

THE WAR ON CHILD POVERTY



free@last

STRATEGY OUTLINE

Executive Summary	3
This Isn't Another report to be Shelved!	4
Personal – Why Poverty, Why Me?	5
What is Poverty?	
Academia	6
The generally used descriptions – absolute, relative, extreme	
Without Poverty	7
A simpler question for us to ask is...	
My Experience	9
A severe lack of ...	
Poverty is Mental	11
Abandonment.....	12
Family	14
Replacement	16
The Virus.....	18
WAR - the Basics	
Who is the Enemy?	20
Levels of War.....	22
War Zones	23
Battles.....	25
Terrain, Troops and Deployment.....	29
Battle Plan	30
Allies	31
Strategic Reserve.....	31
The Grand Strategy	32
Closing Statement	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Waking up every single day, without hope, knowing that your circumstances are not going to change; that you cannot pay your daily bills, feed the children or share your pain and despair with anyone; let alone worry that you are going to be physically assaulted by those you love, robbed by a stranger or controlled by the addiction you struggle with; is the reality for people who are trapped by poverty.

“Abu Yahya, his wife and four children are squeezed together on a sofa. This is their living room and now it’s also their bedroom. Like most houses in their area, the second floor has been blasted.... Through the windows they can see the battered landscape that is their neighbourhood. There is little in the room besides the sofa and a computer. Today, they are lucky to have power – a friend has lent Abu Yahya a car battery so he can Skype... His wife, Umm Yahya, is terrified whenever he goes to work. “My wife cries when I leave the house,” he says. “I’m so worried about him,” she says. “He works while all the shooting is still going on. I am worried he will be hit and killed.” He gets paid £60 a month – a wage raised by donations from doctors. A 1kg bag of sugar costs £6, and a bag of rice is £4.”¹

Although you may think this family lives in Nechells, Birmingham, they in fact live in Jobar, a district of Damascus, and for more than three years they have lived under siege, in a war zone. When asked why they don’t move, the response is firstly, that they can’t afford to move, and secondly, why should they, it’s their home.

The similarities of living in a war zone and living in poverty are not only physical but mental as well. People are trapped. Either they cannot afford a way out or they cannot mentally visualise a way out – they are trapped by the chains wrapped around them by their circumstances and by others who have the power to release them but choose not to intervene.

People who live in poverty will always feel they are fighting their own battles on a daily basis, in fact, they believe they are fighting their own war – but not a coordinated strategic and fully resourced war, led by some of the world’s best military strategists on the planet - they are fighting alone, under-resourced and inadequately trained.

You may have been surprised at the terminology we have used for this strategy – the War on Child Poverty – and may even believe it is excessive, however, it is only when you have lived through poverty that you can truly understand the reality of the fight we face. Any other terminology will only provide a false illusion of a life under poverty siege and will not allow the strategists to implement a military style coordinated response deserved to fight these battles and win this war.

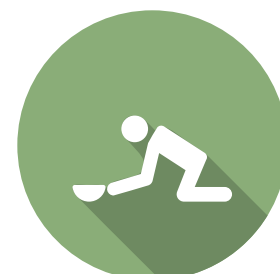
Hopefully reading this report will show you a heartfelt, personal understanding of the problems we face, and the answers needed to eradicate child poverty in our community, and by the time you’ve reach the final sentence, it will have spurred you on to join our strategy, becoming part of the solution, and together improving the lives of our children.

And when you have become excited at engaging with the possibilities of such stupendous change, you will hopefully come and connect with Nechells and see the already huge amount of remarkable work that has been happening here, from schools that tirelessly focus on raising children’s standards to faith groups meeting peoples’ basic needs; from statutory and council officers fighting our cause to charities (like free@last) providing support, services and opportunities over the past two decades. Then you can also meet some of our home-grown troops; our indigenous leaders and gatekeepers, the people who hold our community stitched together whilst the poverty virus continually tries to rip us apart – the real heroes of war, who have been battling all their lives, and very much wearing the battle scars on their sleeves and visual exterior.

Come and see the fighting already underway and join our journey to free the captives, absorb peoples’ pain, proclaim hope to all, bring people together, spend lavishly on the poor, protect the vulnerable and reflect God’s character². Come and bring your skills and passion to enable all in Nechells to finally be free@last!

John Street

Founder & Director of free@last



¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/05/life-in-war-zone-syria>

THIS ISN'T ANOTHER REPORT TO BE SHELVED!

Nechells is a district ward in central Birmingham, England, whose population, recorded in the 2011 Census, is 13,980, with 5,484 of these being under the age of 19. On the 24th January 2018, the 'End Child Poverty' coalition released an article stating that more than half of children, in some parts of the UK, are now living in poverty.

The highest constituency in the UK, trapped by child poverty, is Bethnal Green & Bow, with 54.18% of children living in poverty. The second highest is Birmingham, Ladywood – the constituency in which Nechells is situated, with 53.06% of children living in poverty. The figures also show that some of the most deprived areas of the UK have seen the biggest increases in child poverty, since the coalition last published local child poverty figures in December 2015. Increases of 10 percentage points in some areas demonstrate the growing crisis of child poverty in the UK.²

On 13th March 2012, the BBC news published a news report stating that 'in the Nechells area, 50% of children live in poverty and NHS figures suggest people there die younger.' The headline for this report is 'Bishop of Birmingham David Urquhart starts poverty inquiry.' The Bishop is reported to have said that 'he hoped the project would generate practical ideas to combat the problem' and 'we've got great ambitions and great talent.' However, even following a report that took a great deal of resources to complete, the statistics in the year 2020 show that the 'project' has not reduced this figure. What this project lacked – like all 'projects' –

is to not have a strategic understanding of the root causes of poverty and the need for a strategic approach to eradicate this disease. The resources expended on this 'project' were wasted, like so many other resources, due to the lack of understanding of how to strategically address the most challenging issues that individuals and communities face.

I am not criticising or judging anyone who attempts to react to poverty, in an attempt to overcome the problems, I am – and will be throughout this report – showing that a proactive strategic approach, not a series of reactive projects, are vital for complete and sustained change, and that the truth is real - we can create a community where people do not need to live in poverty. The biggest change needs to come from those who have the power to influence change, not those living in the poverty trap and I would hope that this 'project' (above), and the many others in our history of poverty failure, were not borne out of the need for public figures to be 'seen' to be doing something about big issues, or a need to fulfil personal agendas, but a desire to solve the crippling, debilitating virus of poverty; and that the failure of this 'project', in achieving its aim of reducing the child poverty statistics for the Ladywood Constituency, was simply down to a lack of strategic thinking and application. We can #forgivethose,⁴ who have the influence to change poverty, when they chose to ignore the plight of the people, if they accept the responsibility that they have been given and serve the people in their care, putting them before themselves.

If you are reading this, do not leave it in a cupboard or on a shelf, keep it on your desk, in full view, and constantly refer to it, reminding yourself that this can work! Fulfil your purpose for those less fortunate than you and be a part of the cure, not the virus.

² https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/westmidlands/wards/birmingham/E05011155_nechells/

³ <https://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/more-than-half-of-children-now-living-in-poverty-in-someparts-of-the-uk/>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-17338534>

⁵ www.forgivethose.com

PERSONAL – WHY POVERTY, WHY ME?

I have worked in Nechells (in a voluntary and paid capacity) since 1987, supporting children, young people and families. In 1998, my family and I moved into the area, becoming local residents, just as my wife and my own parents were many years before us.

You may ask the question ‘why would we make the choice to live in a community that suffers from so much deprivation, disadvantage and the root causes of poverty?’ The answer is a simply one - if we want to understand the needs of the people we are here to serve, they must become our needs too. Our God given purpose of choosing to live in poverty, to raise our 4 children in poverty, and to put our community first, is only fulfilled if we truly understand the challenges, the struggles, the inequalities and the oppression that poverty uses to strangle its victims. Then, and only then, can we truly serve our neighbours.

I learnt, many years ago, from the Christian Community Development Association (USA), that community development is only effective when the ‘3 R’s are implemented – Relocation, Redistribution and Reconciliation . A very simplistic explanation of these are, move into the area you’re serving, redistribute the resources strategically so there is no waste, and enable and equip people with the tools to manage conflict and begin the journey to repair and restore relationships. Each of these ‘R’s’ have mammoth challenges, which will take you on a painful and traumatic journey, but this should not stop us from facing our fears, jumping out of our comfort zones, and joining the trials of people who suffer at the hands of poverty.

Having a lifetime of involvement with Nechells (50 years at the time of writing), working with children, young people and families from Nechells for 33 years and living in Nechells for the past 22 years, has enabled a deep understanding of the cause of poverty and the effects it has on peoples’ lives. My journey has also shown me the mental and physical chains that poverty uses to chastise its victims and inhibit them from escaping its grasp, strangling them with a tighter grip each day. In addition, my varied working experiences in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Roseland (South Chicago), Austria, Bulgaria – and in the UK (Birmingham, Sandwell, Bournemouth and Basingstoke!) have shown a commonality in the way poverty traps people around the world. It has also shown me how governmental systems and structures are designed to keep people in their poverty chains, and that there is a severe lack of strategic thinking/planning/execution to resolve and eradicate huge societal issues. My journey has enabled the development of a contextual, strategic approach that can be used in a wide variety of settings globally, to eradicate child poverty, if, and only if, the collective people (from residents to influencers) are willing to work together.

What follows in the remainder of these pages, is how you take a gigantic, life and soul-destroying problem, and eradicate it!



⁵ <https://ccda.org/product/restoring-at-risk-communities-doing-it-together-and-doing-it-right/>

WHAT IS POVERTY?



ACADEMIA

When a child doesn't have breakfast because the cupboards are empty; when a child is living out of a hostel, or hotel room because they do not have a home; when a child does not have access to an education that meets their needs; when a child is starved of love and emotional nourishment, when girls cannot access health products for their period – are they living in poverty?

The generally used descriptions – absolute, relative, extreme

“Poverty can be and is measured in different ways by governments, international organisations, policy makers and practitioners. Increasingly, poverty is understood as multidimensional comprising social, natural and economic factors situated within wider socio-political processes. The capabilities approach also argues that capturing the perceptions of poor people is fundamental in understanding and measuring poverty.

When measured, poverty may be absolute or relative. Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. An example of an absolute measurement would be the percentage of the population eating less food than is required to sustain the human body (approximately 2000–2500 calories per day).

Relative poverty, in contrast, views poverty as socially defined and dependent on social context. One relative measurement would be to compare the total wealth of the poorest one-third of the population with the total wealth of the richest 1% of the population. In this case, the number of people counted as poor could increase while their income rises.”

Most people's perception of poverty is 'extreme' poverty, which affects the world's poorest, primarily in Africa and East Asia. These are the images that we see on International News stories, on major fundraising campaigns (like Comic Relief and Band Aid) and sometimes because people like to think that poverty only exists in faraway lands. But the reality is that poverty comes in many shapes, sizes and battles, and poverty does exist in the Western World, in the UK and in Nechells, whether we want to believe it or not.



WITHOUT POVERTY

A Simpler Question to Ask Is...

The above definitions of poverty are widely accepted in this field of social understanding, but the thought process that we need to go through, to truly understand poverty, is clouded by academic jargon and global descriptors. So, let us start with a simpler question:

What would life in Nechells be like without poverty?

