



Registered Charity No. 1038129

Interchange

www.liv.ac.uk/sspsw/interchange

Annual Report and Accounts

2005-2006

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Interchange

Learning through Service
A member of the International Science Shop Network
[\(\[www.livingknowledge.org\]\(http://www.livingknowledge.org\)\)](http://www.livingknowledge.org)

Registered Charity No, 1038129.

Aims and International Links:

Interchange provides a research and volunteering exchange between community and university to promote applied research for the benefit of the community and for student education and learning. Interchange has been operating as a registered charity since 1994. The ethos of Interchange is partnership; its aim is to act as a 'broker' to partner community and voluntary groups who have a need for research or student volunteers with students who can conduct the research or volunteer as part of their academic studies.

Interchange partners with community and voluntary groups throughout Merseyside and surrounding areas, and operates with the University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Hope University.

Interchange is also a member of the International Network of Science Shops (the European term for Interchange type activity). Interchange is currently a partner in the European Union project TRAMS which provides training and mentoring for new science shops.

Achievements

- The main activity continues to be the facilitation of student projects in applied social research with the voluntary and community sector on Merseyside, as detailed below. This year has seen a record number of students from Sociology & Social Policy conducting Interchange projects as their final year dissertations
- The project was successfully piloted in the Health Department at Liverpool Hope University
- Interchange again presented a community forum at Blackburne House, Liverpool to showcase the newly completed projects and help voluntary and community sector organisations think how research could benefit their organisations

- Interchange has run two early evening ‘taster’ sessions on community based research, as part of a programme of assisting voluntary and community sector organisations to develop their research skills
- Interchange has worked for a second year with the Supported Living initiative of Liverpool Social Services to recruit and train student volunteers to assist people with disabilities into work
- A new Interchange website has been established, linked to The School of Sociology & Social Policy
- Interchange published its second Community Research newsletter, which has been widely disseminated

Charity Status:

Interchange was registered as a charity on 18th May 1994, registered charity number 1038129. Its constitution and objects were revised on 26th June 2003 to include student volunteering within the curriculum and now read as follows:

The Charity's objects ("the objects") are

- 1) The advancement of education by
 - a) bringing together charitable groups in the area of Merseyside and neighbouring Districts and students in Higher Education in the same areas for the purposes of conducting research projects and collating organising and disseminating the results of such research for public benefit
 - b) enabling such students to pursue projects, research and experimental work considered to be for public benefit
 - c) enabling students to undertake volunteering opportunities as part of the curriculum
- 2) To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in Merseyside and neighbouring Districts by providing charitable groups operating within the area of benefit with advice, training, volunteering and scientific or technical information and by any other assistance appropriate to the use of scientific or technical information so as to enable such organisations to carry out their Charitable work more effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the Community

Executive Committee

**Chair: Dr. David Hall, Secretary: Gwen Lightfoot,
Treasurer: Karen White**

Members:

Trish Lunt, Irene Hall, Natasha Butler, Moira Rangel

Co-ordinator's Report – Sharon Lockley

2005-2006 has proved to be a busy year for Interchange with many highlights. It has been very successful in terms of the increase in the numbers of student researchers from the School of Sociology & Social Policy, who produced excellent reports for the community groups, with the majority of the students gaining outstanding grades for their research reports. This year I particularly enjoyed setting up the projects as I met with some very interesting and hardworking people from across Merseyside. My liaison with Sefton CVS and in particular Philip Hurst meant that the Borough of Sefton featured prominently in our project listing, allowing us to work with some of the more hard to reach groups on the outskirts of the city.

There have been a number of other achievements this year including the successful piloting of Interchange into the School of Health & Sociology at Liverpool Hope University, and I found working alongside Margaret Coffee was a pleasure, I know she worked particularly hard to offer her students additional support to make it a success. Her students produced excellent reports for Halton Safety Partnership and The Family Parks School, and it was a real pleasure to include them in the Community Forum celebrations.

