learnt from overcoming adversity. It's usually the hard stuff that's the most insightful and useful.

Although it's important to make sure there's space for people (visitors and visited) to meet and talk, it's also important to see what happens on a day-to-day basis. That's where the real work happens and it's that which makes us successful. We aren't great because we're good at hosting VIPs, but because of the work we do day in day out.

Hassan from St Basil's in Birmingham visits Nottingham



an exchange needs to be for at least two nights...



checking out what happens on a day-to-day basis at Tower Hamlets & City Groundswell



travel

Book the tickets as soon as possible. It's likely to make it cheaper

and it also gives you plenty of time to post the tickets to everyone who is coming.

Remember to bear in mind what time

everyone is meeting up and, of course, it's

not always possible to book the cheapest trip. While train or bus are usually the best way to get anywhere, do look at air travel, particularly for trips from one end of the UK to the other,

as it can often work out much cheaper. Don't forget local travel - it's sometimes possible to

hire a minibus at a very reasonable rates from your local Community Transport Association

member. Sometimes generous service providers may loan a minibus. Or you could

just organise your visits in walkable distances from each other..



briefing the projects to be visited

As host, it's important for you to brief people in the projects we will visit so they know what an exchange is about and why we will visit. It's helpful if projects really know why visitors are there.

A good idea is to leave them information about the exchange process (you could photocopy pages 4 and 6), information about Groundswell (page 5), a copy of the intended programme and some information about your own project. Encourage them to get back in touch with you if they have any more questions.

who goes?

Exchanges tend to be more effective when there is a variety of people going: men and women, clients and workers, first-timers and veterans and people of all ages.

accommodation

As host, you are best placed to try and find a local hotel for a reasonable price. University accommodation is always another good, and fairly cheap, option out of term time.



the money issue

Even if you agree with the host that they are going to pay for everything, there are always going to be situations where you will need cash. You can't expect the host to be there 24/7 so make sure you've got money for stuff like taxis, tea and coffee, food etc.



sending the tickets out...

An example letter sent by the hosts to participants before the exchange, with everything they need to know...

Monday 4 June 2001

Nottingham exchange 26th - 28th June

Dear Viv

Here are your tickets and some information about what we'll be doing when we're in Nottingham. If you have any questions or something's not totally clear just give us a call at the office on xx (include office telephone number).

travel

We will all arrive at Nottingham train station but at different times. We will meet up at the cash point at the station's entrance and then we will take a walk to our first destination.

accommodation

The hotel we are staying at is called the Stage Hotel on the Gregory Boulevard. It is close to the projects we'll be visiting. The rooms are all twin-rooms to help keep costs down, so we hope it's ok for you to share. There's a list enclosed of who is sharing rooms with whom. We'll be having breakfast at the hotel, all our other meals will be together. All the food and accommodation will be paid for by xx (insert name of payee).

exchange

We will visit hostels, resettlement centres and more. You can be sure it's going to be a non-stop couple of days!

recording the trip

When you take part in an exchange there is so much to take in that things can feel like they are just washing over you. Although at the time you may feel that it would be impossible to forget anything that you've seen, when you get back and you are buried again in the day to day stuff, you'll find a lot of what you've seen has been forgotten.

So, we would like you to record things whilst on the exchange - writing a journal, taking pictures, video or audio recording can all help you to write things up when you get home. We'll be bringing along a digital still and video camera, but think of getting something like a notepad to jot things down when you're in Nottingham. Recording the trip is really important! After all, exchanges are only worth doing if the information is passed on to others when you return home.

contact numbers

If there is any problem with the travel which will mean you can't meet up with everyone else at the right time or if there is any other problem during the trip, please call:

Contact at host project/organisation:	xx	Mobile:	xx
Co-ordinating group contact (if different):	xx	Mobile:	xx

If you have any questions please give us a call at the Groundswell office.

We look forward to seeing you on the 26th!

All the best...

host's checklist...

☑ preparing to travel

ensure that...

- ☐ dates have been set and agreed.
- ☐ local projects have been contacted to design a varied, interesting and interactive programme.
- ☐ an informal, flexible two or three day plan or programme is in place.
- ☐ participants have been invited, follow-up calls have been made and details have been confirmed.
- ☐ everyone participating in the exchange is fully briefed on the background and aims of the exchange process.
- ☐ reasonably priced and suitably located accommodation has been booked and rooms have been allocated.
- ☐ travel to the exchange has been booked and paid for.
- ☐ a final letter has gone out to participants including travel details, and tickets if relevant, where to meet up, accommodation information and contact details of the host and emergency phone numbers.
- ☐ bookings have been made for evening meals and, if necessary, lunchtimes. Vegetarian, vegan and other dietary requirements have been considered.
- ☐ time and space has been identified in the programme for 'end of day' and 'end of exchange' debriefs - back at the hotel, at the last visit of the day or back at the host's project.
- ☐ transport during the exchange has been organised, preferably a group minibus.

participant's checklist...

☑ preparing to travel

have you...

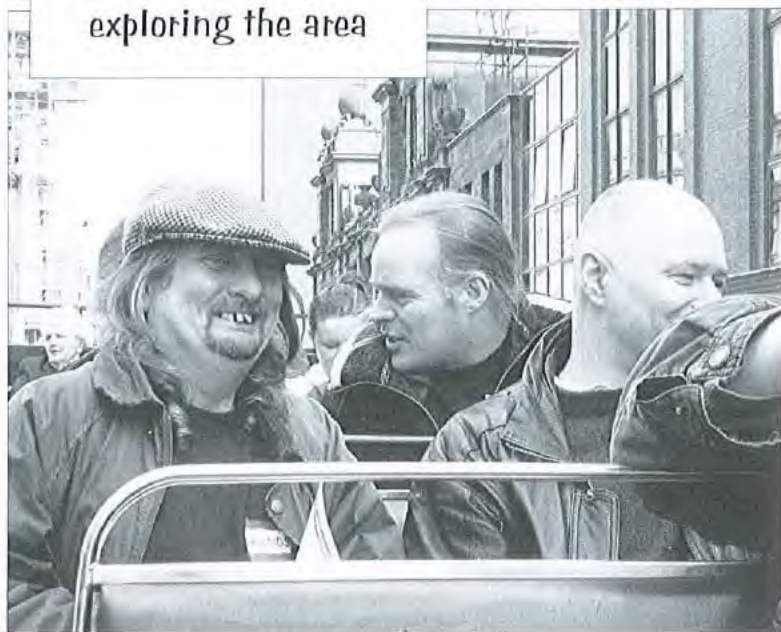
- ☐ taken some information about your project to share with other participants?
- ☐ made sure you have your travel tickets and contacts details for the host and that you've got somewhere to stay?
- ☐ got a notebook or paper for recording your thoughts on the exchange?
- ☐ an open mind as to what the next few days might bring?

sightseeing

exploring the area
postcard from Jack
★ tour 1 in Glasgow
playing the tour guide
★ tour 2 in Birmingham
the highlights
postcard from Bristol
host's checklist
poem from Patrick

"An exchange is a good way for homeless people to network when otherwise it would be almost impossible. It brings likeminded folk together and enables the process for change to continue. When I went to Bristol I was inspired most by the way that clients are treated like managers."

photo: Hussy in Bristol



all aboard - the Glasgow bus tour experience

(sight)seeing is believing

Despite having met people from innovative projects and groups throughout the UK before, and hearing them talk about their work, lives and experiences, nothing can prepare us for the reality of seeing it for ourselves. No matter how passionately or articulately someone talks about something, there is nothing to compare with being there. After all, we're all so different and look at things in totally different ways.

What is relevant and interesting for one person may not be as relevant and interesting for another. So it's important to see things for ourselves and to learn our own lessons.

It's important
to see things
for yourself
and to learn
your own
lessons.

Most participants will arrive on the exchange expecting to see lots of interesting projects, meet a lot of interesting people, have interesting discussions and go back home with new friends and new ideas. From time to time there will be participants who will go on an exchange thinking "Wayhah! a free trip!". Their attitude usually changes when they realise the real value of an exchange.

There will always be people who are apparently less interested and that's hard to know beforehand. All we can do is keep our eyes and ears open and then try hard to encourage that person to see what he or she can actually get out of an exchange.