Did your mind take you straight to materialism (bigger houses, newer cars, a golf club) or financial stability with lots of expendable income flying around? Did you immediately think of children with happy faces, families taking walks in the park together or adults all working in fulfilling jobs? Did you think of drug free streets, of street corners with no hooded youth committing violence or everyone being welcoming and celebrating each other's difference?

Many people automatically think of poverty as a financial issue, or a food issue, as this is what most of the imagery used in the media or fundraising campaigns portray. At the time of writing, a national response to provide food for those affected by

Covid-19 Governmental restrictions is in full force. The Manchester United footballer, Marcus Rashford, is lobbying Government to provide food for children during school holidays (when schools are not responsible) – and he's winning! [although why this is a 'fight' is beyond comprehension]. But is the extensive provision of free food across our country, and the significant increase in foodbanks, the answer to eradicating Child Poverty?

Humans can survive, on average, around 2-3 minutes without air, 2-3 days without water and 2-3 week without food (depending on the individual's size, lifestyle etc.). The following chart shows the life expectancy of children born between 2014 and 2016, based on the communities around the train stations listed. Children who live in Nechells (Duddeston) will die 10 years before their time, compared to someone living 7 train stops away. Much of this is to do with the air quality in Birmingham, but any 'projects' that are being implemented/considered are not addressing the air quality in Nechells.

Although I said above that we need 2-3 minutes of air to live, the quality of that air in my lungs and my neighbour's lungs is killing us. Do you still think this is just about food and money?



The story of the first humans (Adam & Eve) describes them walking around the Garden of Eden, a place of perfection and beauty. There were no TV's, no houses, no vehicles, no money, no industry, no pollution, just the natural, created world – they didn't even have clothes. The original intention of the world was to be shared and enjoyed together, with nature. The concept of poverty was not a part of their experience as they had everything they needed to live and enjoy. I am not suggesting that we all return to living naked in a well-maintained garden, rain forest or Savanna, but if Adam & Eve were walking around the concrete jungle of Nechells today, they would be wondering where the natural beauty has gone, why there is pressure on them to wear branded clothing, why they need currency to live, why are some people extremely obese and some haven't eaten for days, and why are they struggling to breathe in the polluted air?

When thinking about people living in poverty, our thoughts usually begin with money - where do they get it from, how much do they get and what do they spend it on? A community without poverty, currently, would still need money, but is the answer to eradicating poverty the accumulation of wealth?

Google's definition of wealth is:

1. An abundance of valuable possessions or money
2. A plentiful supply of a particular desirable thing

A community without poverty is not defined by the first statement above, but it must have the second!

Consider a neighbourhood without poverty - would there be a plentiful supply of healthcare; a plentiful supply of opportunities to learn for all ages; a plentiful supply of affordable, quality and healthy food; a plentiful supply of opportunities to fulfil your purpose at work or home; a plentiful supply of love and emotional intelligence? Or without poverty, would the community spirit and togetherness dissolve; would the resilience that is found in trauma, chaos and disadvantage be replaced for arrogance, materialism, or self-centredness? What do you think it would, or should look like?



People without the virus of poverty generally presume that all poor people are poor because they are lazy or drug addicts - with no understanding of the circumstances the poor struggle with; and those with the virus generally presume that all wealthy people are happy, content with their 'abundance of valuable possessions or money' – with no understanding as to the challenges the affluent may face emotionally, relationally, not having time for being involved in their kids' lives or feeling stressed and pressured to continue their high standards of luxury living. Our presumptions inhibit our ability to see clearly both ways through the poverty window and understand that a healthy community (in any neighbourhood) thrives on a balance of what we need to live and enjoy life, and an equal distribution of resources, mixed with a village mentality that takes care of its own.

I would love for Nechells to be a place where I can live in a metaphorical Garden of Eden, a place where poverty of any sort does not exist and where humans and the natural world harmonise together. A place where there is an abundance of the 'things' we 'need' to live and enjoy life, and a place where all our neighbours' lives are fulfilled, living life to their full potential. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden didn't end well for them as they rejected the 'Gardener' and He threw them out to live a life of struggle and pain. And this is where we now begin, amid that struggle and pain, creating a pathway – not back to the Garden (which we would only ruin again), but to an existence reflecting the principles of Garden living. There are many, many battles that we will need to engage with, in order to restore environmental and human control over the virus, and then to sustain life with a plethora of vaccines. This is not going to be easy, BUT it is not impossible.



MY EXPERIENCE

A Severe lack of...

Poverty, in my definition, is a severe lack of something required to meet your human needs. This can include money, food, clothing, adequate housing, medicine, warmth, love, affection, education, learning opportunities, life opportunities, fulfilled employment, fresh air, feeling safe, self-worth, purpose, entertainment, social interaction, positive relationships.

The more 'somethings' that are withheld from a person's life, the higher level of poverty they become trapped in. The more generations of a person's family who have lived with the same severity of need increases the tightness of the grip that poverty has on their life, making the chains stronger and harder to break. It might seem strange stating that things are 'withheld', but this is where the human race fails in its ability to solve the global poverty problem.

My experiences of poverty, both personally and fulfilling my purpose, leads me to define poverty as a severe lack of something, without the means or capacity to effect change. This definition can affect anyone, regardless of their race, colour, religion, wealth or circumstances, and can address a particular strain of the poverty virus, when necessary, rather than the whole mutation, or can bring the full weight of the disease to unsuspecting casualties.

For example, a teenager sitting alone in a million-pound house can be starved of love and affection by parents who are working every hour they can, to give their child everything they didn't have growing up (materialistically and opportunity wise). A severe lack of emotion and affection has a significant impact on the child, regardless of the other areas of life where the child is not living in poverty.



Picture a Sunday morning children's football league, where the team manager/coach (usually a volunteer) puts a great deal of effort into getting the team to the ground. The team can be running around chasing the ball, working hard, and implementing what they'd practiced in training. One team comes from a disadvantaged neighbourhood, the other from a wealthy suburb. An onlooker may only notice the difference by the quality of boots that are worn, but if they were to take a step back and see the bigger picture, they will notice that, although the pitch is busy, only one side line has parents screaming and shouting at the players, coach and the ref. The other side can very often be empty, void of parents encouraging their children and cheering them on. Why? Because some 'poor' parents struggle to show an interest in their children's lives, to prioritise the importance of time with their children or knowing how to fulfil their role as a parent. There may also be some 'rich' parents missing for the same reason, but there is a higher percentage of 'poor' parents that do not attend their children's activities. There is a severe lack of support, parental involvement and other issues that can affect both teams on the pitch.

In both these examples we are seeing the expression of the virus, the physical outcomes of unresolved poverty festering, with an ever-growing grip on the individuals and families involved. The virus itself was present many years before and latches onto anyone in its path, but where the virus is at its most contagious is when it is given free rein to affect many areas of a person's life. When a person has a severe lack in several areas of their life, the virus becomes more extreme and more unmanageable.

Nechells is a community where most of the housing is owned by social housing organisations and the City Council. In order to access one of these properties, a person/family is judged on the severity of their need⁶, and when a neighbourhood is predominately social housing, there is a higher concentration of people with the greatest needs, in the same location. You could say that poverty is socially engineered by social housing providers who put all the poor people in the same place! The problem with this approach is that the areas chosen for social housing are generally the communities which have the least number of resources to cope/manage/support the problems. If the housing providers do not offer locally based services and support, targeted at the needs they know they have in their properties, it is left to a depleted voluntary sector to try and help. Should a household's circumstances improve, and they are able to move to a more affluent area, they are replaced by someone in need, thus prolonging the drain on limited resources and the difficulties for that community to respond effectively. A severe lack of quality housing, where housing providers do not offer complete support packages and work together to improve their tenants needs, the properties they own and the community as a whole, all contributes to the poverty trap and the virus that infects our poorer communities.

It is not only Housing Associations (established to support disadvantaged people), who have created a chaotic, complex, impoverished neighbourhood that has far too many problems for them to support, it is a governmental and local council system that has created a monster so big that it can no longer be tamed. Their response – abandonment.

Having a severe lack of resources in a community not only impacts on housing, but it also impacts on everything else. There have been many local residents who are upset with us stating the statistics about poverty in our community, because they do not believe they live in area gripped by poverty, or that the virus affects them personally. It is not a nice feeling to know that you live in a poor community, but even if a person can show that the house they live in is their own, that that can afford to pay their bills, run a car and go on foreign holidays, the reality is that, whilst they continue to live in Nechells, they live in a disadvantaged community that has a severe lack of many things. For example, if they went to one of the many faith venues, they would notice that the congregations are severely under-resourced, compared to more affluent areas. In three of the churches, they do not have anyone who can play a musical instrument, so for many years one man went to a different church each week to play the piano/organ for them. If a child in Nechells wants to learn to play a musical instrument, outside of school, they will struggle to find a local music teacher for lessons. Poverty isn't just about food, it is about every area of life that we need to flourish, and where there is a severe lack of many things, for many people, this feeds the virus and makes it much, much harder to eradicate.

Poverty is so complex and hard to fight that the easiest solution for people in power is to leave the fallen on the battlefield and admit that this is a war they've lost. However, the people with power do not like their failures to be publicly exposed and so they simply abandon neighbourhoods, knowing that the deep wounds inflicted by the poverty mentality will stop the fallen of the battle fields standing together and fighting a systematic battle for equality and justice.



⁶https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5661/housing_allocation_scheme_summary_april_2017

Poverty is Mental

I believe that poverty is mental, a double entendre showing that it is 'crazy' to think that our world encourages the extreme inequality that fans the flames of poverty; but also, that the real poverty 'trap' is in the mind of those who suffer its grasp.

For many who have grown up in an environment consumed by poverty, they will accept that this is their 'lot' in life, and nothing they do can get them out. They may be given an opportunity or two to break free, but without a map to navigate through the challenges, barriers and struggles, or without the support of people who can guide them and help them believe in their own ability to break the chains of poverty, they remain trapped.

Teenagers and adults who sit on their settee all day, thinking 'what's the point in leaving the house' are not lazy, or 'wasters', they are mentally trapped, believing that there is no point doing anything to change their lives, as nothing they do will make any difference to their circumstances.

If you are consistently told you will fail, you will believe you are a failure. If you are consistently told you will succeed, you will be successful. Which one do you think is synonymous with people in poverty? It's not just the negative things that are said, as more is caught than taught, so when the environment that a child is growing up in, is influenced by benefit dependency, survival induced criminality, low value of education or employment, and limited experiences of exploring the world beyond their own neighbourhood, it is not surprising they 'catch' the virus and live a life trapped in the grip of mental and physical poverty.

If you then accentuate the mental grasp of poverty with other things that affect a person's mental well-being, like substance mis-use, addiction, traumatic experiences, domestic violence, cruelty, abuse, isolation, bullying or offending behaviour, it is easy to see (as an outsider looking in) that the chances of someone breaking the chains of the virus's grasp on their own mental state, are nigh on impossible alone. Even if they are able to change specific areas of their lives and improve their ability to cope, grow and flourish in certain areas (career, parenting, emotional well-being, education etc.) they will still need help to completely be free of the virus, which has spent years attaching itself to their soul – their character, belief system, morals, judgments and behaviours.

