



Thrive held Accountability Meetings at Norton and Thornaby Methodist Churches on 20 and 21 April.

The audience was by invite only and the turn out was very high with over 230 people attending over 2 nights. Parliamentary Candidates from each of the three main parties and one Independent appeared each night representing their respective constituencies.

Citizens for Sanctuary and Developing Partners took to the podium with members of Thrive to address the prospective candidates. Each candidate agreed to sign the Sanctuary Pledge if they had not already signed previously. Developing Partners received the promise to work with them on the Right to Work for sanctuary seekers.

Thrive addressed the high interest rates charged by the lender Buy As You View. The new video produced by Thrive on this company with the customers' demands was launched. To view this video go to www.ripofftv.net. Leaflets illustrating the company's interest rates as opposed to the Credit Union were also launched. Candidates were asked to help Thrive in their fight for a cap on interest rates by the new government.

"Good to have local people's experiences on all issues covered. Nice to hear some consensus among candidates. Really pleased to see CAP is still keeping this tradition. Power to the people".



Barbara Hungin holds the sanctuary pledge for all to see and sign.

"The stories I heard just touched my heart and the meeting was useful to us who are seeking sanctuary, because we got the answers we wanted".

Martin gave a stirring report on the value of the living wage and how it would ease him out of the poverty trap. He asked the candidates to support this action if they were elected.



Other discussions included a local problem of anti social behaviour which was brought to the fore by traders of Stockton High Street. All candidates realised that behaviour of this sort was highly undesirable and vowed to help the Thrive campaign.

Stockton South audience in the Thornaby Methodist church concentrating on what they had heard.

FROM 9 TO 4 TO 8

Thrive knocked on my door and asked if I would participate in a Sustainable Living Interview. Seeing I had free time I welcomed them in as it was somebody to talk to.

I had moved into their target area 8 years before after losing my house and was only on hello terms with my neighbours, possibly my fault as I found it difficult to mix with them and refused to make the effort as I felt we had nothing in common.

I was the carer for my husband and son and still am, also looking after my grandchildren on weekends and school holidays.

I explained to Thrive that on a happiness level I felt that after the trials and tribulations that life threw at me, money or lack of it, had not altered the level of happiness I had enjoyed when times were good and profitable.

The main aspect of my life was the family and it was still a loving and compact unit. Caring for my husband and son gave me a purpose in life, as I had in my previous job held a senior position in a care home and could utilise my skills to the benefit of my family in a real sense.

During a talk to academics at a University I expressed the opinion that at that time of asking about my happiness line I had given the wrong evaluation of a 9 as it should read 4 and in present time should be an 8.

The reading of 4 is based on a selfless life of giving to the family, insulated in my little house, thinking "it is not the problem but how you handle it" My wants and needs were never bought into the equation only those of the family. I had lost all connection with the outside world watching it go by through the barriers of a window and a TV screen.

Thrive has opened my life up giving me friends who do not judge me by my failures but as a person in my own right, allowing me to express opinions and to own those opinions. They are allowing me to be the person I was before illness and poverty took over my life. I still care for my husband, son and grandchildren but in a better way as I am handling the problems of life in a real way not in the insulated world of a caged bird looking at life through bars.

Thrive has allowed the dormant me to blossom again, even though the problems of life have not changed I feel valued and confident enough to enter full life again.

Soon I hope to go from an 8 to 10 as I engage fully with the world outside.

Kathleen Carter



"WHY ARE YOU DOING THAT?" It was the first thing I got asked as I bumped into some friends after I left Greg's office for the hundred time this year. "Just to get me out the house," I said. But that was not true. I have explained it so many times to them I have given up trying. When Greg asked me to do a questionnaire 5 years ago they asked me the same thing but back then I did because I thought it would be fun - who would have thought I would still be here after all that time.

To tell you the truth until last year I still thought the same thing. Then Greg asked if I wanted to do the leadership training and after that my life was turned upside down. I don't work as I look after my kids and all I thought I was for was running round after them. My dream of going back to college was only a dream of being able to learn new things and do a job that was

more than cleaning was always just out of reach.

I had come along way since I meet Greg Brown but I needed that push and the leadership training did that. Greg Galluzzo from America taught us that every one had a self interest and I had to find mine and use it. My family did not in any way suffer - I am still here for them. But I had to make my dream come true and I did in 2009. I enrolled for college and have now passed two exams and can't wait to enrol again in August. This is a small part of my life.