**meeting up**

It may be an obvious thing to say but, as the host, make sure you have made specific meeting arrangements with your visitors. It's particularly useful if they know the exact location of where you will be (eg platform 10 of Liverpool Street Station), how they can identify you and how they can contact you if they can't find you.

**people's attitudes****a postcard from**

Jack Thomas from the
Wallich Clifford Community in
Cardiff on an exchange to Bristol

Dear all

The exchange gave me insight into issues that I hadn't even considered before. One example was when we talked about being addicted to gambling. That's an issue you don't think of that often and it really opened up my mind. Both me and Justin enjoyed the exchange and found it useful. I think it's a good idea to go on an exchange for three days and also

to rent a minibus for transportation. Waiting for taxis took a lot of time that could have been used for something better. The debriefing at the end of the day was fantastic. Make sure you do that when you go on an exchange! It's good to have it at the end of the day for two reasons. First, people will have had the time to think about everything they have experienced that day and, second, it's easier to open up after having shared a whole day together and you've had the chance to get to know people a little bit.

take care,

Jack

what is a debrief?

It's extremely useful to have a debrief at the end of the 'formal' part of each day while the visits and discussions are still fresh in everyone's mind. It's a good opportunity to talk about people's reactions to what they saw, to make comparisons with 'back home', to talk about what surprised them. It's such a valuable process to talk through what stood out as everyone sees things in such different ways. An easy way to kick off a debrief is to ask 'What two things stood out for you today?' giving everyone in the group the opportunity to share their thoughts.



hands up, who wants to come on an exchange?

from St Basil's in Birmingham

A useful example of a well planned exchange programme...



Introductions at St Basil's

Tuesday 5 June

- 11.45am Ben (ex service user) to meet group at Birmingham New Street Station.
- 12-2pm Lunch at St Basil's Resettlement Centre - meet staff and service users.
- 2-4pm Information presentations - Groundswell, St Basil's.
- 4.30pm Debrief at IBIS Hotel.
- 6pm Meal in Birmingham's 'Balti Belt'.

Wednesday 6 June

- 9.45am Minibus collects group from IBIS Hotel.
- 10am Visit New Boot Hostel (men only emergency accommodation) - basket ball game, talk and video.
- 11.30am Minibus to Edmonds Court Foyer.
- 12.30pm Buffet lunch at foyer.
- 1.30pm Visit to Fairbridge West Midlands Skills for Life project.
- 2pm Minibus to ENTA Training - meet trainees and tour.
- 4.30pm Debrief at IBIS Hotel.
- 6.30pm Meal at Tong Lee Restaurant, Hurst Street.

Thursday 7 June

- 9.15am Minibus collects group from IBIS hotel.
- 9.30am Visit to Focus' Snow Hill Hostel.
- 10.45am St Basil's Resettlement Centre video extravaganza - 'Life Is', 'Making of Life Is', 'Versace Vs Welfare', 'S-Bends'.
- 12.30pm Lunch and debrief.
- 3pm Minibus back to train station.



It's also important and highly valuable to question and challenge what you see.



Cathy



dialogue and discussion

Exchanges, even the 'sightseeing' part of the programme, are not just about being given a tour around projects. It's vital that there is space for questions and discussion so that staff and clients at the visited projects can benefit as much as possible from the visit. It's about sharing information, thoughts, ideas, experience and lessons. It's also important and highly valuable to question and challenge what you see.

Pete



Debbie





playing the ideal host...

The effectiveness of an exchange hinges on the dynamics of the people taking part so it's vital to get the initial introductory session just right. There are some really effective warm up techniques and you're probably aware of some already but here are just a few more to consider...

marooned

Split into teams and imagine you are marooned on an island. What five (you can use a different number, depending upon the size of each team) items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded? Remember you are only allowed five items per team, not per person. Get each team to write their items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps us to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.

finish the sentence

Go around the room and have each person finish one of these sentences (or something similar):

- ★ The best job I ever had was...
- ★ The worst project I ever worked on was...
- ★ The riskiest thing I ever did was...

This is a good technique for moving on to a new topic or subject. For example, if you want everyone to introduce themselves, you can have them complete the sentence "I am here because..."

four facts

Each person writes down four facts about themselves, one of which is a lie. Each person takes turns reading their list aloud and the rest of the team writes down the one they think is a lie. When everyone's finished reading the lists aloud, the first person reads their list again and identifies the lie. The team sees how well they did.

This ice-breaker gets people to know one another very quickly and find things in common. Some of the truths and lies are so outrageous! This icebreaker can show how right or wrong our perceptions can be.



playing the tour guide facilitating group discussions

facilitating group discussions within the exchange

One useful element of the exchange is the group discussions. These can be held at the host's place, at visits and during the end-of-day debriefs.

The role of 'host' or facilitator is really important for holding a successful discussion. A good facilitator makes people feel welcome, encouraging those who might usually keep quiet to be heard.

There's no hard and fast way to facilitate a discussion, but it's important to remember what your role as the facilitator is - to encourage everyone to talk and contribute to the discussion or debrief (not just the loud people!!). If you can do that, you're guaranteed to be successful.

The checklist on the right should help you to think about the sort of things you need to be aware of if you're going to facilitate a discussion.

- ☒ Set the scene.
- ☒ Set ground rules.
- ☒ Be responsible for timing.
- ☒ Allow everyone to have their say.
- ☒ Take an impartial view.
- ☒ Cope with anger and tension.
- ☒ Bring out the solutions, not only the problems.
- ☒ Give useful feedback.
- ☒ Draw it all together.
- ☒ Summarise points people have made.
- ☒ Keep the vibe positive and energetic.



facilitating a group discussion during the exchange to Bristol

itinerary 2

from 'Café Avrio' in Glasgow

Another example of a well planned exchange programme...

Tuesday 24 April

- 3pm Arrive and check in at hotel
- 3.45pm Avrio team meet visitors at hotel
- 4pm City bus tour
- 6.30pm Visit to Café Avrio
- 8pm Dinner and social evening at 'Eat Drink Man Woman'

Wednesday 25 April

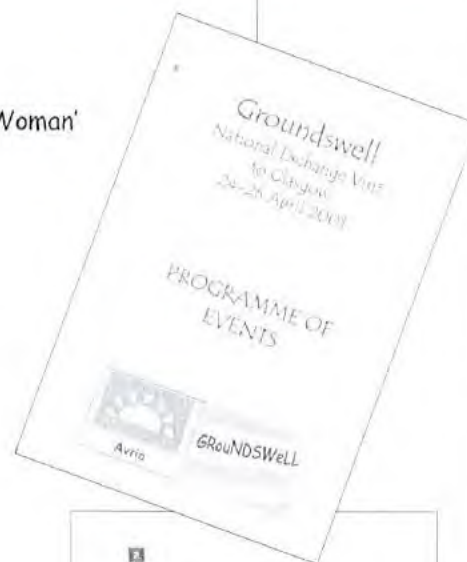
- 10am Meet at hotel
- 10.30am Visit to Big Issue in Scotland
- 12.30pm Salvation Army Drug Support Unit and Hope House
- 2.30pm Lunch at Sadie Frost's
- 4pm Moving On Drugs Rehab Project
- 8pm Dinner at Pizza Express

Thursday 26 April

- 9.30am Meet up at hotel
- 10.15am Hamish Allan Centre
- 12pm Lunch at Café Avrio
- 2pm Review of Glasgow visit
- 5pm Visitors depart



Rod & Allie from Aberdeen



before the Glasgow sightseeing...

& to my left is another car park

9 coffees, 5 teas & 14 sugars please

I've got an idea that's this big

Glasgow, London & Aberdeen



some of the Café Avrio programme highlights

- ✓ Café Avrio kicked off their exchange with a guided bus tour of the city of Glasgow. This was great as it helped participants to familiarise themselves with some of the geography, history, industry and feel of the city. It also allowed for some immediate 'group bonding' by providing a shared environment for numerous jokes shared for the rest of the trip.
- ✓ Lunch at Café Avrio meant that participants could actually see and experience the project in action.
- ✓ A 'social' (a planned meal and entertainment) on the first night allowed people to relax and get to know each other more quickly in an informal way.
- ✓ The venue and time put aside for the final exchange debrief meant a dynamic and involved debate.



what's going on in Bristol?

"We all felt that the whole trip was very well organised. The information received was to say the least very positive, and gives an insight of how things could be.