Over the thirty or so years of working in this environment, I have been privileged to see young people become positive, independent adults, making a difference to others wherever they can. One young lady, whom I've known for over 30 years and supported through many a challenge, has become a successful businesswoman, running her own business, gaining the respect of many other business folk, raising two wonderful boys and making an impact on others in her community. In October 2019, without setting foot on any mountains prior to this year, she climbed Kilimanjaro with me and 6 others. At one point on the expedition, she struggled to believe in her ability to complete this challenge – not based on her inexperience of climbing mountains, camping, or eating bland food, but on the mindset that she wasn't good enough. Anyone looking at her from the outside, would just see the results of the journey so far (and see success), not the physical and mental scars of the virus causing traumatic life experiences and a mental state of unworthiness. The longer someone lives in poverty, the harder it is for them to walk the road to recovery, change and a life without the virus controlling their mind and soul.



Abandonment

Poverty is such a complex issue, that those who work hard and fight to address the issues and outcomes that poverty breeds, are often overwhelmed by the challenge the virus causes and end up focussing on specific areas of need, that are more manageable and achievable to overcome.

This can include food banks, who meet a desperate need of hunger across our land; energy companies supporting people to overcome their fuel poverty; those who challenge the Government for taxing sanitary products, attributing towards period poverty; Skills agencies providing easy access to adult education and learning in community locations; and so on.

The list goes on, showing that there is a strong collective of people who work hard to make a difference and fight to challenge and change these injustices in our society. The problem, however, is the same problem that I shared in the opening page of this strategy – these are projects that only focus on one aspect of poverty and will never be truly effective at eradicating poverty whilst all the other areas are being untouched. And therefore, a strategic approach is necessary, in order to support the ‘projects’ as part of the bigger picture being implemented.

The problem is that a strategic approach requires all those who have the power and influence to change a whole community, to work together and share resources, information, budgets and control – giving it back to local people, who understand where the resources need to be used as part of their own resolution plan. This is where Government and City Council’s struggle. They like the control and they like holding the purse strings, and in my experience, they do not think strategically enough, but reactively to current issues that could hit the headlines and cause PR problems for them; or that will make an impact during their term of office. And where there is the opportunity for a strategic approach at this level, it is not based on solving the problems first, but on creating aesthetically pleasing reports and buildings that make the ‘people’ go ‘wow’ and makes the councillors, MP’s and officers look good, but without solving any long term, real problems. Why? Because the problems are perceived to be too big and too costly to resolve, so instead of addressing them all head on there has been decades of ‘brushing it under the carpet’, of ignoring the neighbourhoods most in need and abandoning those who are the most vulnerable.

Here are a few examples: -

Abandonment in an education system leads to a severe lack of resources to deliver quality education to children who are already starting on an uneven keel, compared to those raised in resourceful communities.

The Education Authorities will say they are addressing these issues with free school meals, Pupil Premium to help those with additional disadvantages, and many other initiatives. A term ‘wrap around care’ was created several years ago, to encourage schools to include looking after children from 8am to 6pm to reduce childcare costs/issues for working parents. An older term was ‘latchkey kids’ and these additional services may help those who are able to work, but does this help change poverty on its own? Somebody, somewhere, in a nice office, is always creating projects or programmes or rules or systems to deal with the areas they are responsible for and the figures show the current approach does not work. It’s never strategic, just a series of isolated approaches to fix what’s broken.

One area of London has started to change this, by running a pilot project with the Child Poverty Action Group, focussing their efforts on supporting a group of families on low income, as follows:

How we supported low-income families

We worked in 11 primary schools across four boroughs – Camden, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Newham, and Southwark.

Each school was given support to design and implement a range of initiatives that would help pupils and parents from low-income families.

This included:

- Completing needs assessments
- Compiling local directories of support services
- Developing a ‘Parent Champion’ volunteering role to encourage use of support services
- Delivering holiday events and activities to reduce holiday food insecurity
- Applying for local grants or funding for activities or services
- Funding a small number of welfare rights advisors to deliver regular advice sessions to parents⁷

This pilot has seen some good success, as ‘many of the families who took part in the pilot identified the positive impact it had on their lives.’

All of the initiatives have been implemented before, all over the country, but the difference here is that the approach recognises the need for a ‘range of initiatives’ to meet a range of problems. [At the time of writing I have been unable to establish whether this pilot was continued and rolled out further as a sustainable, long lasting, and impactful strategy.

⁷ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/tackling-child-poverty-through-schools> (2019)

Abandonment in housing would be argued by many housing providers who have invested in their properties, however, let us start with a comparison of the following images.



The first picture is a multi-million pound refurbishment of the outside of a local block of flats. The second and third pictures were sent to us from a distraught parent who lives in this block of flats and whose soil pipe was broken and leaking through the kitchen wall. The external, aesthetically pleasing picture is not a true representation of the neglected, internal picture, which leaves the residents extremely traumatised and abandoned.

Housing is an exceptionally complex issue, just like all our areas of need, and when those who provide social housing for others (Council's, Housing Associations, Private Landlords) do not live in the same conditions as their tenants, they have a lack of understanding and connectivity with those they should be serving. Some may set up a system to offer support to their tenants, but some are content to abandon those who live in their properties as they are only in it for the money!

Abandonment of housing is not just about the bricks and mortar, it's about the people who live in these properties, and the systems in place to support the tenants. There are many good examples of housing officers, tenant support workers or family liaison officers who help their tenants through the problems and difficulties they face (and not just relating to the property either). However, size here is an issue! I commented earlier that it takes a whole village to raise a child. When that village becomes a district, a town a city or a region, it becomes too big for the individual child to be raised by a collective group who have the same interest in that child's life. People turn into numbers and working together turns into outsourced contracts or teams of office workers who are employed to follow the system, rather than live in the same village, understand the individual needs of the child and collectively fix the problems and support them through their growth and development.

Where there is not a localised (village based) housing team – with the full control, resources, and budget to manage their stock and support their residents – the focus moves from people to process, and poverty remains.

Warning – A Bug bear!!

Consultations - there are many people who love a good old consultation. This is the simple process of asking people, who live in a specific geographical neighbourhood or follow a certain belief system/life choice community, what they want and what their views are. Those who ask/demand consultations are usually the people with the influence, power, budgets etc. who are not a part of the village, but operate far outside of the village, with no understanding of what it is like to live in said community. If you are a part of the village, you already know what the problems are and how people feel about the issues they face, because their needs are your needs, so you live them too. Consultations do not work in poverty-stricken communities, unless they are driven from within, to meet the needs of those who suffer, by those who suffer. People in poverty are fed up with consultation after consultation, that make absolutely no impact to their lives. They are told this will give them a voice – when the reality is that questionnaires, forums, focus groups etc only feed the pockets of those who have the power and influence, but they do not want to give it away to the villagers to solve their own problems. So, if you are not part of the village, please stop asking the villagers for a consultation process in order to fulfil your priorities – instead, give them your resources and control and support them to *learn how to fish* so they can sustain themselves, rather than throwing them a fish if they answer your questions. When it comes to poverty there is only one question you need to ask – do you want to remain poor, yes or no?

Family

There is a wealth of literature and academic studies about families, the construct and function of effective and dysfunctionality within the family unit, so I intend leaving the theory to the academics and specialists in this field. The insertion of a paragraph or two about family life, into this strategy, is based on my experience of working in this field for three decades.

More is caught than taught

When talking about the issue of poverty, the term 'breaking the cycle of poverty' is often mentioned. Generational family dependency on benefits creates a mentality and expectation that undervalues work, employment or generating legitimate income by working for it. This state aid mentality transfers into every area of life, breeding a mentality that responsibility for the problems around them are not their own doing and should be resolved by someone else. For example, as a tenant, whatever is broken is someone else's responsibility to fix, not theirs – a hole in the garden fence, a door hanging off its hinges, the overgrown grass. As a parent the bills to pay are someone else's problem – if you can't afford what you owe; and the kids misbehaving at school are the teachers' problems, or if the cause anti-social behaviour out on the street it must be the 'victims' fault. And the biggest impact that this has, is that children grow up 'catching' the behaviours and beliefs from the adults in their homes, rather than what they are taught in school, in faith centres or by external adults teaching positive behaviour – more is caught than taught! Nobody is born racist, or sexist or homophobic, they 'catch' this mentality from those around them, and as it's often the case that these parents do not take responsibility for their own actions, they will blame the 'system', or someone else for the way their children behave. At the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown, I saw a quote on Facebook which was 'Now some parents will realise the teacher is not the problem!'. All our actions, words, mannerisms and behaviours have an impact on the people around us and if we want to break the chains of generational poverty, we need to change the dependency, blame and negative attitudes of parents and their children, giving them hope and supporting them on a journey of positive influence.

Dominant behaviour

I've worked with many teenagers who have been challenging, meaning that their behaviour is difficult to manage by teachers, parents, and other people in authority. I always state that there is no such thing as a naughty child, just a child who does naughty things, and to understand why they behave in a certain way we need to consider the environment that they have grown up in (what has been caught or taught) and who is forming their dominant behaviour. Let me explain. Imagine a young teenager who has grown up spending more time playing football on the streets and hanging around with their mates than participating in activities with other family members in the home. When the group of young people (who spend several hours a day together) sitting on a park bench or roadside wall, become bored, they will create their own entertainment. This could begin with kicking a drinks can around and playing practical jokes on each other; but as soon as they realise there is no one around to challenge or stop them, their boundaries are pushed beyond recognition and into antisocial behaviour and criminality. Over time (sometimes a short amount of time) this peer led behaviour, where there is no positive influence or constructive challenge from adults, becomes their 'norm', their dominant behaviour pattern. This is then transferred into every setting they find themselves – home, school, the police station etc. – and they express this behaviour, not understanding the impact of what and how they say and do in these other areas of life.

I've seen the change in young people's behaviours, over the past 33 years of working in this field, and the current state of dominance is severely affected because of the decision by Government and Local Councils to stop funding youth activities and positive adult intervention during Austerity. Our country's leaders need to share responsibility, that their choices have attributed to the problems our disadvantaged teenagers face today and consider their strategic approach to changing the dominant behaviour.



Consistency in relationships and parenting

'Dad, can I open the biscuits?'

'Ask your mum'

'She said ask you'

'OK, yes you can then.'

'Who's opened the biscuits?'

'Dad said we could'

And so the conversation continues, and the arguments start and the children sit their eating the biscuits with a smirk on their faces knowing they've achieved another result in playing one parent off against the other. Every parent will have experienced this as children (and some adults!) will keep asking until they get what they want. One of the hardest things that a parent struggles with is to be firm, fair, and consistent. If two parents are involved in raising their children (whether they live together or share the parenting) they need to agree to operate under the same boundaries and rules to be the most effective in their parenting. This is obviously very difficult if the relationship between the parents is strained, and difficult for lone parents who must gather the strength to remain constant all the time. It is academically proven that single parents' ability to be self-sufficient is vastly reduced compared to couples (married or not). Regardless of the family status, all parenting is a challenge – and add to this the additional pressures that living in poverty creates, effective parenting is extremely difficult. When you do not have the resources, the time, the energy, the skills, the physical or mental strength, the mental capacity

or the support needed to raise your children, it often becomes necessary to rely on electronic devices to entertain and educate the kids, and for the local take away to feed them. With the easy access to negative imagery and adult themed TV programmes, recordings and games, on all digital devices, it is easy for children to learn their values, principles, behaviours, words and actions from a place of negativity, rather than from the consistent positive direction of parents and loving family relationships. Unless a parent/s recognise the challenges ahead, and plans how to remain firm, fair and consistent, their children develop through 'catching' inconsistencies and unfair treatment and are taught by unsavoury characters and negative people on YouTube.

