



# Link Up

together for transformation



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## What is Link Up?

*Link Up is a relational network of Churches and Church leaders in and around Chester, West Cheshire and into North Wales. Drawn from across denominations and traditions, Link Up seeks to support and extend partnership working for personal and community transformation.*

In data published by the North West Regional Development Agency in 2005, faith groups were demonstrated to be present and active in areas both of affluence and deprivation in urban and rural settings. With over 45,000 faith volunteers and premises made available at neighbourhood level, faith communities made a net £90-95 million annual contribution to civil society in the North West.

In 2009/2010, Link Up is undertaking a full audit of the faith sector across the Cheshire West and Chester area. Based on the work and methodology of the Saltbox Christian Centre in Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire, preliminary reports are anticipated by summer 2010.

Link Up leaders have already been engaged within Local Strategic Partnerships and now Area Partnership Boards within local communities. We seek to now extend this by:

1. **Enabling, connecting and profiling the work of Churches in and across the communities they serve.**
2. **Encouraging faith groups to share local knowledge and engage with their communities for the long term.**
3. **Encouraging partnership based on shared values with statutory, voluntary and community sectors.**
4. **Providing a connection point and voice for faith groups to other community stakeholders using a common language around a community cohesion agenda.**
5. **Orienting the wide array of service provision already routinely undertaken by faith groups with the delivery of statutory outcomes.**

## What does Link Up do?

Over and above the regular activities of each Church within its own community, here are some of the current partnerships and networks facilitated by Link Up.

*“working together with one mind and purpose.” Philippians 2:2b (NLT)*

### Partnerships within Link Up:

- **Chester Business Prayer Breakfast:** Prayer and networking for those involved in local business.
- **Chester Deo Gratias Choir:** Newly formed, breathing new life into the classical repertoire.
- **Community fundays:** Free fun, games and activities with a community focus.
- **Crossway FC:** With F.A. Charter status running 2 adult teams and 2 junior coaching sessions.
- **Healing rooms:** Weekly prayer for healing each with trained staff.
- **Hope Centre:** Delivering community projects within Blacon.
- **engage:** The new name for Chesterfest.
- **Options:** Pregnancy crisis and post-abortion counselling.
- **Primary Schools work:** Visiting 25 schools each week for assemblies and lessons.
- **Reach counselling:** Offering professional counselling services.

### Networks within Link Up:

- Church leaders' monthly prayer breakfast
- Student Network
- Prayer network
- Youth Workers' Network
- Children's Workers' Network

### Organisations and Projects who look to Link Up for advice and support:

- **Alpha Chester:** Co-ordinating Alpha Courses across Chester.
- **Barnabas Associates:** Developing community projects within Blacon.
- **Chester Bible Focus:** Bible teaching with a guest speaker.
- **Chester Schools Christian Work:** Building relationships with staff and pupils and serving Chester secondary schools.
- **Churches together in Chester:** An ecumenical group meeting within Chester.
- **Sex and relationship education (SRE):** Delivering SRE lessons and training youth leaders to assist in providing these lessons in high schools across West Cheshire.
- **Street Pastors:** A team of trained church volunteers on the streets across Chester and Ellesmere Port.
- **The Light Project:** Chester based training in community evangelism resourcing and working with local Churches.





### Case Study: Cheshire West Street Pastors

Street Pastors are volunteers from Churches in Chester and Ellesmere Port. We aim to listen, care, chat and offer practical assistance. In the night time setting of Chester, sometimes problems arise and individuals can feel isolated or vulnerable.

We believe the Church has an important role to play in making our city a safer place, Street Pastors are demonstrating that commitment. In Ellesmere Port as well as walking the streets, we visit a range of community buildings offering support and building bridges with the community. In both settings we provide an opportunity for those who wish to reflect on spiritual matters and support those in distress. We offer our services to everyone regardless of whether they have faith or not.

Whilst the Street Pastors are volunteers we invest significantly in their training covering issues such as Street Safety, Drugs and Alcohol, Listening Skills and much more. Whilst we retain our independence as the friend on the street we are committed to strong Partnership links with Cheshire West and Chester council, Cheshire Police, West Cheshire PCT and numerous other local agencies.



### Case Study: Community Acts of Kindness

One of the key elements of Chesterfest has been young people, serving their community through various projects.

Under the guidance of project leaders, work has been mainly undertaken by 11–17 year olds along with their youth leaders. Activities have ranged from clearing and planting a wildlife garden for a local playgroup, to helping to organise and run kids' clubs and family outdoor activities, providing pampering sessions for single mums, and a creative project supporting children coming to terms with bereavement.

Sustainability has been an influential factor in the design of some projects and this has been particularly successful with those teams who continue to provide musical entertainment, gentle exercise and friendship to older people, in several residential homes. Residents and staff welcome this regular input and for many it is their only contact with young people.