If Bristol can run a detox centre like the one we've just seen then it should be nationwide. For us, it highlighted the fact that in London there is a severe need for this type of service provision, which is invaluable to all clients who want to be rehabilitated from drugs or alcohol. The three stage programme and their 'move on' facilities for housing and welfare aftercare is second to none, which a lot of clients don't receive."

a postcard from
Jimmy, Harry & Lynn
from their trip to Bristol

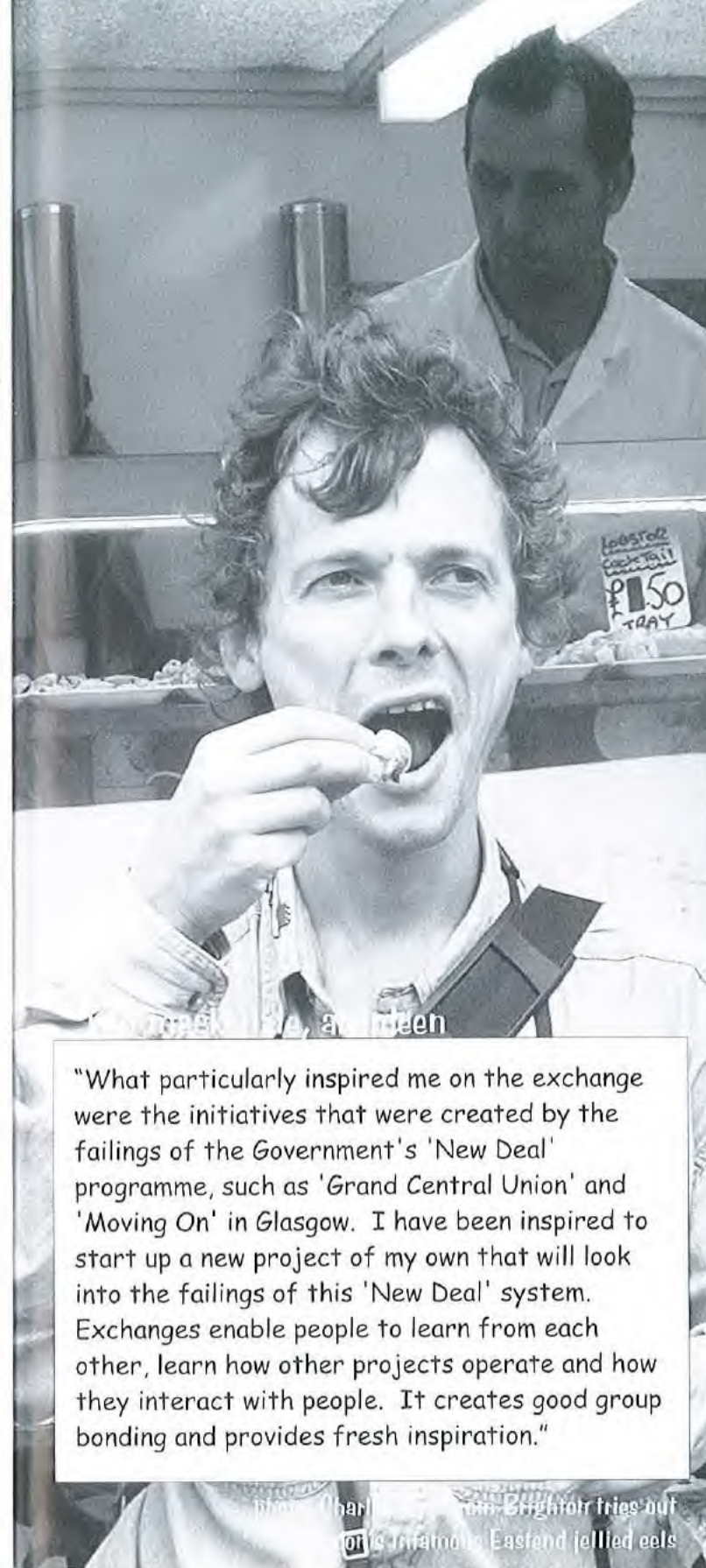
groundswell

✓ sightseeing

check that...

- ☐ everyone is given an exchange programme in advance, if possible, or when they arrive.
- ☐ there's enough time to visit all of the projects and time to get there.
- ☐ there is some flexibility within the plan to fit in an additional visit if anyone has a strong interest in visiting something specific.
- ☐ you've made room for an introductory session where everyone can talk a bit about themselves, their background, project and expectations of the next few days.
- ☐ there is space allocated, preferably near the beginning of the exchange, to give a brief explanation of exchanges, some information about yourselves, the hosts and an outline of the plans for the next couple of days.
- ☐ as hosts, you have given people some background and an explanation about each visit on the programme.
- ☐ you are encouraging dialogue on visits rather than participants just being given a tour of each project or organisation.
- ☐ people feel free to ask questions.

host's checklist...



"What particularly inspired me on the exchange were the initiatives that were created by the failings of the Government's 'New Deal' programme, such as 'Grand Central Union' and 'Moving On' in Glasgow. I have been inspired to start up a new project of my own that will look into the failings of this 'New Deal' system. Exchanges enable people to learn from each other, learn how other projects operate and how they interact with people. It creates good group bonding and provides fresh inspiration."

eat, drink, talk

networking
sharing stories &
experiences
group bonding
sharing viewpoints
setting the tone
postcard from Bristol
host's checklist
participants checklist

sharing stories & experiences

One of the most powerful elements of an exchange is the sharing of people's stories and experiences. The differences between people are usually more obvious and, sometimes, the similarities were not immediately apparent. We are sometimes guilty of making assumptions about people's lives and experiences. It is only when we hear their stories that we are able to fully understand. Without this understanding and knowledge it's far more difficult to share experiences. On an exchange, it is important to overcome this by everyone talking freely about their lives.



Paul Munday from Brighton tells all

tips for
the
host

bonding of the group

One of the most important things to come out of any exchange visit is the bonding of the visitors. Spending time with each other engenders a spirit of togetherness, like a family with a shared experience and understanding. By spending time together on an exchange, even for only a couple of days, participants sew the seeds of a relationship where they can support each other through the difficulties and celebrate their successes together. And, of course, have fun too!

This bonding is a sure way to strengthen networks of homeless people within the UK. There is no better way for people to work together positively than to spend time together, understand each other and go back home with new friends and strengthened connections.



eating, drinking and talking in Birmingham

For the group to bond effectively, it's important to be aware of the potential or perceived barriers between workers and clients that need to be broken down.

Everyone sees things in different ways, and everyone has something to contribute. It's the differences amongst all of us that give us such strength.



set the tone

sharing viewpoints

People bring different approaches to the same problems. Because of their unique experiences and insights people have alternatives to offer and, conversely, can recognise new approaches to problems 'back home'. Being able to share those viewpoints with fellow visitors and people from the projects visited is probably the most fundamental point of an exchange. Having, let's say, gone through the pain of a drug rehabilitation programme and then to being able to pass on insights from that experience to the benefit of others is deeply empowering. Exchanges put everyone on a level playing field where the points of view of everyone are respected.

As the host, you influence the atmosphere of the exchange. As any good host will realise it seems to be all the little things that make a difference, the small touches. As hosts, paradoxically, you are least involved in the content of the exchange and most involved in the process. It's important for everyone to have their say, important for everyone to be listened to. Making sure that everyone is comfortable and involved in the exchange requires lots of concentration and sensitivity. Definitely not to be underestimated. We found that the group itself 'sets the tone' of the exchange, people support each other as they get to know each other. A host may initially have to break the ice, get a discussion going, encourage people to talk (and listen!). As the group gels, gets to know each other and gains confidence they become self supporting and you can relax (a little...).



and they met that afternoon...

a postcard from

Pete Rowden in St Petrock's
(Exeter) sent from Bristol



postcard Pete (of course!)

"After a delayed and diverted train journey even Virgin Trains would be ashamed of, Dan and I eventually arrived very late at Bristol Temple Meads station. After jumping into a taxi, we got to the meeting which was held in a local day centre similar to St Petrock's.

The first part of the afternoon was spent introducing ourselves. It became clear that most of the delegates were from London and the South West. We were struck by how friendly everyone was and how Dan and I were made to feel welcome.