Can parenting really be effective in Poverty?

My wife and I have raised our four children in Nechells. They have attended the same schools as their peers and had the same experiences of living in a disadvantaged community as their neighbours. Today one of our children is teaching in China, another is a public servant, another is a qualified baker, and our final child is studying acting at university. We are extremely proud of our children, who are all loving, respectful and caring men and women. They have happy, healthy relationships with each other and with us, their parents, and have a wide variety of memories to make them laugh, explore and never be afraid of trying new things. They are resilient, confident, and happy, living lives with a purpose and a desire to help others and make a difference in this world. Can parenting really be effective in poverty – yes it can, and we are living examples of the reality that raising your children in poverty and disadvantage does not have to stop you from fulfilling your role as parents.



Replacement

What are we trying to achieve here? Are we trying to tell people how to live their lives, to set a standard of acceptable behaviour and cohesiveness for living in our community? What if local residents do not have the capacity and support to change, what if they do not want to change? We are not delving into human behaviour modification here, but we are recognising that there are aspects to the lives of people in poverty, which if changed, would significantly benefit their relationships, their physical and mental well-being and their dependency on others/things to make it through the day, explore new opportunities and live a much fuller life.

However, those whose lifestyles are directed by illegality or conditioned behaviour, have additional needs, in order that the outcomes of their choices can be replaced, rather than simply removed, or neglected.

Take, for example, an organised gang, with a clear structure of roles and authorities, as described here by Thurrock Council:⁸

- **Teenies** – generally those under the age of 10 – below the age of criminal responsibility – who are used to carry drugs and weapons, or move parcels between older members
- **Runners, Shotters** – generally aged between 12 and 15-ish, those who move drugs between older members, sell drugs in the streets, arrange street deals, stay in 'trap' houses where drugs are sold or made
- **Youngers** – generally aged under 18, they have some level of authority over teenies and shotters, are street dealers of class A or B drugs, can set up trap houses, recruit teenies, runners and shotters, report directly to elders
- **Links, Baby Mama, Bae, Wifey** – girls used by members as girlfriends, used for sex, exploited, they will carry or hide weapons, drugs and money for members of any age
- **Elders** – generally aged over 18, they are in charge of running street operations and trap houses, deal in larger amounts of class A and B drugs, facilitate purchase of firearms and other weapons, have authority over street dealers and youngers, respected
- **Faces, Olders** – those at the top or higher end of the chain, limited contact with street level operations, not often seen or known by street level members

Each person within this structure has a role to play and a value to add. The lower the role the less valuable you are, making you more disposable. However, if you wish to leave the gang, there is a price to pay – as this is often frowned upon with the gang structure.

If a Teenie realises that they have made a mistake, or their parents uncover their involvement with 'the wrong crowd', there may be a light 'beating' from gang members and/or some parental consequences. This child needs the support of a variety of adults here (professionals and family members) to put in place a recreational programme where the child can find fulfilment and enjoyment and to direct their attention from the gang life to a positive activity lifestyle, with consistent and fair parenting. The parent/s may or may not need support with their parent/child relationship or their family circumstances, to address the reasons why the child approached/was approached by the gang, and how they can influence change. The challenge in disadvantaged communities is accessing the resources for this to happen!

What if an Elder, or Older has had enough of the gang lifestyle and wants to bail out, or if we want to create an alternative option for gang members to leave, that is still an attractive lifestyle but without the criminality and risk to Public Health? We are now moving into much more serious and costly territory, both for the individuals looking to leave and for those who are able to offer a way out. Let's look at a few examples and highlight a few specific areas of this situation and see where Replacement needs to be considered.

A. Income: the amount of money that is made each day, selling drugs and other paraphernalia, is far greater than a warehouse or retail job offering minimum, or even living wage. We cannot expect that a dealer, who earns £1,000 a day will simply give up that income for £80 a day, however safe and satisfying the new job may be. Projects are currently being created by employment funded organisations, to entice young people away from gangs and youth violence, by offering them 'pocket money' or travel expenses, expecting that this is a suitable level of Replacement. It is not! We need to create the right level of legitimate income to satisfy/entice them away from the gang.



⁸<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/gangs-and-gang-crime/gang-structure>



B. Safety: some of you will have read the paragraph above and be seething at the thought of paying a drug dealer hundreds of pounds a day to stop him/her dealing and causing misery to many others. This is where I need you to recognise that if you have never lived this life, you will not know the complexities, stresses, or life threatening danger that you'd put yourself in, trying to escape. Our blinkered 'onlooking' external viewpoint will undoubtedly just see the life they live now, rather than the cause of them joining this pathway and the journey that has led them to the trappings of thug life. Replacement is not about replacing the materialistic items gathered through illicit activity, in order to sustain a lifestyle of glamour and comfort – far from it - it is the recognition that a life lived in the extremities of life and death require a complex strategic process to change into a life of legal conformity. For those rare few who are internally strong and resilient enough to leave, without consequence, they are either of no value to the gang or have found faith in some form (another Replacement), but for the rest, it is like easing a heroin addict off drugs using Subutex – a Replacement is necessary for change. Very often, the Replacements created/used are not long lasting, and do not provide the person with a sustainable answer to completely cutting themselves off from the roots of the gang, leading them to slip back into the lifestyle that has gripped them for so long.

C. Purpose: we all need to find and express our purpose for existing on this planet. Those involved in the darker side of life, clouded by a smokescreen of illegality, could track their circumstances back to poverty as the cause for where they have ended up today. As I've previously stated above, the poverty mentality traps you into hopelessness, despair and makes life itself feel pointless. It stops a person from searching for fullness of life and understanding their purpose, it certainly does not give you the freedom or opportunity to consider your place in humanity and how to live a fruitful and happy life. The challenges of supporting a person, whose life is shrouded in criminality, violence, anger, hatred and an expected oncoming fête of prison or death, to a state of purposefulness and fullness of life (within the law) requires significant investment and appropriate Replacement of many different aspects and areas of their lives.

Replacement is necessary at all levels, and within a community of poverty, there needs to be a significant structure to manage the change from negative, destructive lives – whether gangs, domestic violence, addiction etc. – into positive and happy community members.

There is far more to Replacement that I can write here, just as there is with the other areas touched on above, but this is a brief introduction of my 33 years of living and working in poverty, and how serious I am that we need to go to war against poverty, with an aggressive and strategic force that puts an end to our children living in abandonment and hopelessness.

The Virus

I've used the words 'virus' and 'vaccine' above, and it's timely that this strategy is being developed in the midst of the global pandemic Coronavirus, or Covid-19, whose origins are disputed, but suggestions say it's likely to have come from a negative/illegal/immoral source.

It spreads quickly and has no preference or concern for who it infiltrates/infects. Each person who contracts the virus is affected differently; some people don't even know they have it! Those who are the most vulnerable pay the highest price and their families suffer the most. There is no cure, just an antidote to try and reduce the effectiveness of how it affects you, should it hit you again. Those who suffer the most are all put together in the same place (hospital) where the resources to manage them have reached beyond capacity. The professional services (Statutory & Voluntary) struggle to cope with the consequences of the virus and struggle to heal the infected and support their families - hoping that individuals are strong enough and resilient enough to fight on their own. The hope offered is just a plaster for a catastrophic bleed.

Those who make the decisions of how to manage and fight the virus are not affected in the same way as those who live in poverty. If they catch the virus, they have the best treatment available; their livelihoods are not affected to the same degree (they can still order from Waitrose and wine shops); their education is not affected by a lack of technology or connectivity; they can even breach their own rules! They make knee jerk reactive decisions, based on analytical data, rather than getting stuck into the front lines and understanding the reality of the impact of the virus. The decisions they make are based on information they are given rather than experience they have felt. And none of it is strategic. They may resolve one part of the problem but are then overcome by others, as the virus mutates and attacks again. Their true hope is put in something that might or might not work, and that certainly cannot protect everyone.

I may seem hypocritical here, making the above assumptions based on my limited knowledge of what is televised, or reported in the media, without having the full facts that have been used in the decision-making process (just like those who try to resolve poverty based issues).



I recognise that I do not have the experience or knowledge to lead Government and make decisions about Covid-19, but I can present a picture of a more localised response to the pandemic, and what solutions could be offered?

If we were to put a metaphorical dome over a small geographical area (like the Nechells neighbourhood), and the fight is localised, what would it look like then - would each ill patient have access to the treatment they need? If we consider 'ill' to be categorised as someone affected by the virus, we could establish the starting point of local residents before inflicting restrictions that are a struggle even without a lockdown, like: -

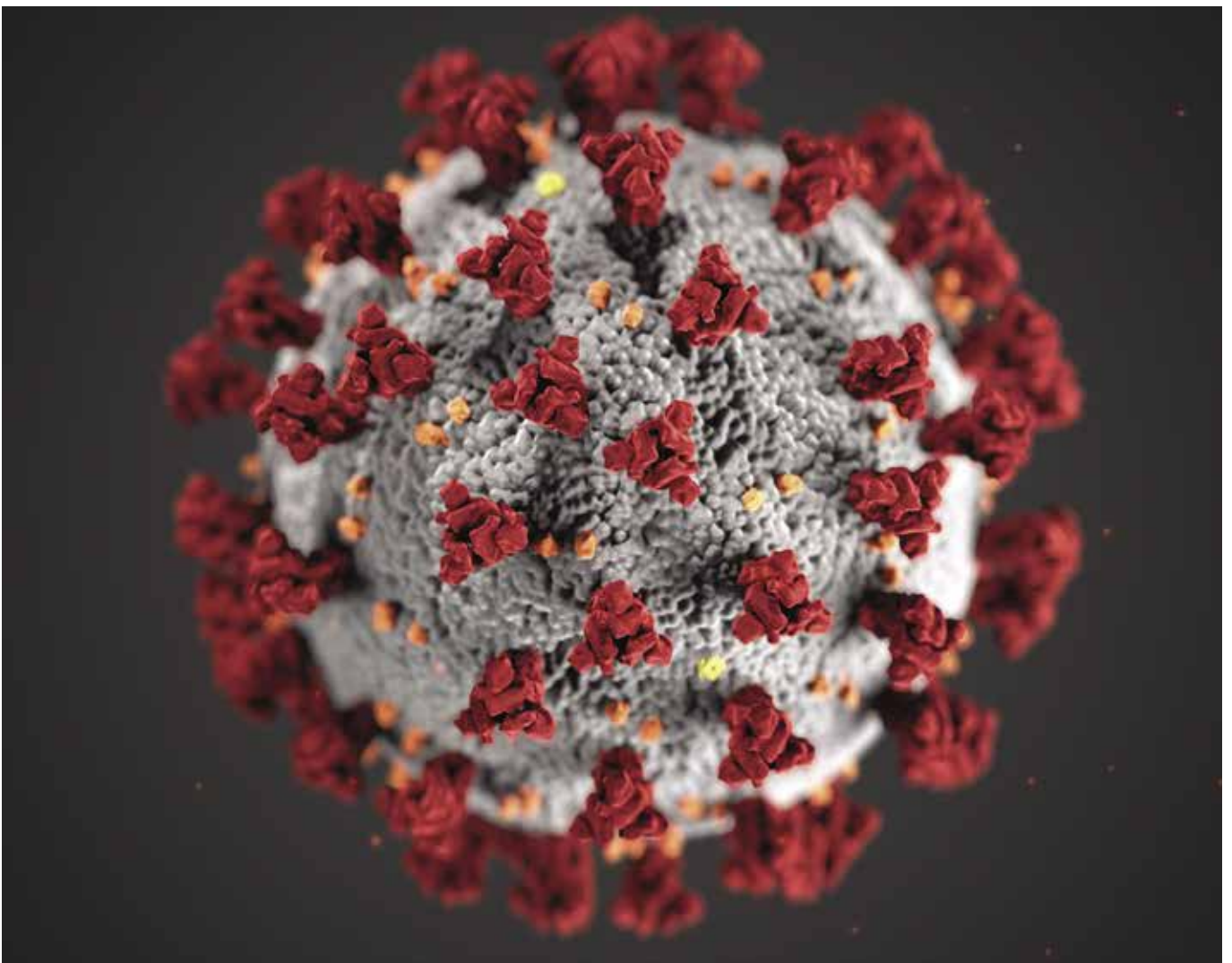
- Would everyone have access to appropriate technology, connectivity and have the skills to use it?
- Would everyone have access to mental health support, both children and adults?
- Would everyone have neighbours and friends knocking on their doors to see if they are ok?
- Would they be able to go to work or work from home (if they have work)?
- Would they be able to provide for all of their children's needs?
- Would they have a garden to exercise or a park which is safe and free from rubbish, dog mess or groups of bored teenagers looking for some 'entertainment.'
- Would they have easy access to food and be able to shop online?
- Would they be able to play sport and keep active?
- Would they be able to comfort their loved ones, who do not live with them?
- Would they be healed?
- Would they have access to the antidote, with a clear understanding of why they need it and what effect it will have on them?

