



Connecting Communities

How can neighborhoods work for everyone
as they become increasingly unequal?

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Foreword from Tom Neumark, CEO of The Peel

The ideal of “the living tapestry of a mixed community” rightfully has an enduring appeal. But the reality of living or working in these communities can be quite different from the pictures painted by politicians or policy makers.

The assumption is often made that if people from different backgrounds live or work in close proximity, untold benefits will follow; social mobility, the breaking down of prejudices and sharing of resources and opportunities.

Our experience is that this is not necessarily inevitable and additional work is often required to realise the potential benefits of mixed communities.

Working in Clerkenwell, a tremendously mixed inner London neighbourhood, has taught us that people do want to make connections and build relationships. They want to feel like they belong in and benefit from their community. However, very often the opportunities to do this simply do not exist. Activities and spaces that feel welcoming for some people can feel less so for others.

This means that many mixed communities do not have that much mixing, which in turn means that many of the potential benefits of living or working in these areas are not realised.

We believe that it is possible to build more connected communities, so that everyone, regardless of their background, benefits from where they are living. But we know there are significant barriers to this happening.

Working with the local community, we have started to explore how these barriers might be overcome. We are delighted to share our journey so far and to invite you to join us on the next stage.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Join the network

It's early days for Connecting Clerkenwell but already the energy and motivation of those getting involved is clear. From coming together to create the roaringly successful Exmouth Market street party to launching a community run newspaper, meaningful connections are being forged and are starting to have a positive impact in the community.

Whilst our long term goals of community-wide connectedness and reduced isolation will take time to realise, something exciting is underway.

If you'd like to get involved or just be kept in the loop, please get in touch. You might be:

- A member of the local community
- Someone with an idea for a local initiative you'd like to run
- Someone already running a community initiative
- A leader within an organisation interested in being more inclusive or locally involved
- An individual or organisation interested in partnering with Connecting Clerkenwell to contribute skills, experience, space, or funding.

If one of these sounds like you, or none do, but you'd like to know more, please call **Sara Bloch** on **07949154297** or email sara@thesocialchangeagency.org

You can find out more about The Peel on its website (www.peelinstitute.org.uk), including more detail on the Connecting Clerkenwell programme and the option to sign up to the mailing list.

The Peel is a charity that relies on the generosity of individuals, businesses and trusts to maintain much-needed services. Find out more about becoming a supporter.

 @PeelInstitute

 thepeelinstitute

Who's involved?



The Peel is a charity that's been building a connected community in Clerkenwell since 1898. Here is some more detail about what it hopes to achieve and how:

Vision

A connected community where everyone benefits from living here.

Mission

- We help children living in poverty to improve their life chances by connecting them and their families with others in the community
- We help older people who may be lonely or at risk of isolation to become active citizens by connecting them with others in the community
- We provide opportunities for all residents of Clerkenwell to participate in activities through which they can make acquaintances across divides, for mutual benefit

Goal

In 2020/21 The Peel will support 1,000 residents to become acquaintances with people they would not otherwise have met, for mutual benefit.

Values

- **Learning** - We learn as we go, focusing on finding out what works and what makes a difference
- **Partnership** – We work in partnership to deliver projects and activities
- **Equality and Diversity** – We promote all residents' wellbeing without distinction
- **Compassionate** – We treat everyone with respect and dignity

The Social Change Agency (SCA) has been commissioned to deliver the Connecting Clerkenwell programme, working in partnership with The Peel and in close contact with the local community via a dedicated Programme Manager.

SCA specialises in building people powered movements.

It's core focuses are:

- Creating social impact using communication, community organising, crowdfunding, peer networks, systemic and organisational change
- Combining tried and tested approaches with cutting edge tools and perspectives
- Offering consulting, programme design and delivery, training, and workshops

What is CONNECTING CLERKENWELL

Designed and developed by The Peel in partnership with The Social Change Agency, Connecting Clerkenwell is a community cohesion model that shifts the paradigm for how community centres work with local people. It is an asset based approach to community cohesion that provides opportunities for people to connect across divides, and supports people to become active citizens in their communities.