Mike Baker from Bristol Cyrenians gave a slide presentation about Groundswell's visit to India in January. The poverty in India seemed much more obvious than in Britain. There's a whole community of slum dwellers who had to live only feet away from a main railway line and how they took charge of their lives and bettered themselves. They all started a Savings Scheme - the equivalent of only a few pence a week over here - and soon had enough money to approach the authorities about their housing problems. Because they had strength in the sheer number of people pulling together and some money behind them, the authorities helped them improve their housing. As a result of pulling together, they built up a strong community spirit, which was enhanced by setting aside a small area - a community square - where they would meet, formally and informally, to talk about various issues. The sheer weight of numbers meant the slum dwellers had more strength and it increased

their bargaining powers with the authorities. We all felt that this sort of set-up could be possible over here.

The second session of the afternoon was more informal but every bit as powerful. Sitting in a circle, we discussed various ideas on how best homeless people can take a more responsible role in their own destinies. We had ideas about establishing the true number of people sleeping rough (Government figures are often wildly inaccurate) and what homeless people really want and need. We talked about organising an event to bring homeless people together, finding professional help in sorting a plan out, helping project developers and users to feel part of a team and building up community spirit by attempting to develop somewhere that people can meet and talk.

Finally, as an aid to identifying what is needed and what we can offer, we had a brainstorming session with a 'hit list' of problems for homeless people and a list of strengths and skills of the people involved. Almost without exception, the skills were available to help every problem, which seemed to indicate that homeless people have the talent to help themselves in partnership with the professionals.

When the afternoon drew to a close, we departed to our hotel. Throughout the evening we got to know each other, sharing our experiences and building friendships for the future."

host's checklist...

☒ eat, drink, talk
ensure that...

- ☐ everyone is participating and no-one is feeling left out or in need of support. An exchange can be an intense experience (eg visiting a first stage detox centre can be a difficult experience for a recovering drug user) and some participants may need support at certain times so look out for this.
- ☐ you have managed fit in the intended debriefs as way of allowing people to absorb and reflect what they have seen and heard.
- ☐ everyone has what they need on a practical level - people have access to food they like, a phone if they need it etc.
- ☐ you compile a list of everyone's contact details.



Lynn & Sam in Bristol

participant's checklist...

☒ eat, drink, talk
check that...

- ☐ at the end of each day, you know what time everyone is meeting up for breakfast and what time the group is being met by the host.
- ☐ you know the room numbers of a couple of other participants in case you need to contact someone for whatever reason.
- ☐ on the last day, you know what everyone is doing with their bags after checking out.

face
to face

Face to face with one another.
Face to face with reality.
Face to face with poverty.
It is for real we are poor.
It is for real we need each other.

The grass cannot live without its roots.
Government cannot survive without its people.
Fish cannot live without water.
We have to live for each other.
We have to come face to face with reality.
It is for real that we need each other.
The city cannot survive without hobos who will eat
the crumbs that fall from the rich.
We are part of daily city life.

We have come face to face with other squatters.
We have come to learn from each other.
Yes, we saw pain, courage, endurance, and perseverance
in one another's eyes.

There were no solutions to our needs.
We only had each other's unity, strength, and experience.
We were face to face with reality and poverty.
We cannot live without India, and India will suffer without South Africa.

by Patrick Hunsley Magebhula

President of the South African Homeless People's Federation

we have to come
face to face
with reality



Patrick Hunsley Magebhula



sheela patel, india

"You can't take advantage of a regional exchange process unless your local process is robust. You have to first create a very fertile ground before these seeds from your international exchanges can come and be sown. You can't have nothing happen locally and then just keep going on your jolly global rounds. What are you going to come with? In that sense, the exchange process is a way of forcing that kind of investment in local processes - to prepare that soil and make it rich."

trips out of
town

the long haul
a postcard from India
travel tips from India
postcard from Bombay
postcard from South Africa

the long haul

An overview of Groundswell's first international exchange to India to share experiences with pavement and slum dwellers there...



the UK visitors in India

why all that way?

What happens when you bring together homeless and excluded people from different parts of the world to share skills and experiences? According to the Shack Dwellers International (SDI), a network of homeless peoples' federations from across the world, the process of learning from the experiences of homeless people in different countries enhances the networks and projects that people are working on at home.

long haul to India

And so in January 2001, Groundswell took a group of homeless and ex-homeless people from its UK network to visit SPARC, Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) in India. As an organisation supporting a network of self-help initiatives and community projects with homeless people in the UK, we were keen to learn firsthand about the workings of SPARC, Mahila Milan, and NSDF. Groundswell has been interested in, and inspired by, the work of Homeless International's southern partners.



meeting between
homeless and
ex-homeless visitors
from the UK and
pavement dwellers
in India

the tour group

The group of eight people represented very diverse projects and interests in the UK. They came from across the UK, and their experiences ranged from rough sleeping to travelling to drug abuse. Like local Mahila Milan and NSDF groups, the projects they represented are all self-help initiatives being run by people who have experienced homelessness.

Groundswell was developing a process of horizontal exchange within the UK. Its role in the exchange process is very much a facilitating and supporting one. And so Groundswell staff were particularly interested in learning more about SPARC which plays a similar support role to community networks in India.



Carol Waller from New Futures Association shows pavement dwellers how Travellers in the UK live in buses and caravans

top travel tips: lessons for UK exchanges

Much of what the group learnt in India is now being directly applied at a local and regional level within the UK. Groundswell developed a programme of regional exchanges as a tool for developing local projects and national networks. Since January, Groundswell

has supported five exchanges in the UK providing the opportunity for homeless people to share experiences and knowledge and recognise their own skills. As in the South, people learn from each other, not only about practical matters and issues which were already important to them, but also about very different experiences of homelessness, as well as different solutions that other homeless people are working on. From the regional exchanges that have taken place since coming back from India, it is clear that principles taken from Mahila Milan's exchange process can easily be applied to exchanges in the UK.



Carol, Toby, Mike & Joakim

tips from India

Mike Baker (right), one of the people who participated in the exchange, has spent many years on the streets of Bristol as a heroin addict. Mike now works closely with Bristol Cyrenians encouraging other users of their services to become involved in decision-making. He produces a magazine for others using drugs and those who have stopped.



groundswell

a postcard from

Mike Baker of the Spark Project in Bristol from the India visit

The visit to India has been a very valuable experience for me. I think it changed the perspective of the whole group who went from the UK. I was proud to be part of the group, part of the trip and part of the whole exchange process. I came with an open mind, took everything at face value and I saw some very real situations - the Mahila Milan women are so strong and proud, living with the realisation of their own capabilities. People do get knocked down but they get up again, particularly as they are part of a huge structure that has taken years to get to its current position, and to be part of that is amazing.

People in India have touched my heart - they were warm, kind, generous, and giving despite where they've been and I want to show this spirit to others. There's so much to tell and show people in the UK - I want to shout it from the rooftops, I want to tell service providers and street people.



Sheela Patel from India uses the analogy of how Indian women pass on recipes to each other. One says, for example, "This is my recipe for curried chickpeas," but when somebody takes it far away, some of the ingredients aren't available, the stoves and cooking vessels are different, family tastes vary. So that recipe gets changed. You keep innovating, finding substitutions, adjusting the recipe to fit the new circumstances. And those curried chickpeas get so transformed that you might not recognise them.

pearls & recipes

Joel Bolnick in South Africa explains the process of copying and transforming ideas from one group to another using the analogy of how a pearl is formed. The concept is like the idea of a tiny grain of sand becoming a pearl. Maybe that original grain comes from Bombay or from Manila but the pearl is made in South Africa.



whose risk?

It is good to remember that in experiments, communities are the greatest risk-takers. With no safety margin, with nothing to break their fall if things go wrong, poor communities have a lot more to lose when they try new things. Their survival strategies are extremely delicate, and any change could mean their destruction. So you can't expect them all to walk the



tight rope. But when charities or governments plan development, they often behave like everyone but the poor are taking risks in these investments. This reality is the poor are almost never included in project planning, where the 'community participation' component leaves precious little space for experimentation, allows at most a single failure and doesn't support those whose failure could teach everyone else.



our situation is special...

After a visit with tenant organisations in the UK, Sheela Patel pointed out, 'In almost every place I visited the sentence that kept echoing was "You see, our situation is special". In almost every community in which the NSDF works, this sentence is the preface to all discussions. Each person, each family and each community is unique - that's what makes the whole thing so interesting - but we do have many things in common. More than anything else, the circumstances which lead to impoverishment - unemployment, marginalisation, unfulfilled aspirations - have root causes that are often similar.