There is no strategic, coordinated response to redistribute resources within a community that does not have access to, or control over those resources. This is where the severe lack of... causes the most damage, death, and long-term problems. It may be a global pandemic, but a global response has not been created or consistently implemented, as each country directs their own response to the virus. Neither should a national response be implemented to each village that is different to the next one. There should also not be a regional response, or a city/town strategy, but a localised, community-based plan that meets the needs within that geographical community.

Now, compare everything that you have read so far with this - if poverty was a virus, a global pandemic that many projects and people had tried for centuries to resolve, what differences would there be in the approach to eradicating it?

I am not a medical expert or scientist, but how I see the world leaders and Governments respond to Coronavirus, compared to influenzas, shows me the different approach to how they respond to a new virus that has spread around the world, compared to the common cold that has been with us forever! Airports and businesses are not closed if someone starts to

sneeze, new rules and consequences are not imposed across our land if runny noses occur, and billions of pounds are not given away by Ministers when the box of tissues are empty. The flu is generally overlooked, unless a new piece of research shows that by giving an annual injection to those who are most susceptible to catching the virus – or indeed being the most affected by it – will help those infection/affected by the disease. The virus of poverty, like the flu, has lived on this planet for centuries, and it has unfortunately become a part of life, something that is incurable and therefore it is a waste of time investing the resources needed to eradicate it. If using analogies is useful to you, then please consider that the virus of poverty is a global pandemic, that needs to be fought with a strategic approach to that of Covid-19, rather than the Flu. But more so, this is not a domestic, homeland response that is needed, this needs a military focus as poverty is humanities enemy and simple masks and social distancing will not suffice. Poverty is our enemy; it is a virus that has engaged in biological warfare on our planet throughout its history. Recognising the strengths of this virus and how it spreads will enable us to use the resources that we have, effectively to overcome and win. This is our battle front, this is our War, this is our purpose. We need you!



WAR – THE BASICS

Can a man simply pick up a weapon and go to war against his enemy?

Before we answer this question, we need to understand the difference between a 'War' and a 'Battle.' A War is a state of armed conflict, a fight, a struggle, which affects everyone in a large geographic area. A Battle is a concentrated fight or struggle in a particular area. Battles can affect a smaller number of people than the those involved with the war. Many battles make up the war, and each battle needs to be won, one at a time, in order for the war to be won.

So, to ask the question again, can an individual go to war on their own? The answer is surely 'no'. It is a simple statement but most people, who have never experienced poverty, think that those of our society who are cursed by poverty should just get off their backsides, stop being lazy and go get a job! There is no denying that an increased income into a poor family's home will help them fight their daily battles, but to eradicate poverty we need to fight a war.

free@last has announced war on our community's enemy, Child Poverty. For far too long now Poverty has had control in our neighbourhood, having its grip on the cause and effects of peoples' lives, controlling them, and disabling their abilities to take control of their own lives and fight against it.

We have spent decades identifying our opponent's strengths, weaknesses, resources, and attack methods. We have seen the devastating effects of this long-standing war, as the people of Nechells have been given limited, or the wrong, weapons to use against their enemy, and it is now time to fight back effectively.

This document provides details of free@last's strategic approach to identifying specific battles, our methods of attack and defence, and our rules of engagement

with the enemy. We will deploy our resources (forces) to the most needed battlefields, where the children are hurting the most, and we will create a plan of attack on all our enemy's methods, plans and systems.

Our enemy has had control in Nechells for decades, so this will not be easy, quick, or cheap. There are many supporters of the enemy's stronghold and we will need to increase our own support networks and resources to make a strong fight at all levels.

Too many children have suffered at the hands of Poverty and enough is enough. We need to recognise that we have a multitude of battles where we will need to engage the enemy, if we are going to win. It is therefore imperative that we approach poverty as our enemy and fight it using the universal rules of engagement for fighting any war. We will win this war, and we will end Poverty's grip on our children's lives. This is our battle front, this is our War, this is our purpose. But we need you to fight with us!

Who is the Enemy?

The dictionary defines an enemy as a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone or something. A foe, adversary, opponent, rival, nemesis, antagonist, combatant, challenger, competitor, opposer, hostile party. It can also be a hostile nation or its armed forces or citizens, especially in time of war. Finally, it can be a thing that harms or weakens something else.

When a child doesn't have breakfast because the cupboards are empty; when a child is living out of a hostel, or hotel room because they do not have a home; when a child does not have access to an education that meets their needs; when a child is starved of love and emotional nourishment – is the enemy within themselves? Is the enemy their parents? Is the enemy the professional workers whom they encounter? Is the enemy the State, local council or system or is the enemy much greater than all these things?



Poverty is multi-faceted, with many faces and expressions that can confuse its enemy (even though we are stating that poverty is our enemy, make no mistake that we are now its enemy, as this is a war it does not want to lose!). The effects of poverty, the trail of destruction, pain and trauma that it leaves behind, as it rips through individuals, families and whole communities, is clear to see; and for some reason easy to ignore by those who have chosen to abandon their people and keep well away from this particular war.

The reality of influence is that there is no one taking the lead - no government, or military power, no single leader or ruler, no politician or parent is leading the march, making decisions, commands, or policies to end the war. The enemy is much bigger than just one person, country, or belief system – the enemy is poverty itself, and this enemy is winning the war.

Poverty has many supporters, people who either encourage a system that allows Poverty to flourish and contain control, or those who choose to place embargos on Poverty's opponents. These include Government and Local Councils, right through to the mindset of parents and local Nechells' residents, who have become immune to the control that Poverty has over them.

If we viewed poverty in the same way that we do Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin or Saddam Hussein, we will change the way in which we approach our enemy and create a strategy to overthrow them. Poverty is our enemy.



Levels of War

War is exceptionally complex. It is after all a life or death situation that necessitates decisions and orders given by control room political leaders to military forces, to implement destruction on land, sea and air; impacting on other armed forces and civilians as collateral damage – all for a higher purpose of freedom.

War needs to be approached strategically, and there are 4 levels of war:

1. Grand Strategic
2. Strategic
3. Operational
4. Tactical

“Each level is concerned with planning (making strategy), which involves analysing the situation, estimating friendly and enemy capabilities and limitations, and devising possible courses of action. Corresponding to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war and conflict are national (grand) strategy with its national military strategy subcomponent, operational strategy, and battlefield strategy (tactics).

Each level also is concerned with implementing strategy, which must be re-evaluated constantly (and usually based on incomplete information) because warfare is dynamic. Therefore, a key to success in war and other conflicts is the ability to adapt rapidly to the changing situation and to exploit transient opportunities rather than strictly adhering to a predetermined course of action. The ability to adapt and exploit requires extraordinary judgment, a “feel” for the situation and knowing what to do and how to do it. Exercise of this judgment is the art of war at each level.”⁹

Grand Strategy

This is the overall aim of the war; the liberation of the people or land being held hostage by the enemy. The Grand Strategy for us is the liberation of the children of Nechells held captive by poverty.

Strategic

Strategic objectives are more aimed towards our broader goals. These are achieved by completing operational objectives, and in turn by the tactical objectives below them. A military example would be “cripple German naval operations”. For us, “reduce knife crime in Nechells.”



⁹Three Levels of War
USAF College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education (CADRE) Air and Space Power Mentoring Guide, Vol. 1 Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1997

Operational

Operational objectives are the procedures and methods. Progress towards these is achieved through the completion of tactical objectives, but they themselves do not necessarily achieve your Grand Strategy goal. In a military sense this would be “clear and secure the Belgian coast”. For us, it might be “Run a knife amnesty campaign across Nechells” A big mistake we can make though, is to try and skip operational goals, as it creates a disconnect between tactical and strategic, making the accomplishments of the former seem insignificant.

Tactical

Tactical objectives are our executed actions. The tasks and movements that in themselves don't make a huge difference, but they underpin and define the success of everything else. In a military sense this would be something like “capture that hill overlooking the Ypres salient”. For us, it might be “host a series of events for local parents about knife crime”.

Every level must be implemented, we cannot skip a level, or the strategy becomes ineffective.

War Zones

“War zones or former war zones, often called hostile environments, are distinctly dangerous. It is highly unusual for anyone other than professionals sent with a specific mission, or locals who cannot or will not leave, to be wandering around war zones.

Some people must travel to these areas as part of their job; these include soldiers, reporters, diplomats, military or security contractors, [in our case, teachers, housing officers, community workers etc.] and often people employed by various governments, international agencies and NGOs to provide relief from some of the ravages of war, to deal with refugee problems, or to rebuild after a war. Usually, those people will have had special training and the organization will provide extensive support.

Going into such an area for tourism is a spectacularly bad idea since you may not have the training and will certainly not have the backup or protections that the professionals do. Even a tourist with no hostile intentions may provoke heated reactions; among other things, you may be taken for a spy. Some may be specifically targeted because of their home country, religion or ethnic group.”¹⁰

Our war zones in Nechells fit this description perfectly. A place where locals cannot leave, a place where professionals are ‘sent’, a place where visitors are simply viewed as being on a Poverty Safari¹¹ and not there to engage in the fight. It can be hostile, dangerous and a mistake for people to assume that they can join the war without being protected and supported by our peacekeepers.

In order to develop an effective and strategic plan, we need to create various war zones, where we will need to engage the enemy using different approaches and weapons/troops, if we are going to win.