Connecting Clerkenwell situates community centres as the hub of community networks for organisations, businesses, and institutions with a shared vision. It is a model which galvanises local people with lived experience and a great idea to make use of these networks and spark new ideas for ways to improve their neighborhood.

Connecting Clerkenwell provides the tools and skills to engage with communities differently and more effectively, as genuine partners to change. Success looks like a community where everyone, regardless of their background, benefits from living in Clerkenwell and feels that they belong.

The ultimate aim is to develop a trailblazing community cohesion model that will:

- Benefit all residents by breaking down the barriers to active participation in their community
- Connect local people, businesses, and institutions for mutual benefit
- Enable people to take action and spark new ideas for tackling the key challenges they face

Why is it needed?

The context of civil society is changing and so are the lives of the people within it. Community centres need to take on innovative techniques and skills to be able to respond to new challenges and gaps in provision.

Research commissioned by The Peel in June 2018 characterised Clerkenwell as a place residents view as friendly and diverse, but where there are few opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together.

There is concern that economic changes such as rising house prices and increases to the cost of living will squeeze out lower and middle-income households. This risks Clerkenwell becoming a place where people from different backgrounds live side by side, but lead parallel lives which continue to grow further apart economically, socially and culturally.

As a result, the research identified an opportunity for The Peel to reposition itself by bringing together different parts of the community across social backgrounds, in order to become an effective advocate for community cohesion and connectivity.

What's happened...

Year 1

Community outreach

July 2018 - September 2018



We took to the streets and spoke to 100 people that live and work in Clerkenwell to understand what issues matter to them, and how the changes to the area have affected them.

Invitation to apply for a grant

October 2018

After the event we extended the invitation to the wider Clerkenwell community. Successful applicants were offered 1-2-1 mentoring and access to The Peel's networks, as well as financial support so that money would not be a barrier to the success of their projects.

Community workshop

11th October 2018

Pre programme diagnostic research

June 2018

The Peel spoke to 250 people in Clerkenwell to find out how they perceive the area. We found that the area is seen as a friendly and diverse, and people generally get along. At the moment, however, there are few opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together.



We invited people that live and work in Clerkenwell to a community workshop to give them an opportunity to take action on the issues that matter to them. A diverse group of 45 people attended including residents, workers, and council staff. At the workshop, we launched our grants scheme offering up to £5K to anyone with an idea for a project that would bring different people together in Clerkenwell.

...so far?

Ongoing support of volunteer projects



November 2018 - ongoing

We worked closely with the four community leaders to get their projects off the ground. We supported them to build teams, write budgets, unlock community assets, and develop plans for the sustainability of their projects.

Permission is granted from Islington Council for Damaris' Clerkenwell Community Garden

March 2019

Oliver's EC1 Echo is launched

September 2019



Selection of lead volunteers

November 2018

We selected four projects that we thought would have the biggest impact, could be achieved within budget, and could be sustainable into the future.



Scarlett's Exmouth Market Street Party

8th September 2019



Lennox's Basketball team is relaunched

December 2018

EC1

SEPTEMBER 20

GET INVOLVED

EC1 Echo is a new community newspaper written by and for local people. That's what we want to hear from you. Join our first editorial meeting on 24th Sep at 6pm at The Peel, Three Corners C Northampton Road EC1R 0HU



d's ancient meat market is facing big changes

et faces ne

that market the thin ded om wo test to hat f a fishing, and transition to a plant-based food system in order to avert climate breakdown, mass extinction and ensure justice for farmed animals." Smithfield Market's butchers and porters are tight-knit and it is expected that there will be a response. Animal Rebellion has noted that it "expects resistance" and is committed to 'nonviolent disobedience.' With traffic unable to access the market, the protest is likely to cause disruption.

The protest is not the only thing vexing the market, trading in stock for 800 years and centred around the central market, built by Sir Horace Jones - who also designed Tower Bridge - in 1868. It has now been mooted that the market

will be a Dock, which will gate Fish and Fruit and parts and meanwhile commercial quarter Market a Corporation ing two de posed com Food will b Tumbridge of London Committed ue to work food centre future, in te vironmenta

Oliver

EC1 news website

“ It's good for the area to have this energy about trying to connect people and to bring skills together to see what we can all do. I'm very glad the programme is continuing and that there's a bit of uplift in the area for people actually wanting to make stuff happen and make things change. The programme could act as a model for other areas.