When groups of community leaders travel to other places, they begin a education which allows them to explore the lives and situations of people in other communities and it turns out people are not so unusual as they might have thought. The experience of exchange affords a hugely expanded picture of common predicaments and common possibilities.

How freeing to realise that your situation is not so special, that you're not so far beyond the pale after all, that after years of despair and isolation, you find that many people not only have similar problems, but they have all sorts of ideas how to solve them and you can learn from them, share the burden. But this also demands that you do something about it!

a letter from India

Toby Blume from
Groundswell

"It's hard to understand, let alone explain, what happened in January. The facts are, I suppose, fairly straightforward - a group of people who have experienced homelessness from the UK, visiting slum dwellers in Mumbai and Pune in India, supported by professionals from Groundswell and Homeless International. Those are the facts, but they don't begin to explain how profoundly we have all been affected on a personal level by the experience.

It doesn't explain how, as a professional supporting a network of homeless people engaged in tackling poverty and homelessness, my work has changed. It cannot begin to convey how the diverse network of groups Groundswell supports has been positively affected by the trip, in ways we cannot even fully understand yet.

My overwhelming sense of inability to effectively communicate all of this must not prevent me from trying, so here goes...

horizontal exchange

Countless professionals from the North (and indeed increasingly from the South) have made the trip, but the notion of poor people's exchange is still extremely new to us in the UK. Having been to India and participated in an international exchange I have no doubt of their value in strengthening community groups and networks. As a professional, I felt privileged to have been able to travel with those who participated on the exchange and to have witnessed the bonding of seemingly different people and cultures.

We went to India with many assumptions and presumptions of homeless people and poverty - why people become homeless and how they were finding the solutions to their problems. I understood it only in terms of the differences between us and them, India and the UK - I had not accounted for the similarities. Nor I believe, had the members of Mahila Milan and NSDF who we spent time with. But that's it. That's exchange! Learning things for ourselves, by seeing them for ourselves, meeting new people, sharing new experiences and broadening our perspectives.

In the UK we have a tendency to shy away from talking openly about ourselves, our lives and experiences, and a tendency as professionals not to pry. This is especially true when those experiences are painful or traumatic. The experience of our hosts in India encouraged us to talk openly and personally and to listen to the stories of those we were visiting.

The Mahila Milan women spoke about themselves and I found to my surprise that their stories were no different to the stories of homeless people in the UK. They had become homeless through the break up of relationships, domestic violence, leaving their villages in search of work in the city - exactly the same reasons why people become homeless here.

I cannot over estimate the power of this process in bringing people together. I learnt about

the lives of people who I thought I knew (who I'd travelled to India with) but I hadn't even begun to really understand. This bonding experience - both for us as a group and with our hosts has given us a tremendous sense of shared purpose and togetherness, in essence 'community'. Which is, after all, what it's all about.

seeing is believing

Over the ten days we spent in India our feet barely touched the ground. We visited transit camps and railway settlements, participated in enumerations and savings collections, we saw the toilet building programme in Pune. We visited recycling projects, met pavement dwellers and street children and saw the permanent homes which the slum communities are designing and building themselves. I had heard about most of these things before, but in hindsight, they'd never really meant much to me. It sounded interesting and impressive but somehow impersonal and even irrelevant. Having been and seen them all for myself, I don't suddenly think they're all things we should be doing in the UK. It's the ideas and inspiration they've given me - directly and indirectly - the belief in the process and approach which Groundswell and Mahila Milan and SPARC and NSDF share. Seeing some of those things generates new ideas and acts as a catalyst for something else. The fact that we all see things differently means we 'pull out' the bits of the experience that seem relevant to us. After all, you are the best judge of what will work for you in your community.

pride & purpose

I think that previously when I'd met members of SDI and the respective federations I'd always felt inferior and somewhat inadequate. It was as if what we were doing in the UK was so inconsequential compared to the achievements in India and other places. Of course what we have achieved so far in the UK is small by comparison, but no less valuable for it. The individuals we took to India - ambassadors for the UK's poor - communicated so articulately to their Indian peers what we were doing, that no one was left with any doubt of the value of our work. I felt that we too had something to offer our hosts, rather than beating myself up about a perceived inferiority. Judging by the warmth and friendship, as well as the genuine interest, shown in us I can only believe that the Mahila Milan women felt so too. Like us they had, I believe, made certain assumptions about homelessness and the UK (like it didn't exist!). We both educated each other, about our communities and countries but also about ourselves.

I have returned to the UK with a tremendous sense of purpose, a renewed energy and a great sense of pride. We're initiating a programme of horizontal exchanges within the UK, having recognised exchange as a powerful tool for strengthening the network we support. The trip has given me a sense of 'global purpose', which may sound strange, but the knowledge that all over the world there are other people who, like me, believe in working together in this way is somehow comforting. Positive social change is attainable, I've seen how millions of slum dwellers in India are doing it for themselves. And that's it, that's the message we've brought back from the exchange - it's no good waiting for someone else to give you what you want. You need to do it for yourself. So just do it!"

Toby Blume
Groundswell



a postcard from

Ivy Anthony
Port Elizabeth, South Africa

The homeless people's federations from the South all use savings schemes as a technique for building communities and mobilising people to action. Here is an account from Ivy, a saver from South Africa...

"And the people from Kleinskool, South Africa, a small group of men and women, started having meetings and shared ideas on how we could improve our lives. And I thought, 'Well this is probably something good' as we were planning how to move out of our shacks and build affordable decent housing. We started saving just a small amount every day which turned into what we thought was an enormous amount. Through saving

and giving small loans, we get to know each other and by getting together, the women sort out the larger social problems and sort out their own smaller problems as well. And so, by coming together and saving small amounts of change and sharing information, we, as the women of Kleinskool, are now becoming the real decision makers and the people who are bringing about change in our community. We do daily savings. Every day we go door to door, we meet our members, we share our ideas and collect everybody's money. But when we go round collecting money, we also engage with people, learning about their problems and helping them to find solutions."

Ivy Anthony (left)
South African Homeless
People's Federation



"The India presentation during the Bristol exchange was inspiring because I found out that the people in India are a lot worse off than we are in the UK, but still they had this community spirit and solved their problems together. I think that's something we should take after back here. I know it's possible."



photo: TVE cameraman taking his
view of the Bristol exchange

recording it

notes from...
host's checklist
holiday snaps
a travel diary
postcard from Glasgow

writing a journal or taking pictures
can help you pass things you've
seen on to others



reporting & recording

When you take part in an exchange there is so much to take in, things might feel like they're just washing over you. And although at the time you may feel that it would be impossible to forget anything that you've seen, when you get back and you're buried under the usual day to day stuff, you'll find you've forgotten a lot of what you've seen.

This makes it really important to record things whilst on an exchange - writing a journal, taking picture, video or audio recording can all help you to write things up when you get home, and pass onto others things you've seen. Exchanges are only worth doing if the information is passed on to others when you return home. This is where the real value of exchange becomes apparent. People can record things in lots of different ways—photos, video, writing, audio tapes, even drawing! Be creating and go with what works for you!

host's checklist...

☒ recording it

- ☐ If possible, provide disposable cameras.
- ☐ Try and have spare paper and pens on hand.
- ☐ Use the recording process as a way to get the more reserved participants involved - using cameras, video cameras or audio recorders.
- ☐ Take notes during the debrief sessions.
- ☐ Remind people how important recording the exchange is.



Mike Baker used his
exchange video footage for
a presentation back at the
Bristol Spark project



methods of recording

a travel diary -

handwritten or typed notes of all your thoughts. It might be useful to include details of everyone who participated, the projects you visited and brief notes about what was discussed, particularly at the debrief sessions.

 **snapshots** - photos are good for telling the story to everyone 'back home' about the exchange or for using to make a display. Photos are also a good way of jogging your memory, especially a while after the exchange. Remember to ask people if it's okay before taking their picture.

 **tape recording** - ideal for a record of what was said at particular discussions like debriefs.

 **video** - videoing the exchange you participate in (or host) might seem a bit of a luxury but if you can borrow a video recorder you'll have a really powerful tool to show to people who couldn't come along or who want to organise one for themselves. It's a very effective way of capturing the atmosphere and tone of an exchange. Once again, make sure you ask people if they're okay about being filmed.