To simplify the complexity of our strategy, we have created ten war zones – areas that have different challenges, different terrains, require different methods of engagement, skills and resources. These categories are:

1. Systemism
2. Identity
3. Relationships
4. Healthy Minds / Bodies
5. Self-Value
6. Criminality
7. Under / Unemployment
8. Social Interaction
9. Apathy
10. The Capitol

Each of these zones has a series of Battles that we believe have their core grounding in that particular war zone. Most of the battles cross zones and may even be considered by others as being in the wrong zone – such is the complexity of war!

This strategy is written from the perspective of living and working in this geographical war for several decades, which may be very different from your experiences in your geographical war. Therefore, if you intend adapting this strategy for your community, you will need to seriously consider which of your battles fit in which war zones, and fight accordingly.

Definitions of the War Zone Headings

Systemism

The result of negative circumstances, feelings or lifestyles caused by a failure of statutory systems put in place for the masses, and out of individuals' control.

Identity

An enduring and continued sense of who we are.

Relationships

The way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.

¹⁰https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/War_zone_safety

¹¹ To understand this phrase read Poverty Safari, by Darren McGarvey, 2017

Healthy Minds & Bodies

A healthy mind includes a presence of intellectual curiosity and a sense of fostering creativity and critical thinking. It is awareness and acceptance of feelings and includes the degree to which a person feels positive and enthusiastic about oneself and one's purpose, value and meaning for life.

Healthy eating means eating a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health, feel good, and have energy. When combined with being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight, eating well is an excellent way to help your body stay strong and healthy.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Self-Value

Self-worth is the opinion you have about yourself and the value you place on yourself. An example of self-worth is your belief that you are a good person who deserves good things or your belief that you are a bad person who deserves bad things.

Criminality

Behaviour that is contrary to or forbidden by criminal law.

Underemployment / Unemployment

The state at which a person can generate legitimate income through working for it, and the internal feeling of pride and ownership of the money that has been earned, valuing the process of working to generate money, rather than dependency on others.

Social Interaction

The ability to 'be' with and around other humans – regardless of age, race, gender, social standing, lifestyle, sexuality etc. – without feeling inferior, uncomfortable, or inadequate. 'Be' is to converse, to enjoy each other's company, to relax and share, to accept difference and to peacefully resolve differences of opinion and conflict.

Apathy

A severe lack of interest, enthusiasm, concern, or responsiveness to anything. Can't be bothered attitude that inhibits positive thinking, action, and feelings.

The Capitol

The ultimate struggle for power. The intensity of the fighting will be focussed on the Capitol, where the true controllers of poverty reside once the local residents (the victims of poverty) are trained and resourced to fight with us.



Battles

Within each of our War Zones are several Battles that we need to fight. These are of varying intensity, with some taking a great deal of time and resources and others being won or lost quickly.

We have categorised many of the Battles we face underneath the War Zone heading. They are open for interpretation and movement, crossing other Zones and being interweaved throughout the whole War, but for simplicity we have placed them where we believe the enemy has the greatest stronghold. This should help us to begin preparing our battle plans.

Systemism

These battles will require the most skilled and trained 'troops', the Special Forces of our united organisations, who can overcome the treacherous terrain and take on the institutions and systems that hold people captive.

Inadequate Housing	Food Poverty	Benefit Dependency
Unemployment	Insufficient Education	Youth Violence
Institutional Racism	Social Injustice	Gender Inequality
Pollution & Poor Air Quality		

Identity

These battles are exceptionally complex and need a very extensive understanding of the cause and effect of conflicts and struggles in these issues.

Negative Stereotypes	3rd Generation Family Conflict
Religion	Mixed Heritage Parenting
Gangs	

Relationships

As community and relational beings, we develop a wide variety of relationships, both positive and negative – some by choice, some forced upon us. How we are taught (and by whom) to nurture or challenge relationships, affects how we develop the skills to overcome the difficulties we face. An understanding of relationships is key to knowing how to enter and win these battles, enabling and equipping the people we save to become resilient enough to fight for themselves and win.

Parent to Parent	Parent to Child	Adult to Authority
Child to Authority	Lone Parent Struggles	Neighbours
Opponents	Social Behaviour	Conflict

Healthy Minds / Bodies

A clinical understanding of the body and mind is critical for these battles, but this must be combined with an understanding as to the life conditions and how poverty has infiltrated and infected the lives of those trapped in its grip.

Addiction	Recreational Drug Use	Isolation / Loneliness
Teenage Pregnancy	Mental Illness	Grief
Self-Harm	Suicide Tendencies	Disability
Long Term Illness	Lack of Exercise	Poor Diet

Self-Value

This is a very difficult battle zone as we will need to uncover where the poverty virus has its strongest grip on an individual (victim and perpetrator) before we can identify the right approach to fighting it.

Low Self Worth	Low Confidence	Bullying
Cyber Bullying	Media Portraying Perfection	

Criminality

A response and fight in this war zone is not purely the responsibility of the Police and Criminal justice system. We are all at war here, even the people inflicting the virus on others and doing the enemy's dirty work. A police firearms officer is still prioritised with the preservation of life, even after they have had cause to shoot someone. In Nechells, all are victims to the enemies' grip, however that manifests itself.

Grooming	Child Sexual Exploitation	
Slavery	Robbery	Muggings
Car Crime	Hate Crime	Sexual Abuse
Rape	Domestic Violence	Drug Dealing
Driving Under the Influence		Trap Houses
Youth Violence	Female Genital Mutilation	
Animal Cruelty	Dog Fighting	County Lines
Organised gang Activity		Knife Crime
Gun Crime	Stalking / Harassment	

Under / Unemployment

A job or a career is not just about getting paid! We are built to work, rest, and play and work is a key part to feeling fulfilled with life. The appreciation of a fulfilling job and a clear understanding of learning, qualifications, money, assets and liabilities will not only challenge individuals trapped by the virus, it will also challenge the approach of educators, employers and 'support' workers in this field to consider the impact of their provision (resource) towards fighting these battles.

Lack of Ambition and Aspiration
Long Term Illness / Capacity
Low education Attainment
Under-Resourced Education
Under-resourced Businesses
Inadequate Distribution of Training Opportunities
Agency Work

Social Interaction

You may have noticed the decline in our human ability to positively engage with each other over the last decade or two. This may be due to the introduction of social media and digital relationships or the decline in services that encourage social interaction (e.g., less community and youth centres; more home drinking causing a decline in pubs and clubs) or other influential factors. Regardless of the changes, the reality is a steep decline in the skills and confidence needed to discuss these issues in a positive environment, causing an increase in the outward expressions of negativity towards other humans in our neighbourhood.

Poor Communication Skills		Racism
Prejudice	Homophobia	Anti-Social Behaviour
Classism	Conflict	Stereotypes
Poor Social Skills	Young Carer	Carer



Apathy

Years of community neglect and abandonment, combined with a poverty mentality that traps people to think that their life and circumstances is all they are worthy of, and nothing will ever change, creates a mass of pressure pushing down on people, constricting them to a life of apathy. Please do not confuse this with laziness! Not being 'bothered' to do something is simply poverty revealing itself through a lifetime of failure, a severe lack of belief in oneself and attitude that disarms them from fighting for themselves in this battle.

Lack of Ambition	Lack of Inspiration	Ghettoisation
Isolation	Historical Benefit Dependency	
Historical Cultural Oppression		Spiritual Oppression
Continual Failure		

The Capitol

When we have fought and won the battles above, we will edge closer to the Capitol, and fight our remaining battles. The final War Zone will involve infrastructure, sustainability, growth, and development after the war has been won and the enemy defeated in the surrounding war zones. It may be that those who control the capitol choose to engage with the strategy, before we engage them in warfare, thus reducing the number of battles we will need to fight.

Before we consider a new battle to add to the above, there needs to be a question answered for everything we do, showing the cause and effect of our actions and plans: 'Why are we doing this?' 'In order to achieve this...'. We truly need to understand our battles and recognising their need and importance to the overall Grand Strategy, before including them in the above.



Terrain, Troops & Deployment

Terrain:

Each Battle Zone has a different terrain, and therefore a different set of skills is needed to enter into battle and fight in that specific environment.

Example:

Systemism is like a mountainous region, treacherous and life threatening. To navigate through this terrain needs skills in map reading, compass work, understanding crevice's, inverts, and crags. Specialist equipment is needed – ropes, ice-axes, crampons, layered clothing.

This battle is for special forces – skilled, experienced, and professional troops who have the experience to understand this battlefield and how to penetrate it unnoticed, and without the terrain taking lives before we even get to the frontlines.

Troops:

We have skilled specialists, full time troops, part time troops, reservists, and volunteers. We have to make sure we have the right mixture of people for the right terrain / battle we are sending them into – we wouldn't send a novice into the mountains (i.e. we wouldn't

send an 18 year old inexperienced volunteer to discuss with a cabinet member the impact of the clean air zone on Nechells; or expect a part-time worker to support a family in critical crisis).

Deployment:

The Grand Strategy is agreed (eradicating child poverty from Nechells) and then the other 3 steps are passed down the line, making sure no step is missed.

Depending on the level of involvement of individuals, depends on their perspective of implementing the plan: i.e.

A Youth Worker (Soldier) has a *Strategic* order to run an effective youth club; their *Operational* step is to plan activities that get the children and young people to interact; their *Tactical* step is to encourage and support 'Mo' to join in as he finds it difficult to relate to other kids.

How we deploy the right troops into the right battles is an operational and logistical challenge that needs careful thought, in order to make sure the troops are fully resourced to complete their job, fight the battle effectively and then return without any physical or mental wounds.



Battle plan

Every battle that we decide to fight, must be well planned, and executed.

These Battles, although the raw and painful end of the fight, still require their own plans. The 4 levels of War will need to be created for each battle embarked on:

1. Grand Strategy
2. Strategy
3. Operational
4. Tactical

The following questions will also form the Battle plan:

- What tactics are we using?
- What troops are we sending and who has trained them?
- What resources do we have for this terrain?
- What resources do we need?
- How many casualties have we rescued?
- How long will this battle take?
- What is the cost of the battle and is it value for money?





Allies

All Wars need supporters, allies to help the campaign to succeed. They are needed to:

- Send resources and extra troops
- Be involved in the strategy
- Fund the battles
- Develop new weaponry

We need to know who is on our side, what battles are they interested in supporting, how we are going to keep their interest and support and sometimes, what they want in return. We also need to systemise how we are reporting the right things to the right people at the right time.

Strategic Reserve

A strategic reserve is the reserve of a commodity or items that is held back from normal use by governments, organisations, or businesses in pursuance of a particular strategy or to cope with unexpected events.¹²

We will need to consider what our strategic reserve is and how it is going to be used, replenished, managed. How or when do we know whether we should continue the battle, hold the fort, enable, and equip the casualties to fight, or recognise that we are fighting a losing battle and consider pulling out? We will need to consider our battle timescales, particularly in comparison to the access to resources to continue the fight and we must always allow for our troops to receive adequate R&R (rest and recreation).

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_reserve

THE GRAND STRATEGY

We are in a state of social emergency as we are currently addressing a generation of problems and issues that have historically had poor attempts at resolution, generally by 'projects' rather than 'strategy'. These have traditionally been delivered by well meaningful organisations (and some money chasers!) who have parachuted into Nechells, without being immersed in the culture and environment; or by City Council elected members or officers who are either under-resourced to address the vast array of issues in their portfolio, or frankly do not care about the people they are here to serve.