The large number of Interchange students benefited from the involvement of a new academic supervisor from the School of Sociology and Social Policy, Moira Rangel, whose input was much appreciated. Moira has since left for a new life in Australia, and we wish her and her family well. In her place next year we would like to welcome Louise Hardwick from the School, who like Moira has a social work background and has particular expertise in engaging with the community.

The third Community Forum again proved very popular, but this year the celebration focus was made special by the presentation of certificates to the students and the community groups involved, something which I know they appreciated and I hope we will continue next year.

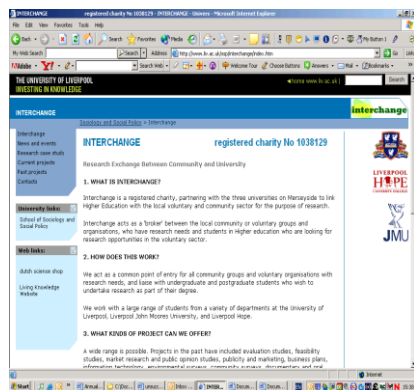


Third Community Forum, May 2006

The second Community Newsletter was produced and it is always a sense of relief when I see the final printed version. I never realised that the production of a newsletter created so much work in collating the information, editing, re-editing, and producing photos of good enough quality for printing. I would like to offer my gratitude in particular to

Kristen Karlsson Cooper who once again produced an Interchange newsletter to a very high standard.

A particular achievement for me has been the launch of the new



website, linked to the webpage of the School of Sociology & Social Policy at the University of Liverpool,. The website for one reason or another had been an on-going problem and a cause of concern for Interchange for the past few years. At last now it can be easily updated by myself, and can include details of current activities. Check it out at www.liv.ac.uk/ssp/interchange and make your links to it.

This year Interchange has been supported financially through a variety of means. We received funding from the University of Liverpool , from the Higher Education Innovation Fund, for reach out and development work with community organisations around community based research, and Interchange successfully achieved all its objectives and outcomes for this funding stream. After last year's successful pilot project with the Supported Employment Project, in partnership with Liverpool Social Services and Breakthrough, we received substantially more funding this year to re-run the project, and again we achieved our objectives and outcomes for this funding stream by recruiting and training student volunteers to help people with disabilities back into employment. We also received an award from the John Moores Foundation to conduct the Community Research Training Sessions, which have been delivered by myself with David and Irene Hall. For the first time we also had small and medium size donations from the organisations we work with, these included MOWLL, Footsteps, and The World Trade Centre.

Overall I feel 2005-2006 was a very successful year, and as we approach a very transitional period in the life of Interchange, the following year will be a very important one, in terms of its future growth and development.

Chair's Report – David Hall

This has been another year of achievement for Interchange, and I entirely endorse Sharon Lockley's report as Co-ordinator for Interchange. We have had a bumper year for undergraduate research as well as some excellent projects with postgraduates, and established many new connections with the voluntary sector, particularly but not exclusively in Sefton Borough.

It is difficult to pick out any particular strengths of Interchange's operation without appearing to ignore others, but I would like to take the opportunity to identify a few areas which may not have been flagged up in the other reports.

- We have strengthened our international participation through partnership in the European Union funded project TRAMS for the Training and Mentoring of Science Shops. This has involved Interchange, as an established science shop, making its expertise available to new science shops. An inaugural conference has been held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and Interchange will host an advanced training workshop at Liverpool in late 2006.
- The US-EC international curriculum project on sustainable community development has resulted in sharing the experiences of our students in Liverpool with colleagues in Chicago, Washington DC and Seville, and a lasting legacy of that project, completed in early 2006, can be found on the project website www.luc.edu/curl/escd

This last year saw a remarkable example of the integration of community based learning, when Sally Walters, volunteer and researcher at Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre, was joined by a first year volunteering student, Samantha Jennings, and two postgraduate student researchers, Matthew Cocks and Richard Stowe, who also worked with and for the PNR. Matthew and Richard's action research on greening the alleys was a great example of community engagement.