 **a report** - writing up your exchange notes in the form of a report can be really useful. You need to be clear about the aim of the report before you start it. Is it just as a record? Are there any ideas picked up you'd like to develop? What messages encourage others to participate in an exchange? How can you make changes within your own project? How do you inform a wider audience? Groundswell may be able to help you put together your report, give us a call.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Glasgow. In fact, I so lusted after the prospect of some luxurious hotel life that I arrived three hours early. At this point I wasn't aware of what other people's reactions were but I can say that I found our organised bus tour of Glasgow to be cunningly clever in the way in which the range of landmarks and the style of the commentary was pitched. It suited young or old, passing tourists or folk holidaying, clubbers and culture vultures, historians and art lovers too. The depth of knowledge of our tour guide was quite breathtaking and although a cynic might belittle it all, the fact is that it gave us some handle on the geography of the city we were guesting in.



The idea of taking over an entire pub ('Eat Drink Man Woman') for the night makes me squirm with enthralment at being part of a 'gang' who are powerful enough to be able to do such things. We had a serious space and some time to acquaint ourselves with each other and nobody got left out.

Visiting the Big Issue Scotland office is always intriguing. Having been a vendor for several years and kept my ear to the ground about other related projects, I am often curious about the degree of their success.

The Sally Bash visit was another okay formal visit. Sometimes, with some of these formal things, I prefer to

come and go. Maybe leave the room for a while and think a few things out for myself. What the Salvation Army have going against them is that people slag them off. Having stayed with them on a few occasions I can understand that the religion can get to you.

Café Avrio, a 'not for profit' community café run by disadvantaged young people in Anderston, seems to be an excellent project. I would say that projects like this ought to be sprouting up all over the place, provided, of course, that there are enough folk interested in catering. Thinking about Café Avrio, and what it represents because of its commercial potential, I wouldn't be surprised if the whole homeless industry cooks an inquisitive ear. I hope so.

Moving On, a project supporting homeless people to access training, education, volunteering and employment opportunities, contained something very delicate and sensitive for me. I grew up through the hippie movement, some of which is still quite good, where there was a great big cultural avoidance of heroin. You just couldn't be a hippie if you did it. I have never found myself reverberating so sensitively as when we listened to X's story, and possibly realised that maybe none of us, including him, could really tell if he was going to leave the planet or stay a while longer...

In conclusion...? Well, I don't think that there should be a conclusion. This was not a conclusive visit. It was much more of an exchange."

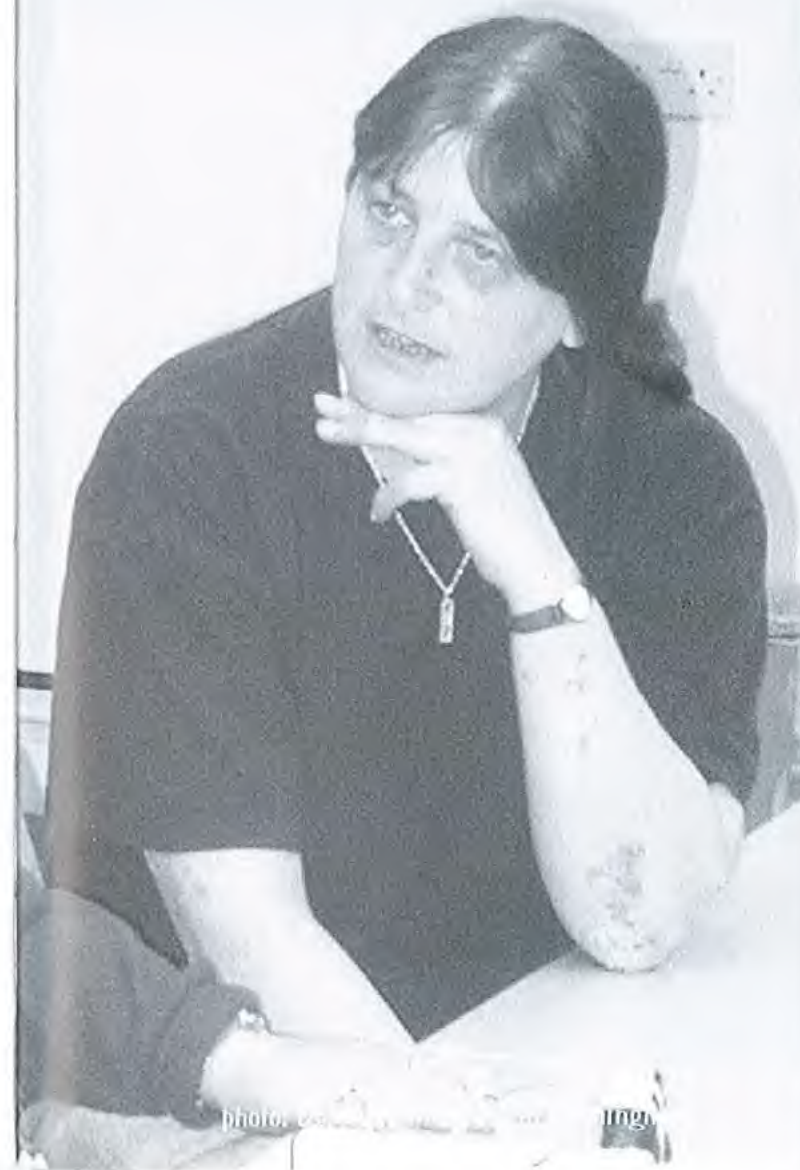
Sam Waylen

a postcard from

Sam Waylen
of Scottish Speakout
in Edinburgh



"Exchanges are a fantastic idea. This exchange to Bristol gave me insight in issues that I hadn't even considered before."



coming home

follow up
unpacking with Carola
follow up questions

follow up

Do you want to send
a thank you note to
your host when you
come back?



follow up

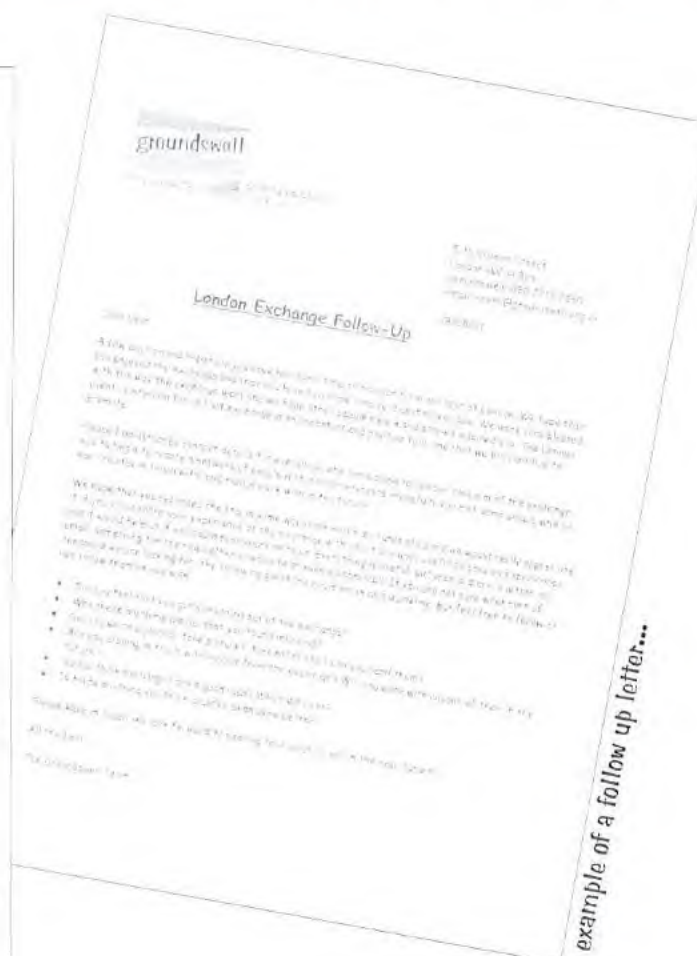
When you get back from the exchange, it's a good idea to prepare a follow-up letter to send out along with contact details of the participants and project visited as this will help expand the network of people working together.

It is also good if the letter asks for people's recordings of the exchange (notes, pictures etc). Everything will be useful to you: pictures, a diary, a letter, a poem, something for the newsletter or website or even a phone-call.