So far, meeting a lot of people I hadn't met before has been really interesting. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that a lot of people live here. I've learnt a lot already and those learnings are starting to come together.

I'm hoping to get together a really good site that a lot of people use, and that brings together all kinds of stories about the area, big and small. In the longer term I hope we can get this website going as a thing that people read a lot and refer to and that even maybe breaks stories on a national level, but at the same time supports a community effort, with lots of community interest.

”

Damaris

Community garden

“ Connecting Clerkenwell is a very good thing. It's good to see communities come together and do things together, because we don't always have time to speak with our neighbours. But when you're doing an activity together, friendships start and things get built.

Personally it's helped me to speak with people that I always used to see but never really approached. I've spoken about the project to neighbours, and parents while dropping my kids to school. It's helped me get to know people I didn't know. I feel more confident about myself, and I think that's what it will do for other people as well.

I think it will change the local area. People will come together and no longer see each other as strangers but as a community, and we'll have a sense of being in a community and of doing things together and helping one another. When communities get along, good things happen.

In the next year I'm hoping that people will come and get involved and get their hands dirty. In the longer term I think this project could get a lot of people involved, including children, and schools could organise trips to see what's happening. There's endless opportunity. ”





Scarlett

Exmouth Market Street Party

“ When I found out about Connecting Clerkenwell I thought it was a really good opportunity to get involved with something locally and meet different types of people.

I think the programme is brilliant – it's only a positive that local people are being given the chance to have their projects supported. The best thing about it so far for me has been the exposure to my community – hearing about other people's projects, meeting lots of different kinds of people – and also the support to be able to do what we want to and develop our ideas.

The most important thing about the street party is that it will be bringing people together from the area to have a really light-hearted, fun, affordable day. In the longer term, I hope there will be more community fun days and projects and things people can get involved in, and a really strong network of referrals so that new initiatives can access the expertise they need quickly. I hope people in the community feel more together and included, and that people feel they are not forgotten about. ”

Lennox

Clerkenwell basketball team London Zip

“ I’ve been in the community world for a very long time and I’m also a basketball coach. I wanted to use basketball as a vehicle to get young people together, so I started London Zip and we’ve been training since November 2017. We chat about life and the future, not just basketball. A lot of them feel broken and like nothing happens for them. I really want to help in a positive way.

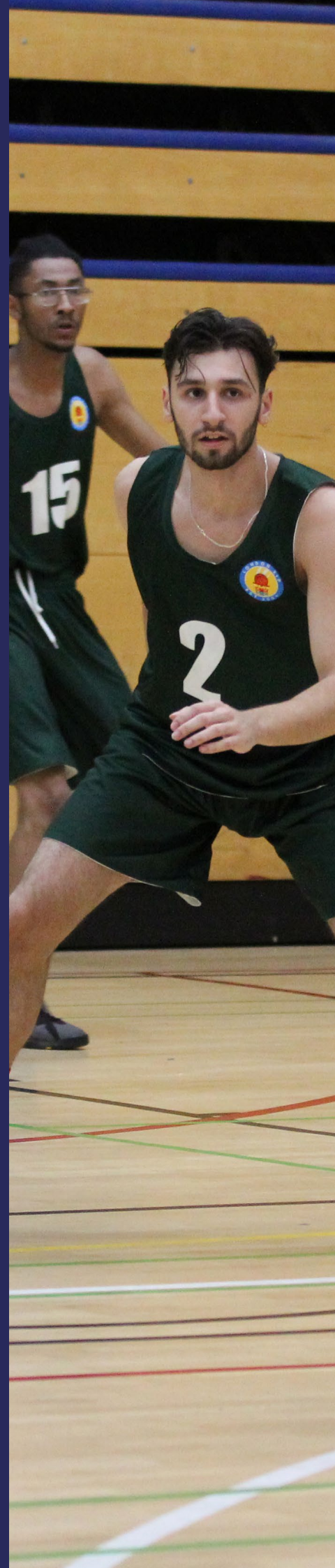
I used to be stressed out because I wasn’t financially equipped and didn’t know who to go to or talk to. I would use my pension to help fund it, and I’ve been looking for local support for so long and had no help.