- Interchange has worked closely with Wirral Women's and Children's Aid to bid for European funding for an international action research project on young people who have been witnesses of domestic violence. This involved a visit to Brussels in March with

Marie McManus of WWACA to consult with the Brussels Science Shop and the voluntary organisation Zijn. Although the bid was positively evaluated, regrettably it was learned there was not enough money to fund the proposal.

- Nearer home, I gave a talk on science shops and Interchange at Liverpool to a Café Scientifique colloquium in February 2006.
- The Community Forum had two innovations this year – we presented certificates to the successful students who had completed their reports, and to the voluntary organisations that had hosted their research, where it was great to see both partners together and learn of the use of the research. Second, we welcomed to the Forum under the TRAMS project our science shop mentee, Ilse Lāce, from the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences in Riga, Latvia, where she was able to see first hand the impact of the current projects.
- I would like to thank those Trustee members of the Executive Committee who have stood down this year, in particular Irene Hall, Moira Rangel and Karen White. I am delighted to see that new supporters of Interchange are willing to join the Committee in their place.
- For the future, my role as supervisor of student projects at Liverpool University is being shared with Louise Hardwick this year, and I have every confidence that as I finally retire from the university the community engaged learning modules will be in good hands, that Interchange can continue to make that vital link between the voluntary and community sector and higher education, and that what we do in Liverpool and Merseyside will be noticed across Europe and beyond.



Secretary's Report – Gwen Lightfoot

The role of the Secretary can often be seen as just setting the agenda, taking the minutes and remembering to send them out to the committee which in itself can be quite time consuming. But there is much more to being the Secretary. It is the responsibility of the full committee to be aware of their roles and responsibilities, but few will be fully conversant in all the legislation affecting the charity and the provisions of the governing document. It is the Secretary's role to support the board to find their way through the maze of law, governance and good practice and to facilitate effective meetings.

This is the role I have undertaken with Interchange for several years now. In accordance with our constitution we are obliged to hold a minimum of 4 ordinary meetings a year. As we are a very active committee that plays an active role in the day to day work of Interchange we hold meetings on a more regular basis. Over the past twelve months we have met as a full committee at least 6 times. There have also been several sub group meetings convened to look at specific aspects of the work being undertaken eg Community Forum.

Interchange and the Centre for Lifelong Learning – Trish Lunt

Interchange has worked closely with staff from the Careers and Employability Service within the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Liverpool University over the year 2005-2006. A trustee and management committee member of Interchange, I am also manager of the Student Development Team, and have been able to represent both agencies in activities such as the Community Forums as well as participation at the management meetings. Interchange has been able to draw on the links with staff from Community Bridge, also based in the Careers and Employability Service, to help resource volunteering placement opportunities for students on the community based learning modules in 'Voluntary Service Learning' and 'Sociology at Work' offered to students in the SES Faculty, and in providing pre-placement training for these student volunteers.

Student Research and Volunteering Projects

Applied Social Research Placements

As in previous years, student projects based on negotiated research with local voluntary organisations continue to be the main outcome for Interchange, thus fulfilling its objectives in the fields of education and dissemination for public benefit, and the provision of advice, training and scientific information to the voluntary and community sector.

Interchange student Nicola Fowler engaged in interviewing service users for Women's Enterprising Breakthrough

As is evident from the list of projects conducted this year, a wide range of organisations across Merseyside (and a little beyond) have benefited from the student research reports.

A record number of students were involved in Interchange projects this year.



(1) ***Final year undergraduate*** students at Liverpool University produced research reports for participating organisations, with students graduating in June 2006.

Barnardos Young Carers – Caroline Ezekiel

An evaluation to measure and report upon the distinctiveness of Barnardos and the impact it has upon the lives of its service users, through focus groups and interviews. Due to illness, this report was not completed, but it is anticipated it will be completed the following year.