### Case Study: D'Biz youth cafes

D'Biz is a network of Community Youth Projects in and around Chester. All our projects run in partnership between the Light Project and the local Christian community - usually a local church. D'Biz has 10 community youth groups across West Cheshire set up to meet the needs of local young people. They provide a safe place where young people can meet positive adult role models and build up helping relationships. D'Biz works to encourage holistic development of young people by a variety of activities and programmes in line with national youth strategies.

Our youth clubs are set up as enjoyable places to be in themselves and not just the only alternative to being outside. They run weekly, providing equipment and activities that many young people may not normally be able to access.

D'Biz draws young people from a range of age groups, backgrounds and cultures. Together with the Light Project, D'Biz works to help pioneer, support and train emerging youth clubs and detached work across West Cheshire and Chester.

### Case Study: Options Pregnancy Crisis and Post Abortion Counselling Service

Options is an organisation set up to meet the needs of both women and men facing an unplanned pregnancy, giving them the time and space to talk about their situation, feelings and all the available choices. It also offers a post-abortion recovery programme called 'The Journey' for those facing emotional problems following an abortion.

We have a team of 11 fully trained volunteers who are available to see clients on a one to one basis either for a pregnancy crisis situation or for post abortion counselling. We are open by appointment on Monday and Tuesday 6.30pm – 9pm and Thursday 10am – 2pm. Other times may be arranged to suit.

Options is affiliated to CareConfidential, an organisation helping to network pregnancy crisis centres throughout the UK ([www.careconfidential.com](http://www.careconfidential.com)). Options is a registered charity (number 1126108).



# engage

the new name  
for Chesterfest



**engage** is a project 12 years in the making and building on the success of a one-day event in Hoole in 1997. This one day developed into a week long Hoolefest in 2004 and then Chesterfest in 2007. Each year it has grown to include more people and to have an even greater impact on local communities. 20 local Churches have partnered with local businesses and agencies to deliver a week-long youth and community program.

Young people have grown in confidence as they have understood their value and significance as well as building character, self-esteem and teamwork. Residents are served by their positive social contribution and build a positive perception of all ages. A key part of engage are CAKE (Community Acts of Kindness Experience) projects involving active citizenship for young people (aged 11-18) and adults to:

- **Improve urban areas, green spaces, allotments, housing and Nature Parks.**
- **Running children's holiday clubs.**
- **Running community cohesion activities.**
- **Supporting work in old peoples' homes.**
- **Improving community areas and resources.**

In the last 3 years, there have been over 120 young people involved in over 20 projects with a team of over 50 youth leaders each year plus even more adult volunteers involved in CAKE. At the start of each day there is training, teaching and discussion groups for young people with evening entertainment and activities for young people to provide the opportunity to build friendships across the city.

In 2007 Chesterfest was awarded the prestigious Chester 'Team of the Year' by Chester Chronicle and Scottish Power.

## Community fundays

Each year a growing number of Church groups come together in their local communities to provide a high quality day of community activity and focus. Each funday is offered free of charge to build community and strengthen local relationships.



## Serving the Church and Church leaders

Link Up grew out of deepening relationships between Chester Church leaders throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Out of a growing partnership for purpose have emerged wider initiatives ranging from work in schools to pregnancy crisis support, fundays to football. In 2002, the Link Up Trust was founded and Andy Glover, Team Leader at Hoole Baptist Church, was recognised as bringing leadership to the Link Up network.

Through relationship and partnership we can see our communities and region impacted by the transforming love and power of God. We believe in partnership without ownership, and so Link Up exists to support local churches and ministries as we seek to reach people and demonstrate God's love in action. Today Link Up serves Churches and Church leaders across Cheshire West and Chester and relationally into NE Wales.

We achieve this by relating together, walking together and working together.

## Relating together

- **Monthly prayer breakfasts:** The foundation of our relational network and most people's first point of contact meeting across Cheshire West and Chester.
- **Annual leaders' retreats:** Each autumn, leaders and senior leadership teams take three days out for valuable time away to pray, talk, eat and reflect.

## Walking together:

- **CORE groups:** Are small groups in which leaders can share life and become accountable to one another.
- **Leaders' support networks:** For children's workers, employed youth leaders and student work at Chester University.
- **Facilitating prayer:** Networking prayer through @the Throne prayer gatherings to seasons of 24/7 prayer.
- **Day conferences:** Inviting strategic figures into the City for training, information, inspiration and networking.

## Working together:

- **Networking joint projects:** Between Churches, charities and service providers across the region.
- **Community engagement:** Engaging with local partners to serve and support our local communities.

Congregations and Church leaders participate to differing levels from simply attending prayer breakfasts through financial support to partnering on a range of projects.





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