Helen Schofield



Community Organising Training from Mary Gonzales, Gamliel Foundation, USA

Mary Gonzales, one of the most senior community organising trainers from the US came to Thrive earlier this year to deliver a powerful leadership training. The training was both for people who've been trained up by Thrive before and newcomers. Mary's training was challenging, yet affirming. She brought new expertise on the important organising principles of power and self-interest and she helped our leaders strategise on forthcoming issues and action. We're very grateful for the opportunity to share great training in partnership with senior leaders from the Gamaliel Foundation.



Thrive Visioning day

Leaders from the grassroots and trustees of Thrive came together in June for a 'visioning day' where they planned their strategy to 2015. The group was kindly facilitated by Professor Sarah Banks from the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham University, a partner of Thrive. Key themes of the day were power and the actions the organisation will take on into the future. With recent victories in difficult campaigns, the future's certainly looking bright!



Media appearances

Leaders from the organisation have recently appeared in the media, including Newsnight, Channel Four News, Radio Four and the national press. Kath Carter, a leader with Thrive, and Tom Hodgson, a mentor in Thrive's financial exclusion work and CAB worker, will be presenting at a regional conference. The project was also tracked by a BBC documentary team and the programme will be seen later in the year.

Forthcoming dates

Gamaliel leadership training with Greg Galluzzo, 17-19 September 2010. Contact Thrive for more details.

Did you know?

In terms of wealth distribution between the rich and poor, Britain is now the most unequal country in Europe and the gap between rich and poor is bigger now than at any time in the past 40 years.

Oxfam's Women and Work project

This project has explored, with support from Oxfam UK's Poverty Project, the issue of gender stereotyping and how it affects women's poverty.

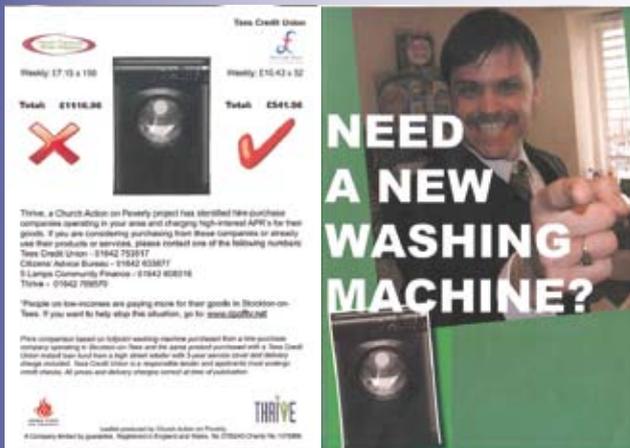


Ultimately, the aim is to engage with Job Centre Plus around the welfare reform agenda and how men and women are affected differently by poverty.

So far Kath Carter, one of Thrive's leaders, has run some very powerful workshops covering the concepts of self-interest, the gender pay gap and other important areas of inequality.



Early feedback from the group is "10/10. [How does the group make you feel?] Empowered, more informed. ..very interesting discussion time." And, "Enjoyed meeting the group. Learned more about myself".



Thrive launched their video on Buy as you View, and their on-line campaign as well as the leaflets based on the video advising people on predatory lenders. The candidates all agreed to help Thrive in the battle against high interest rates charged by these companies.



Our salesman gives the, ahem, 'persuasive' pitch: "YOU buy a washing machine from us NOW, and you make regular payments over the next THREE YEARS...including our optional service cover, you'll end up paying over twice as much as it would cost you in the shops!"

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Buy As You View

Thrive discovered that several of the poorest households in our financial exclusion mentoring project were using the company Buy As You View (BAYV). This company uses high rates of interest in the hire-purchase agreements they use with their 100,000 customers.

In one household the customer has been paying around £1000 per year since 2002 and is paying around £1000 for a second-hand washing machine at the present time.



Another household pays the company around £237

every 6 weeks as part of their agreement.

We challenged the company through a series of actions:

- A spoof advert about home credit hire-purchase companies
- An email action to Buy As You View demanding key changes as devised by the Thrive strategy team on this issue
- A Telephone action when the company withdrew from their original planned meeting.

This led to a meeting between Thrive leaders and four senior managers of BAYV. The meeting was respectful and very productive, with these positive outcomes:

- BAYV will work to reduce interest rates for customers who are regular payers
- the company will introduce much more transparent statements to customers so that people are clear about their loan commitments
- BAYV will work with Thrive to lobby for changes in financial regulations to allow people to gain good credit references even when borrowing from non-mainstream lenders.

These are significant changes, initiated by Thrive and a brave group of its leaders, which could have a significant impact on hundreds of thousands of low-income households, and those trapped in debt.