Beechpark Initiative – Helen Strong, Emilia Windebank,

A study using observation and description supplemented by a lengthy series of interviews with a large sample of residents, to provide data on the needs of the area, and how the Beechpark Initiative in Maghull might develop to meet those needs

Fair Trade in Schools – Joanne Wright

An evaluation of Liverpool Fairtrade in Schools project which looks at a variety of contrasting schools for evidence of their implementation of fair trade ideas and practice. This uses personal observations, focus groups and questionnaires with children and interviews with teachers

Footsteps – Toby Manley, Steve Russell

An evaluation of the services provided by Footsteps to the families and/or carers of drug users in St Helens and surrounding areas. It uses qualitative interviews with clients and workers/volunteers to produce an assessment of impact plus recommendations for the organisation to develop.

Halton Domestic Violence Forum – Liz Farrington

A study of the response to domestic violence through questionnaires to Forum members, interviews with survivors of domestic violence and with members of the public, providing pointers which the Halton Domestic Violence Forum can use to improve their effectiveness.

Homestart Warrington – Jenna Porter

An evaluation of Home Start in Warrington where volunteers provide practical and emotional support to families with young children. The report gives evidence from a sample of families of the impact of the services against the background of lack of other available services.

Local Solutions – Hannah Kaiser

A study for two organisations, Local Solutions and Barnardos, of the transition period of support for young carers aged 16-25. The report gained information and suggestions for action from the young carers themselves, backed by interviews with senior professionals in the field.

Merseyside Stroke Network – Richard Kerrigan, Darren Reynolds

An evaluation of Network's services to its members, who are survivors of strokes and their carers. Focus groups discussed the organisation and the meetings while interviews allowed consideration of the physical and especially psychological effects of stroke on survivors, and how the organisation can help.

Netherton Park Centre – Laila Smith

A report on the needs of people in the Netherton Park area, with an evaluation of the services currently provided by the community association, established in a former school, using a variety of group and individual interviews to gain the views of centre users, backed up by a questionnaire providing more quantitative information.

New Pathways– Claire Madden

An external evaluation of the supervised contact service of New Horizons, which brings together parents, children, the service provider and social services in order to write reports for the courts. Observation is used to describe the facilities and events,

followed by interviews with service providers, parents and children.

Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre – Sally Rogers

Working as a researcher and volunteer worker at the centre, Sally provides a description of the services of Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre, the needs of the area's residents, and an evaluation of the services provided. Statistical information about Picton is balanced with qualitative interviews with two focus groups and with key informants.

Plaza Community Cinema – Joanna Davies

A study which considers the views of children, educational advisors and head teachers in assessing the potential for the Plaza Community Cinema to develop its educational role. The report includes an information leaflet produced for the Plaza as part of the research.

Queens Road Neighbourhood Centre – Belinda Jones

An independent review of the services provided by Queens Road Neighbourhood Centre through the views of children and adults, to produce recommendations for the future. An interesting feature has been the recruitment of 'junior researchers' to ask other children what they would like to see at the Centre.

The Reader – Donna Anderson

Get into Reading is the title of the project evaluated here, with information collected by interview and questionnaire from the members of seven reading groups on Wirral, which demonstrates the effect of the reading groups on their confidence and engagement with educational activities.

Sefton O.P.E.R.A – Chloe Stacey

A study designed to produce suggestions for the development of this Sefton volunteer group for older people, which uses observations of the variety of activities undertaken, recorded interviews with management committee members, and a questionnaire to volunteers.

St. Leonard's Community Centre – Louise McBride

An evaluation of the services provided by St Leonard's Community Centre in Bootle, where issues of housing renewal and anti-social behaviour are the background to the work of the Centre with young people. The research uses questionnaires to parents and Centre workers, together with qualitative interviews with key informants and the children to identify the strengths of the Centre

HelpLink Community Support, Wirral – Barbara McNamara

An evaluation of the variety of services provided by HelpLink, around transport, befriending and social care, and their impact on the clients – and their families also. Observation is carefully recorded and supplemented with interviews and case studies, so that the impact of the services are described and related to government social policy for older people.