It could also be useful for you to call the participants yourselves to have a chat about what they got out of the exchange, if they have developed the ideas they got, if they are staying in touch with any of the people who went, what they think could've been done better.



coming home from Brick Lane on the Eastend exchange



example of a follow up letter...

exchanges
by danny ross

Exchanges, Hostels, Houses and Homes and Policies
From every part of the country
Where we come together
To listen with a listening ear

Ideas and inventive ways
To form self initiatives with some more choice
For some real change

Against the scales and charts and deafened ears
Where strengthens the strength and voice
For people who stand on the line
Or out in the street without a voice or choice.

So then back to our own parts
Ideas running and reeling in our minds
From the experience of exchange
With more friends, experience and understanding.
Where the ground is.

danny



things to reflect on when
you're back home...

- The after-effects from exchanges might be powerful but it can be difficult to predict when they will take place.
- What works in one community might not work in another. You have to adjust and reform the ideas to develop your own alternatives that will suit your situation.
- Don't force your ideas on people, just offer a fresh point of view and see if it gets picked up.
- Give people space to adjust to the different environment.
- Maintain communication after the event - keep in touch!!

'ideas running
and reeling in
our minds'



coming home

unpacking...

It's useful be able to 'unpack' an experience after getting home. Here's how Carola Lundberg (right) did it after an exchange to Bristol...

"For two months now I've been on a practice placement at Groundswell. I'm going stay until June and then I will go back to Sweden to finish my education at university and become an international/intercultural social worker. At Groundswell I co-ordinate exchanges. The first exchange took place in Bristol in mid March.

An exchange is an opportunity for poor people to visit other poor people to share ideas, skills and experience. Going on an exchange gives participants ideas and inspiration to create new solutions.

So Groundswell brought a group of people - 13 of us travelling in from Cardiff, Newport, Exeter, Bath, Luton and London. Our host, Mike Baker, is a former rough sleeper who is now living in a third stage shared housing for recovery. He did a brilliant job helping us to organise the exchange.

On the first day we went to the Bristol Cyrenians Day Centre for a presentation by Mike. He spoke about the exchange trip he made to India in January where he and a group of other people visited SPARC, Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation. This trip was obviously very inspiring for the people who went. By the end of the day we were all deeply involved in a discussion and brainstorming about how to make things happen in our own local communities, defining the needs of homeless people and also identifying the resources available. The way Mike passed his experience on to others is one of the most important things about an exchange...sharing ideas and approaches. Very pleased with the day, we went to the hotel to check in and then it was time for dinner in a restaurant by the city docks. We had a great night out and when we got back to the hotel, we had a briefing of the day. This was actually one of the most interesting parts of the trip, when everything had calmed down and people had had the time to digest what they had experienced that day. A lot of interesting stories were told and people really opened up. It was amazing and I felt really privileged to be there that night.

Then some had a good nights sleep and some did not (I had a really bad cough which kept both me and my room mate awake most of the night).

On the second day we all met up for breakfast and then wandered off to the Salvation Army Hostel which is a homeless and detox centre. We all squeezed in to this small room where we got a lot of information about how the Salvation Army worked and then we had a tour around the building. It all took a bit longer than Mike had planned, so we didn't have time to go to Walsingham House, which offers a primary stage recovery for homeless people with drug or alcohol problems.



some of the discussions to be unpacked after the event...



One of the problems with the exchange was that we didn't have enough time to see all the interesting projects we wanted to see! That would have taken us at least another day. After lunch, we rushed off to an Addiction Recovery Agency (ARA) for single homeless and insecurely housed people which is a second stage recovery. We were only there for a short while, but collected information to take with us. The last stop for the day was St James Priory Project for single homeless people in recovery. This is a third stage shared housing project where Mike currently lives. Two of the residents told us their stories and once again I was amazed about how open people can be about their lives. That must take a lot of courage and opening up is one step closer to making a difference in the society because everyone has something to contribute. Let people know where you come from, what your story is, what you think can be done to tackle homelessness and so on... We noticed that we all saw things in different ways, but also that the differences could give us strength.

Let people
know where
you come
from, what
your story is,
what you
think can
be done.

I could probably go on forever about this visit as it was such a fantastic experience for me. If you are ever invited to go on an exchange, DON'T hesitate for a second! There is a lot to take in when you go on an exchange and to pass on all that stuff to other people is really difficult, but at the same time, it's a challenge. That's when you find the real value of this kind of trip.

Hopefully this exchange has strengthened the network of people working within the network Groundswell supports..."

Carola x

April 2001

☒ coming home

ensure you have...

- ☐ written to everyone to thank them for participating.
- ☐ sent anything you promised to (photos, information, contact details, meeting dates).
- ☐ written up or otherwise recorded your exchange experiences.
- ☐ identified any lessons you have learnt to improve the process the next time.



starting to unpack one of the exchange visits

Of course, the exchange process is continually evolving and developing and so it's a good idea to get feedback from participants. Perhaps wait until people been home for a week to give them chance to reflect on their visit and then given them a call. Here's a few questions you might want to include...

follow up questions



- ☐ Did you feel that you got something out of the exchange?
- ☐ Was there anything special you found inspiring?
- ☐ Did you write a journal, take pictures, take notes? Can you send us copies?
- ☐ Have you continued working with the information you collected? In what way?
- ☐ Are you staying in touch with anyone from the exchange? Will you work with anyone in the future?
- ☐ Do you think exchanges are a good idea? Why? Why not?
- ☐ Is there anything you think could've been done better?
- ☐ Do you think the exchanges should go national or should they stay local? Or both?



jimmy carlson, london

"I would definitely recommend going on an exchange to other people's places. It was brilliant to see what other people were doing. I have made excellent contacts with people from Wales and made more contact with people on the streets that have been in situations like my own and I've been inspired to work with them."

directory

resources a-z
publications
websites
contacts

 'Don't agonise, organise'

Groundswell report on the benefits of local, national and international exchanges to support a homeless people's network.

 'Face to face'

Information about community exchanges from the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights including a useful 'how to' guide.

 Groundswell forum report

Report on the 1999 Self-Help Forum.

 Groundswell newsletter

Quarterly newsletter to share ideas and experience, views and opinions, including a round-up of news from the network.

 Groundswell speakout recipe book

Practical guide to putting on a local speakout event.

 North-south exchange

ODEC, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford, OX4 1DD
tel: 01865 790 490, email: odec@gn.apc.



diy resur...

websites...

 Groundswell
<http://www.groundswell.org.uk>

 Homeless International
<http://www.homeless-international.org>

 Inclusive City
<http://www.theinclusivecity.org>

 People's Dialogue
<http://www.dialogue.org.za>

 Slum Dwellers International
<http://www.dialogue>

 SPARC
<http://www.dialogue.org.za/sdi/>

contacts...

Aberdeen Cyrenians

Simon House, 106 Crown Street, Aberdeen,
AB11 6HJ
tel: 01224 625732
contact: Rod McDonald

Alcohol Recovery Project

130-134 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9JF
tel: 020 7837 0100
contact: Jimmy Carlson

Azuka Befriending Scheme

Housing Choice, 135 Lower Parliament Street,
Nottingham, NG1 1EE
Contact: Del

Bedfordshire Groundswell

tel: 01582 657945
email: l.petryszyn@ntlworld.com
contact: Lynn Petryszyn

The Big Issue South West

4 Pierrepont Street, Bath, BA1 1OE
tel: 01225 404488
contact: Michelle Baker

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project

6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY
tel: 01273 671213
contact: Joy Rigby

Café Avrio

64 Elderslie Street, Glasgow, G4
tel: 0141 204 4651
email: avrio@bigfoot.com
contact: Alister Blades

Cambridge Groundswell

Zion Baptist Church, 1 East Road, Cambridge,
CB1 1BD
tel: 01223 516054
contact: Peter Frye

CAN Maple Centre

PO Box 5164, 37 Ash Street,
Northampton, NN1 3ZP
tel: 01604 250678
contact: Heidi Moore

Derby Housing Aid

46 Curzen Street, Derby, DE1 1LL
tel: 01332 297611
contact: Cathy Fowler

Focus Foyer

St Chad's Circus (off William Booth Lane),
Birmingham, B4 6HJ
tel: 0121 236 6298
contact: Malcolm Greenhalgh