THE STRATEGIC ANSWER

The eradication of poverty requires a strategy, not a series of short term 'projects'. Our strategy is to turn Nechells from a community of poverty into a community of prosperity and opportunity – whilst enabling the existing residents to remain in situ, should they wish to, so we do not fracture their community spirit and relationships.

The strategic answer to eradicating child poverty in Nechells, meaning that anyone who lives in our community does not need to live with this disease, is to prioritise and focus our collective attention on:

- People – Residents, Workers, Visitors
- Education – Preschool, Primary, Secondary, Further Education, Adult Education
- Employment
- Businesses – Sustainability, Growth, Support
- Environment – Land, Water, Air
- Housing – Social and Private landlords
- Well-being – Health (Body & Mind), Fitness, Dependencies
- Safety – Community, Safeguarding, Digital
- Recreation – Child, Adult, Family, Community Culture & Faith



There are several parallel journeys that we must engage with in order that we might effectively address the issue of poverty. Several of these fulfil the outcomes of existing services in Nechells, including free@last's new building, which opened in 2018. However, some key services need to be dispersed around our community for us to sustain our war on poverty.

If we are to fulfil our vision of creating a community of prosperity and opportunity, we have several areas of change that need to be developed and implemented:

- War Zone Advisory Panels
- The Nechells Management Company
- Nechells Business Forum and Recruitment Service
- Nechells Maintenance and Grounds Company
- Good Neighbours Group
- Nechells Estate Asset Management
- Nechells Power +
- Changing the visual aesthetics of our community
- Indigenous Leadership Programme
- The GAP
- Nechells Investment Programme

All of these create great challenges, but it is essential that they all function synonymously and effectively for us to fulfil our strategy vision.



Base, how low have we gone?

Before we embark on the implementation of this ambitious strategy, we first need to establish a true need, rather than just a perceived need based on a small percentage of the community. We will therefore engage with all relevant stakeholders to establish an evidenced based plan for moving the strategy forward, including residents, businesses, statutory partners, Housing providers, the Third sector, Potential Investors, and local universities.

Our research will establish the views and opinions of stakeholders and evidence of our community profile and the expected success of implementing our strategy. We will also consider the barriers, challenges, and potential hazards/risks for the strategy, as well as potential investors.

There are many questions that need answering in order to assess the actual poverty situation and how we will successfully overcome it. We need to uncover the following:

1. What, in landlocked Birmingham, in Western 1st world England/GB, are the issues that make/force/keep people in extreme, moderate, or relative poverty?
 2. Why are our poor, poor? Is it because they are lazy? Because they are unable to get themselves out of poverty? Because the structural system is against them (punishing them for being poor)?
 3. What are the different scenarios of how people currently live and how they can improve?
i.e. do they live in moderate or relative poverty in Nechells?
In the '1st World' is damp in the home or holes in shoes classed as moderate or relative?
- What is the 'mean' and what percentage below the mean is considered moderate – if any?
4. What could stop a family's efforts to improve their income growth?
 - Is Nechells economy in decline or static, or is it growing – and if improving are residents benefitting?
 - What skills and assets do Nechells people already possess?
 5. How is income currently used? Is it to stay alive, to feed an addiction? On items of nonessential value? To numb the pain of destitution or on savings/a way out of poverty?

Consider asking a few specific families as an example? What do they currently spend their income on, what is a necessity and why is it considered a necessity?

Assets – car, house – Education – Jobs / careers – Opportunity to explore (do they finance, or do they go into debt to explore?) – Poverty? (by choice)

Relative or debt dependency?

Options to overcome – why do we choose to stay in our current situation?

- Sky? Costly but still required – why?
 - Entertainment?
 - Insurance?
 - Food? (choosing Tesco not Aldi, choosing local shop rather than supermarket)
 - Holidays?
 - Connectivity?
6. We need an economist and sociologist who can look at the issues for Nechells from a local council and Government perspective. We need them to work out how much money from Council/Government budgets are directed/earmarked for Nechells and how that money is distributed, which will enable us to create an investment cost per person for our community. We will then be able to show how local management/devolution provides a more cost effective and efficient way to manage statutory money better. We need to evidence the economic benefits to the city and country for eradicating child poverty in Nechells?
 7. An effective monitoring and review system needs to be created and implemented in order that we can continually monitor the development and growth of the strategy, based on the baseline. Every single point of growth, from individuals, businesses, organisations etc. needs to be regularly measured without fail.
 8. We need to record perception as to why children need to be healthy, why they need access to the internet, how do adults and children value work and employment, what is taught to children about working hard and what constitutes laziness? We need to know how people define success and prosperity, economic freedom, and opportunity, and what does this look like to local people? We need to know how all these above differ between cultures/ethnicity/age/generation/length of time resident in Nechells?
 9. We need to know what are the actual costs of living in Nechells:-
 1. If on 'full' benefits
 2. If on 'partial' benefits (just housing or on sliding scale)
 3. Not receiving benefits

And the difference for single people, couples, with/without children, retired?

We need to know what are the Poverty Premium items that affect our community?

From a position of 'baseline' to a journey with a final destination of 'prosperity' – how much financial support is required from Government? Should this be a weekly/monthly amount (as current payments are made) or an annual/one off amount given to enable people to manage a sizable amount.

What additional barriers will some people face more than others? – disability, illness, language, etc.

10. We need to understand the resources and skills that already exist within our community, and how these can be used/redistributed to benefit more people, thus reducing unnecessary expenditure. A decade or so ago emerged the Local Exchange Trading Scheme (L.E.T.S.), which encouraged local people to share their skills and tools, using a 'credit' system rather than cash (so you could borrow my lawnmower and in return you can paint my garden fence). Although such schemes have their place, even in our strategy, the bigger picture is to consider the resources that people have and

how they use them to full effect. For example, if they have a bicycle that they underuse, it could be kept in a shed rather than the garden, prolonging the life of the bike for when they begin work. Through a L.E.T.S. programme they could 'hire' the bike, receiving other services in return that they'd usually spend money on; or they could buy a fleet of bikes for those who park in our community to avoid the Clean Air Zone charges but still do not want to walk the remaining distance. They could add power sources to the bike, making it more attractive to people who park in Nechells but need to use it to get to work faster, or without sweating in their suit - therefore 'charging' a higher price for usage. Or they could start a bike hire shop that takes over a plot of land to charge people in the city centre for parking their cars and hiring a bike to get to work. So how do we create these opportunities in Nechells? It's not as simple as giving everyone a job, we need to be more creative with the skills and resources that already exist. Nechells residents may live in poverty but that doesn't mean they are incapacitated, and that they cannot be part of the solution.

We need the statistics if the figures are going to speak for themselves, and this is our immediate priority of the War Zone Centre of Gravity.



War Zone Centre of Gravity

The definition of a CoG is “the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.”^[2] Thus, the centre of gravity is usually seen as the “source of strength”.¹³

Our designated War Zones require experts in their fields to provide the advice and guidance on the current and historical issues, within the specialist areas, that will impact on the overall strategy and the requirements to plan for each battle. This will be our epicentre and where the strength of collaborative expertise will drive the strategy forward.

As part of the role of the CoG they will need to consider what is ‘wrong’ with Nechells by creating and agreeing on a ‘perfect’ community concept, one that nurtures life and enhances opportunities, progression and holistic interdependent growth for all who are connected to that geographical community.

As an example, an ideal situation for human development, growth and positivity is that in every community children, young people and adults have access to the following activities, opportunities, services and specialised services which support their individual and collective needs (*not an exhaustive list*):



- Multi-cultural, creative and engaging pre-school play
- A caring and effective primary education that feeds into a successful secondary life – with access routes to university
- Opportunities for further education
- Youth centres and play centres
- Day time and evening ‘drop-in’ services for socialising and support
- Health services – including mental health and addiction services
- Therapeutic and Counselling services
- Sports, music, arts, and media opportunities
- Exploration, adrenaline, and fun based activities
- Competition and Award schemes – like Music Grades, Sports, and arts awards etc.
- Career’s services/advice and preparation for work services
- Faith groups that deliver specialised and relevant services for the whole community
- Employment training and opportunities to fulfil career dreams
- Independent living facilities
- Supportive adults who are positive role models
- Parental support services

A **perfect** community could be defined as many different things, depending on your morals, ethics, beliefs, prejudices etc. Our definition is based on a belief that all are equal, all desire the same opportunities, access to support and services, and to feel safe, secure and valuable, with the ability to be an active member of their community (whether they live or work there).

There are potentially thousands of areas for change and although one person’s perfection will not equal another’s we have to start somewhere.

The War Zone CoG will lead and direct the Grand Strategy, generating the evidence, monitoring the effectiveness, and disseminating progress to our allies, whilst challenging those who fight against us.

¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Center_of_gravity_\(military\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Center_of_gravity_(military))



The Nechells Management Company

In order to successfully coordinate and implement the strategy, and the many other services and strategies not detailed in this plan, we will need a team of full-time staff to develop and manage the Nechells Management Company. This company will be instrumental in securing all the contracts that relate to our community (grounds, maintenance, roads, education, care services, policing etc.), and to redistribute the resources most effectively where they will have the greatest impact.

Within the Nechells area there are many services which are contracted to be delivered; some by Birmingham City Council, some by Housing Associations and others by third party companies. Whether Park clean ups, refuse collection, housing repairs, road maintenance, street cleaning or local policing there is a need and a budget to deliver statutory and non-statutory services for our residents. Creating a management company that secures all the contracts for this neighbourhood would not only be cheaper but would help to reduce the unemployment and poverty figures and increase the visual pleasantness of our community. A local level of control, deliverability and accountability for these services would significantly improve all aspects of this plan and enable our vision to be fulfilled.

To achieve success as a management company we need to create the right structure that enables representation from all 3 sectors and local residents. We also need to begin negotiations with those who commission contracts and/or have the authority to direct spend towards our neighbourhood. Our intention is to secure as many local contracts as possible (ideally all of them) and to deliver these contracts professionally, efficiently and cost effectively by redistributing the resources in a strategic manner, to where they need to be. Image our community as a jigsaw, where currently each individual piece is held by a different contractor, department, service etc. and they are all trying to figure out where to place their piece. The Nechells Management Company will gather the pieces and place them where they need to be, enabling a complex jigsaw to be completed effectively. Employing local residents will also help us have a significant advantage as locally employed residents will take more pride in their work, work closely with their neighbours – the Good Neighbour representative – and significantly increase the local economy as money is redistributed internally and back into our own neighbourhood.

We have already stated that a key factor in reducing poverty is local jobs for local people, and we have also recognised that those who will take more pride and care in looking after our community are those who have a vested interest in improving every aspect of our neighbourhood. These two key areas will be a key factor to the effectiveness of the new Management Company.

Nechells Business Forum and Recruitment Service

We run the Nechells Business Forum, which aims to bring together the businesses who operate within our community. There are a wide variety of sectors that are based in Nechells, with many different sizes of operation, and collaboration with these are critical to fighting many of our key battles.

We not only need to consider how we can attract and prepare local people into local jobs, but we also need to consider how we enable local businesses to improve their bottom line. If a business increases its income, it can pay higher salaries, thus providing a better quality of life for its own employees, which, if from Nechells, will play a big part in eradicating local financial poverty.