YKids – Joanna Kendall

A study on the aspirations and self-perceptions of young children in a disadvantaged area of Bootle, and the effect YKids has on their activities. It uses interesting approaches to gaining information from young people, backed up with a variety of interviews with adults and makes the link between statistical measures of deprivation and children's and adults' perceptions of the situation locally.

YKids – Peter Swan

A second study for YKids in Bootle, focusing on older children, those 11-15yrs, which details the levels of deprivation in the area and their effects on school learning. This is supplemented by interviews with key informants, and with the children themselves, and illustrated in a DVD with scenes of the area and some of the children's activities

GYRO/Young People's Advisory Service – Sarah Steeg

An evaluation of GYRO (Gay Youth 'R Out) as incorporated into YPAS, researching the views of gay youth for the development of their service, using focus groups and interviews. The report identifies problems of 'moving on' and the young people's suggestions of areas for improvement.

(2) ***Final year undergraduate*** students at Liverpool Hope University produced research reports for participating organisations, with students graduating in June 2006.

Halton Community Safety Partnership – Claire Little, Stephanie Brannigan

An investigation into the drinking habits of young people in the Halton area, exploring the levels of harm and occurrence of anti-social behaviour. The results of the research show that the average age for teenagers to begin consuming alcohol is 12, with most choosing to drink once a week on either Friday or Saturday night. The most popular drink suggested was vodka and lager. The results further highlighted that there was not a high incidence of anti-social behaviour relating to alcohol, and that there was a need for further education on the health risks associated with consumption of alcohol.

The Park Family Centre – Catherine McCall

An exploration into of the contents of children’s packed lunches and an evaluation of the Healthy Eating Club at the Family Centre. The results from the research suggested that a high percentage of the children’s lunch boxes did not reach the Balance of Good Health. Many of the lunch boxes exceeded limits for fats and sugars, and a high percentage did not meet recommendations for fruit and vegetables, and meat and fish alternatives were poorly represented. Further to this it was found that more boys than girls did not meet the balance of good health, and boys also consumed higher amounts of unhealthy snacks.

Volunteering Placements

As in previous years, first and second year undergraduates at Liverpool University took part in modules involving volunteering with local voluntary and community groups, and placements were arranged through the cooperation of Interchange and Community Bridge at Liverpool University.

(1) Voluntary Service Learning (first year module)

- Everton Kids Club –
Christopher Sharpe
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Calder Kids project –
Jessica Mole
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Family History project -
Leanne Cook, Jessica Mayhew
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Mildmay House project -
Rebecca Lynch, Charlotte Middleton, Sarah Tickle
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Refugee Support project –
Francis Hulme
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Tea Dance project -
Amy Rebane
- Liverpool Student Community Action, Women’s 10K Run project -
Samantha Johnston, Francesca Marsh
- Oxfam Shop, Liverpool –
Amy Jay
- Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre –
Samantha Jennings
- Student Tutoring in Schools, Liverpool
Alicia Parker
- Supported Employment Project, Liverpool Social Services –
Jessica Moule
- Victim Support, Garston –
Katrina Vassie

Wirral Women's and Children's Aid, Birkenhead -
Adam Aulaqi and Michael Begley
Women's Hospital, Liverpool –
Jennifer Hall
Youth Offending Team, Liverpool –
Carmel Buirds, Sophie Edge, Kate Faller-Fritsch
Youth Offending Panels, Liverpool –
Clare Ridings, Lisa Seddon

(2) Sociology at Work (second year module)

Afro-Caribbean Club, Oldham –
Jermaine Thomas
Citizen's Advice Bureau, Toxteth –
Kimberley Black
National Trust, Liverpool –
Joseph Binns, Jonathan Guest
Oxfam, Liverpool
Nicola Lloyd
Prince's Trust, Liverpool –
Sarah Barr
Save the Children, Liverpool –
Katie Tierney
Shaw Trust, Bootle –
Carla Dillon
St Bridget's Girls Club, Picton –
Kathryn Moffatt
Supported Employment Project, Liverpool Social Services –
Hayley Bell, Holly Boag
Toxteth Tigers –
Daniel Kenna

Interchange and postgraduate teaching – Irene Hall

In 2002 the MSc in Applied Social and Community Research, which had been based at Liverpool Hope since 1998 (but jointly taught with the University of Liverpool), moved into the Liverpool University Sociology Department. The degree had finished at Hope on a high point, with a record twelve students completing quality projects with community groups, using the intermediary of Interchange.