Groundswell

5-15 Cromer Street, London, WC1H 8LS
tel: 020 7713 2880
email: exchanges@groundswell.org.uk
contact: Kara Carter

Hiddinkulturz

174 Deeside Gardens, Mannofield, Aberdeen,
AB15 7PX
tel: 01224 311086
email: k.mackenzie@btconnect.com
contact: Ken Mackenzie

Lorgan Short Life Housing Co-op

70 Trafalgar Street, Brighton, BN1 4EB
tel: 01273 622791
contact: Paul Munday

Macedon

Park House, 20 Bentinck Road, Radford,
Nottingham, NG7 4AD
tel: 0115 912 7740
contact: Nigel Parkinson

Meaningful Occupation Project

10-11 Cathedral Yard, Exeter, EX1 1HJ
tel: 01392 422396
email: foxtor4@hotmail.com
contact: Tor Hodgson

New Futures Association

The Cottage, Glaneirw, Tan-y-groes, Cardigan,
SA43 2HP
tel: 01239 811929
contact: Carol Waller

Newport Action on Single Homelessness

1st Floor Offices, 128 Lower Dock Street,
Newport, Wales, NP20 1EG
tel: 01633 664045
email: nash01@freenet.co.uk
contact: Richard Frame

People Off The Streets

75 Royal Exchange, Newport, Isle of Wight,
PO30 2HW
tel: 01983 532927
contact: Etty McKinley

PUSH

222 Victoria Road, Cambridge, CB4 3LG
tel: 01223 352718
email: pushlrc@yahoo.co.uk
contact: Lee Culley

Ripley Project

131/133 Rosary Road, Norwich, WR1 4BX
tel: 01603 764281
contact: Angela Carley

Scottish Speakout

c/o Big Issue Scotland, 14 Albany Street,
Edinburgh, EH1 3QB
tel: 0131 467 0467
contact: Sam Waylen

Simon Community Bangor

41-45 Central Avenue, Bangor, County Down,
BT20 3AW, Northern Ireland
contact: Willy Bradford

The Spark Project

Bristol Cyrenians, 1 New Street, St Judes,
Bristol, BS2 9DX
tel: 0117 909 6308
email: yourworks@hotmail.com
contact: Mike Baker

St Basil's Resettlement Centre

Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, Birmingham,
B9 4AX
tel: 0121 772 2483
contact: Paul Bridges

Torch Housing Group

2 Charleville Road, Lozells, Birmingham
tel: 0121 551 3161
email: beeb@dial.pipex.com
contact: John Barnabus

Tower Hamlets & City Groundswell

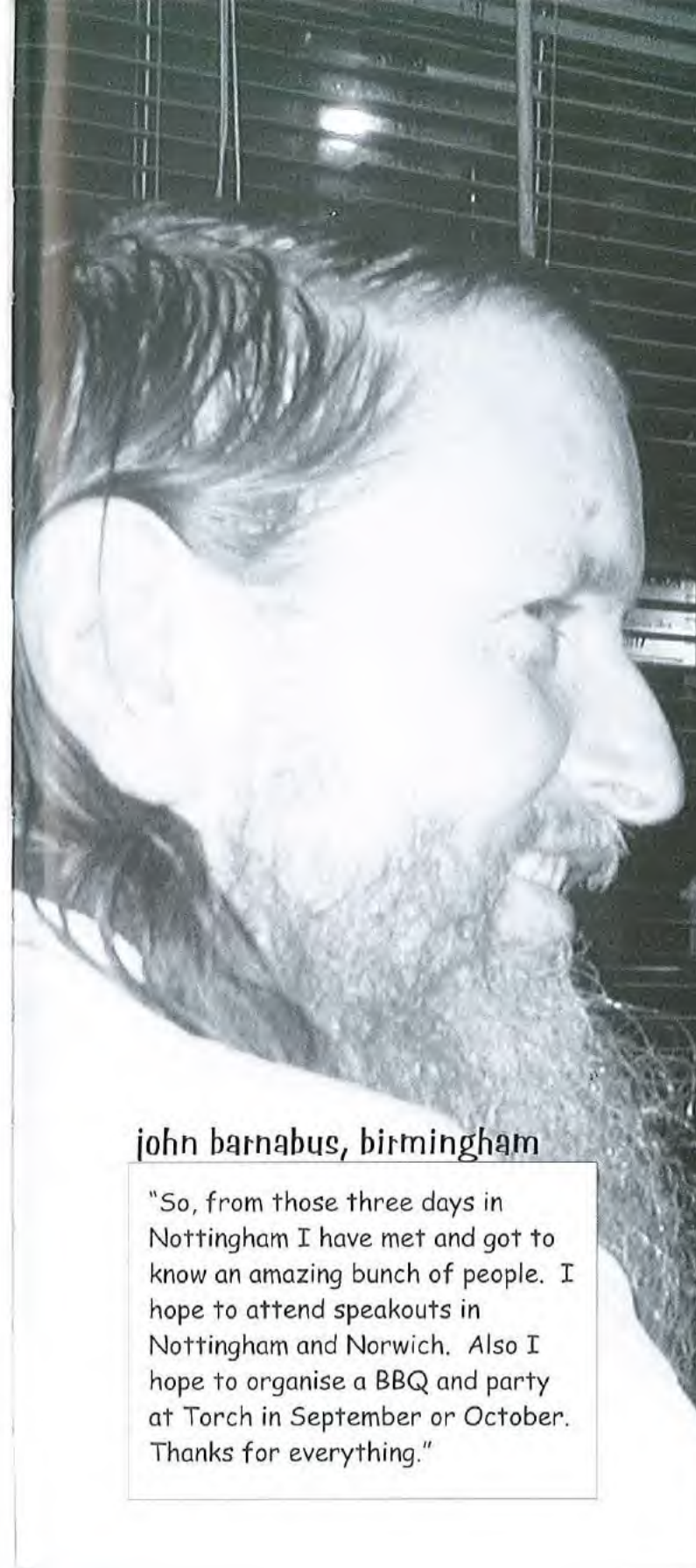
Bethnal Green Training Centre, Deal Street,
London, E2
tel: 020 7655 0770
email: stevegroundswell@btclick.com
contact: Steve Scott

Wallich Clifford Community

Severn House, 1 Severn Road, Canpon
Cardiff, CF1 9EB
tel: 01222 668 464
email: wallichclifford@hotmail.com
contact: Jack Thomas

do you want to host an exchange?

Groundswell is keen to encourage exchange between groups in the UK to build the capacity of homeless people to develop their own solutions and to build the capacity of the network to support each other. Exchanges provide the opportunity for people to get to know each other better and to further develop regional and national networks. If you would like to host an exchange, Groundswell will cover the expenses (accommodation, travel, food and so on) for the people going. Groundswell invites people selected from our database and if you find a hotel and give us the phone number we take care of the booking and travel arrangements. Together we come up with the places to visit on the exchange. Two projects per day is enough, because if we visit a lot of places in one day that won't leave any space for people to ask questions.



john barnabus, birmingham

"So, from those three days in Nottingham I have met and got to know an amazing bunch of people. I hope to attend speakouts in Nottingham and Norwich. Also I hope to organise a BBQ and party at Torch in September or October. Thanks for everything."

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from an indian slum dweller

"No university has taught you to come from the village, to squat on land, to build your own house, to find work. Nobody gave you that training. But you have all that knowledge.

If you depend on training, nothing will come to you. If you see somebody doing something, you can do it yourself. In our work, we do no training - we learn from each other.

If you go somewhere and tell your story to another person, they will learn from you - how you came, how you survive, how you got a house, how you talked to the city."

exchanges

The Groundswell rough
guide to exchanges
includes everything you
need to know...



preparing to travel



sightseeing



trips out of town



coming home

We all have things to learn
from each other, whoever we
are. Exchanges are a way to do
that - to share, experience and
learn, to meet people and have
fun. It's going on all over the
UK and further afield. Learn
all you need to know to host,
participate and understand how
exchanges can help us all
achieve our goals.

groundswell

5-15 Cromer Street
London

WC1H 8LS

tel: 020 7713 2880

fax: 020 7713 2884

email: exchanges@groundswell.org.uk

website: www.groundswell.org.uk

'The rough guide to exchanges -
great, brilliant, fantastic, well, it'll do.'

'Does exactly what it says on the tin.'

'Beg, borrow, steal or photocopy it!'

printed on recycled paper