I’m so glad The Peel has come along. Immediately they saw what I wanted to do and started to provide support. They provide practice and theory hand-in-hand, and they go all out to find the people with the expertise to help you get things done. I’ve never found an organisation in London as positive to work with as The Peel.

I’d like to see London Zip become a collective, not just a team, so the members can start to give back to the community. I hope we end up with a positive group of young people. It’s not just about basketball – it’s about finding individual talents and looking to the future. I’d like to eventually take them overseas once a year and invite other communities here through an exchange programme.

We need to search the community for more talents and community leaders. I’m sure there are lots of people out there with ideas!

”



Emerging impacts and learning

The Connecting Clerkenwell programme presents an exciting and dynamic opportunity for new ideas to flourish. Year 1 of Connecting Clerkenwell has led to a lot of learning and a great foundation to extend activity and impact through the next phase of the programme.

For The Peel, the first year provided proof of concept for a new style of working, the development of relationships with a broad range of people and organisations, and confirmation of the value of investing in relationships as a key to sustainable growth.

Activities and feedback during year 1 of the Connecting Clerkenwell programme suggest that there is a strong potential for impact on three levels:

1. For the emerging community leaders and their initiatives.
2. For the wider community – particularly an increased sense of community and connectedness.
3. For The Peel, other organisations and other local areas, in the form of learning in response to questions such as:
 - a. How far can this type of model scale in a single community?
 - b. What makes a community / contributes to somewhere feeling like a community?
 - c. What are the key opportunities, challenges and practical considerations for delivering this type of model in a sustainable way?

Year 2: what's next?

An opportunity to do more

The learning and positive momentum developed over the first year of the programme has led The Peel to extend activities for Year 2, offering even more opportunities for local people and organisations to get involved and join the growing network of community leaders and innovators.

Here are the core activities that we are currently developing which are designed to build movement of people working toward a more connected Clerkenwell, where people can connect easily and in multiple ways.

Core activities

Volunteer-led projects

Four initiatives are already engaged in the programme from Year 1. In Year 2, each project leader will continue to be mentored on a bespoke one to one basis to support them with the planning, delivery, and sustainability of these projects.

New projects will be identified through outreach, explored and taken to the next stages of development.



Community Hub

The Peel wants to ensure its home – 3 Corners – is used by more diverse younger and older people. Year 2 will focus on understanding how older and younger people currently consider The Peel (if at all) and then co-design interventions to increase the use of the Community Hub.

The potential for an updated events programme will also be explored. This could include networking events, speakers, and facilitated discussions about the future of the neighbourhood.

Influencing

The Connecting Clerkenwell programme is a significant step forward for The Peel, but also has the potential to influence politicians, policy makers, funders and charity leaders that have an interest in tackling the key issues that this programme addresses.

A key focus for Year 2 is building relationships and connections with key stakeholders likely to be interested in this work and its impacts.

Community Connectors



This new strand of work will develop and trial a programme that supports people who live or work in Clerkenwell, and who have a leadership role, to become 'Community Connectors'.

A Community Connector will be a leader within an organisation who has the ability to consciously link people with other people from different backgrounds and give them the skills to make their organisations more inclusive.

Alliance Building

The Peel has a great opportunity to build an alliance of organisations that have lots to contribute to the local community. Our research in Year 1 suggested there is significant appetite from local organisations to actively engage in creating a more cohesive neighbourhood. We are testing if The Peel can play a role in developing a vision with interested parties to enable this.

The long-term benefits could be significant – not only for local residents, organisations and businesses, but also for other communities wanting to do more to enhance local cohesion and reduce isolation.

We're keen to develop and expand our work continue the conversation with you to tackle the challenges our communities face together.