In its new base at Liverpool University, the degree was integrated into departmental and faculty teaching, and continued to feature the year-long applied community research project brokered by Interchange, and supported by modules and tuition. The emphasis at postgraduate level was on evaluation, rather than research. Among projects completed were two outstanding reports on recycling in Toxteth (for EnergyWise)

and on luncheon clubs for older people in the Wirral (for Hoylake and West Kirby Volunteer Bureau).

The degree was designed to foster students' practical and theoretical understanding of research and evaluation, and included modules on survey and qualitative research, the voluntary sector, and policy research and analysis. A module on International Aspects of Sustainable Community Regeneration was developed through an international collaborative project, described below. Here the class is seen visiting the Welsh Streets regeneration area in Liverpool 8.



The Equitable Sustainable Community Development (ESCD) project was an innovative international program funded by the U.S. Department of Education (FIPSE, the Fund for Innovation in Post-Secondary Education) and the European Commission. More information on the project is available on the project web site: <http://www.luc.edu/curl/escd/>



The two year program (launched in 2003) linked university-community partnerships in four cities – Chicago (USA), Washington DC (USA), Liverpool (UK), and Seville (Spain). Students, faculty, and community leaders in each city made contributions to exploring policies and strategies relating to equitable community development. The university partners in the four cities were Loyola University in Chicago, Georgetown University in Washington D.C., The University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom, and University of Seville in Spain. All of the partners were actively involved in university-community partnerships, and worked through intermediary “broker” arrangements such as CURL (Chicago), CoRAL (Washington) and Interchange.

The module was innovative for Interchange – as it involved students completing a community engaged research project in one semester, rather than in two. Students worked in teams of 2 or 3, and for assessment produced a joint report for their organisation, and a website article (which included reflective comments) – some of which can be viewed on the website listed above. Projects included research conducted with Toxteth Town Hall Resource Centre and with voluntary organisations based in the building. Building on connections established that year, the following year involved collaboration with Riverside Housing and its partners in regeneration, Picton Neighbourhood Resource Centre and the Eldonians.

An excellent action research project in 2005 - 6 was completed by two Civic Design students, who worked with residents to “green” their alleyways in a part of Picton, following up a survey of residents with some literal fieldwork – they helped residents to plant up pots with flowers, for which the students had secured funding from the local area regeneration developer.



Richard Stowe and Matthew Cocks

Interchange was also instrumental in finding projects for two social work graduate students, and it seemed hopeful that this would be a fruitful new field for development. Sadly, as social work is currently not in the curriculum at Liverpool University this development has been halted, while it seems as if the MSc and the Sustainable Community Development modules will also not be running in the foreseeable future (because of low graduate recruitment).

So this contribution to the Annual Report is to mark what has been an important part of Interchange work – and a unique development within the UK. And to mark its passing, what better than a quotation from one of our first MSc graduates:

For me the project has been the most fun packed roller coaster ride I have ever encountered ... I've learned so much from this experience. Learned 'doing it' really, truly, madly and deeply isn't like anything I expected, and I want to do it again. Please.

(M C, 1999)

Interchange and the MA in Social Work –Louise Hardwick

Conventionally social work students have written a 15,000 word dissertation on an area of interest from the two year professionally qualifying course. The majority of students have chosen to undertake a field study rather than literature-based investigation because of the transferable skills between social work practice and applied social research and its benefits for practice and policy development.

However, this has created a number of logistical problems related to identifying an appropriate research problem, negotiating permission and access to a chosen welfare agency, and the future use of the research and resulted in the University cupboards overflowing with social work dissertations that have not been disseminated back into the community.

In an attempt to address the mismatch between students' research plans and the research needs of local community organisations, it was decided to run a pilot scheme whereby a number of students were linked to an Interchange organisation for their social work dissertation.

Ciara Flood undertook an evaluation of Home-Start in St. Helens. Ciara interviewed children and then parents receiving the service and ran a focus group for volunteers within the agency. From this she was able to produce a report that highlighted the strengths of the service for families.

Catherine Turley undertook an investigation for Refugee Action to ascertain the mental health and disability services available to asylum seekers and refugees in Liverpool. Two key findings emerged from her study. The first was that asylum seekers prioritise their asylum claim above health needs to the detriment of their health. The second main finding was that more research was needed into service provision for disabled refugees and asylum seekers as there is currently a lack of information on this topic.

Both these students felt that although they had a considerable work load, having undertaken the investigation while also completing other academic assignments and a six-month social work practice placement, it had nevertheless been extremely worthwhile enterprise. It produced knowledge that made a difference to the agencies and ultimately to service users while developing their own research skills and confidence.

They felt that much of the time-consuming processes of negotiating the study had been shared with Interchange, which had freed them up for getting on with things. Compared to other social work students, they felt they had support from not only their academic supervisor, but also Sharon Lockley (Interchange) and the client agency.

Ciara now works in children services as a social worker and Catherine with Refugee Action as a case worker and trainer. Both feel their Interchange project was relevant to their present posts and are considering undertaking further research training in the future".

Reflections on the experience and impact of applied social research

Student Experience – Barbara McNamara, Interchange student 2004

“I was fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to engage in an Applied Social Research course through the Liverpool Science Shop Interchange, which was the first opportunity I had to test the theories and policies that I had learned in my first and second years to a practical setting. The course involved me in conducting ‘real life’ research in partnership with a community based organisation called Helplink Community Support based in the Wirral, Merseyside. The research with Helplink was negotiated and co-ordinated by Sharon Lockley of Interchange, who offered additional support to myself and the organisation throughout the life of the project. The research ran through the academic year from October 05-May 06, and was academically supervised throughout by Dr. David Hall, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology, and Social Policy, The University of Liverpool.



As a student researcher I designed a qualitative research proposal which would enable me to encapsulate the real life social issues such as social isolation that are experienced by many members of the sample of the elderly population who were in regular contact with Helplink. Through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the use of case studies I was able to ascertain for Helplink evidence that their services were unique in providing holistic care and therefore an essential and valuable addition to a statutory community care policy that was in much need of maintaining the right balance and revision in keeping pace with the increasing need for provision.

Through participation with Helplink I was able to grasp many of the real life social issues that older people suffered on a daily basis. As I was dealing with vulnerable members of society I had to carefully consider the ethical guidelines which guided me throughout the project and this enabled me to develop additional research skills, such as sensitive interviewing techniques, and confidentiality, which can be directly transferable to either employment or further academia.

Community Group Experience - Jeanette May, Beechpark Initiative.

“...What a worthwhile project Interchange is. I had no idea how it was going to pan out really. I know that it has all come together magnificently without even reading the draft. I also know from the dark circles under the student’s eyes that they have given me 100% and more for our organisation. I am so proud of Helen and Emilia what fantastic people they are. So positive and really hard workers. I can’t find fault with anything about their work.

I hope they have enjoyed working with me and I hope our friendships, albeit at a distance will continue and I can follow their career paths. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work alongside such focused young people. I am extremely proud of them both. Thanks for your help Sharon, I have suggested to a group called Rampworx to get in touch with you. They have a really exciting project and I work alongside them on a number of projects”.

Financial Report

INTERCHANGE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING
31 MARCH 2006

Bank Account

National Westminster Bank

Liverpool University

Oxford Street

Liverpool