We therefore need to understand the challenges that local businesses face, and how we can work with them to enable growth. For example, where do they trade – just locally in Birmingham, the whole of the UK, or Internationally? If they manufacture and sell worldwide, a stumbling block for growth could be the high transport costs, using road, rail, or air. As Birmingham has the largest waterway system in the UK, that extends all the way to the coast; could we improve a business by using the waterways again; which is the cheapest form of transport? Or could several businesses who use logistics firms, agree a special rate for bulk purchase?

We also need to consider how can we strengthen the local infrastructure to improve local trade; or to bulk buy the items that all businesses use – maybe in the form of a cooperative, that employs local people and reduces costs for local businesses? We also need to establish what local businesses currently have under their own control for growth, and what they have no control over (i.e., business rates)? Understanding the key barriers for businesses and finding commonality in these challenges can help us to create local solutions for local problems.

If we are going to encourage local businesses to recruit from their surrounding areas, we will need to provide a supported access route for local people seeking employment. To effectively take a person (and a business) through the recruitment process, into sustainable employment, a wide range of specific skill sets are needed. We will require our own recruitment service to support the local businesses to identify, train and recruit local people into their workforce. The aim of this service is to enable every single person who is eligible for work in Nechells to secure sustainable and fulfilled employment and stop being dependant on benefits. Increasing the amount of money going into a home that is living in financial poverty will significantly help to win this battle.

The recruitment service will also identify external training providers who can work in partnership with us to increase the range and skill levels of Nechells residents. We also recognise the challenges and difficulties that many local people will face with training and employment, and this is particularly due to our experience of employing many young people and adults in a variety of roles, from chefs to activity instructors, support workers to researchers.

Imagine a 17-year-old lad that has got off the bus following his first day at work. His mates are in the park and call him over, making fun of him wearing his shirt and shoes. He settles back into his dominate behaviour and before he knows it, it's 2am, he's stoned and doesn't know how he's getting home, let alone up for work the next morning. He loses his job as he didn't show up. It is not unusual for people to cut their employment short because of the pressures of living in Nechells, we have many similar stories. An important part of this business is to support individuals and businesses through the initial challenges of fledgling recruitment, to resolve teething issues and enable sustainable employment.

Surrounding our community of 13,500 residents is a vast array of small, medium, and large sized businesses. Some of these employ local residents but many of them do not. We believe that there are 3 main reasons for this lack of local employment:

1. Access – recruitment is not carried out locally and residents do not know that vacancies are available.
2. Skills – even if local people did have an easy access to the local vacancies, it is probable that, overall, people do not have the relevant and/or necessary skills to fulfil those roles.
3. Perception – Nechells still has a poor reputation and although many elements of this reputation are unjust, some perceptions inhibit local recruitment/employment.

The recruitment service will develop relationships with businesses as well as with residents and support both through their journey together.



Nechells Maintenance and Grounds Company

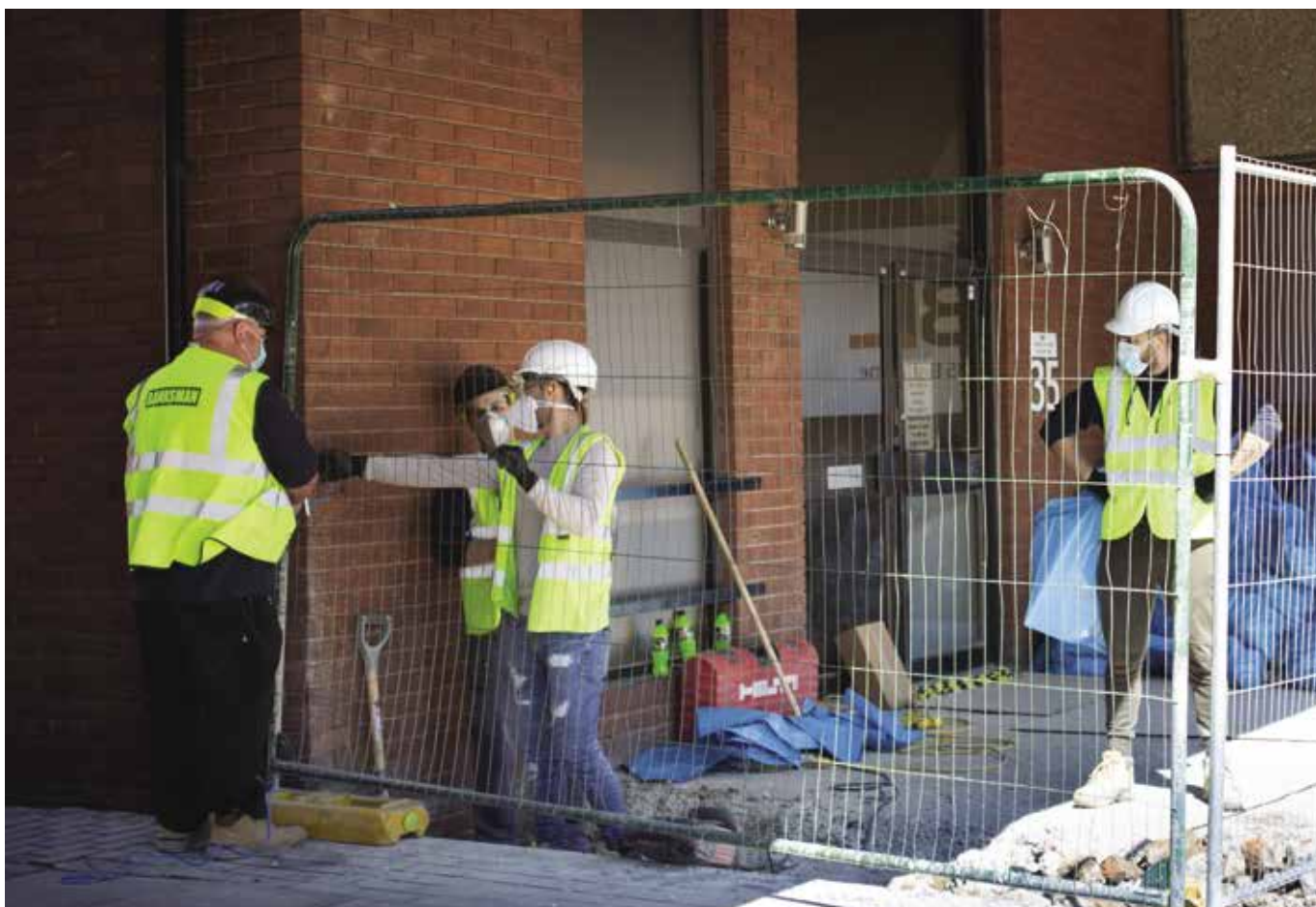
A member of our staff team, who was a local resident, asked me for the day off work, as her boiler had broken. I asked why the housing provider was doing and she replied that they were sending an engineer out to her property between 8am and 5pm the next day.

Although it may appear at first glance, that there is nothing wrong with this situation, the impact that it had on the lady, having to take a day's holiday, delay her work tasks and sort out childcare, made this very inconvenient. Added to this was the disruption to our organisation, not being able to plan for her day away from the office, left us understaffed. This issue could affect anyone in our city, so does that mean we cannot change it? Is it better for us, as the employer, to be more sympathetic to our employees or is a much better solution for a localised maintenance company to be established, whereby we have the flexibility and local planning to agree a time to attend the property without disrupting the lady or her workplace.

I walk around the area and observe the contractors responsible for cutting the open space grass areas. They are contracted to pick up the litter first and then cut the grass, but because they are not reprimanded (through a lack of complaints and accountability) they continue to cut the grass and anything on it, creating a problem instead of solving one.

Imagine if the person fixing the boiler (or making the appointment) or cutting the grass was a local resident, known to his/her neighbours, and the contracting company was the Nechells Management Company (with its local, accessible office). Local employment, local accountability, local pride in their work, localised understanding and flexibility – this is the model of operation that would by far outweigh any existing contracts where maintenance and ground works are run and delivered by people who have no investment in our community. This is one clear example of how redistributing resources, that are already committed to a community, can significantly improve the service, and reduce the costs, whilst at the same time addressing some of our poverty battles.

Each housing provider has their own contractors, and the Nechells Management Company will negotiate and work with them to secure these contracts, and agree deliverables and value for money, as well as the social return on investment for the clients. Some of the existing contracts have lengthy terms, so negotiations to 'buy-out' or manage the Nechells aspects of the contracts will be attempted until we can tender for them in the future.





Good Neighbours Group

Although there are many local residents and visitors to Nechells who do not care about the state of our community, as they throw rubbish on the floor, leave their gardens unkept or choose not to get involved with any improvement initiatives, there are many people who do want to see change and are happy to get involved. Over the past 30 years we have seen different attempts to try and encourage local people to become more involved with the decision making and community maintenance. These initiatives have included resident associations, neighbourhood forums, neighbourhood watch and street champions. All have had a level of success, but all have a common theme of leaving local residents frustrated due to a lack of change. The weak link with all these initiatives has been the limited relationships with those who have the influence to make things happen, to bring forth change and to spend their budgets effectively.

The Good Neighbours Group was formed out of the need for local residents to become actively involved with their own community and to work with local businesses, statutory service providers and community leaders to raise their concerns and work together to overcome the difficulties faced. Active citizens are frustrated that the efforts they, and others, put into their community are not sustainable, where the resources are not invested properly. As an example, many clean-up projects have been initiated over the past decade, but none of them have successfully overcome the rubbish problems that we face in our neighbourhood. We have tried cleaning parks with local schools, regular weekly clean-ups around shops, tri-sector clean ups of hotspots and many more attempts to manage the litter. Every time we were out with litter pickers, other residents would comment that we are wasting our time, and if continuous clean streets were our goal, we failed and did waste our time. The journey we have been on, with this issue of rubbish, has been very long and tiring, but our success is understanding how the poverty mentality affects people's attitudes to everything, including rubbish.

The Good Neighbours Group begins with a door to door survey of a road/street, about the general issues that residents may face [lighting, Anti-Social behaviour, dog mess, parking etc.] and then the results are compiled into an action plan report. The residents of the road/street are then invited to a meeting to discuss their road. The aim is to have at least one person from each street/road to nominate themselves as a Good Neighbour, who begins to look after their road and implement the suggested actions in the plan. This includes reporting issues, raising concerns, welcoming new residents, building a sense of community for their street and signposting where necessary. With one person on every road there will be a strong group of people to overcome issues and identify trends, problems, and solutions. For every ten roads there will be a Good Neighbour Support Worker, who will support the Good Neighbours, and there will be a Good Neighbour Coordinator to manage all the Support Workers too.

Our Good Neighbours Group is a service that supports local residents to take ownership of their own streets, outside their front door – the place that affects them the most - as a starting point to changing the whole area. Having a designated Good Neighbour on every street in Nechells will enable and equip the resident areas to remain clean – but this can only be truly successful if education, self-responsible action and enforcement can be implemented across our community – for residents, businesses and visitors. Local people need to be involved from the beginning and the Good Neighbours project will only work if people 'buy in' to the potential for a whole community change. There have been too many years of 'being done too' from external agencies, without seeing any change or improvements. The Apathy War Zone has been inflamed by years of neglect and empty promises, so the only way for the Good Neighbours to be effective is with a massive 'whole community' investment to fund 100 local GN's at once. This will have a bigger impact and as the higher purpose is shared the value for money significantly increases.

Nechells Estate Asset Management

Poverty in our community is socially engineered by housing providers who own the majority of our neighbourhood's housing stock. Their policies and points system for allocation of homes enable the most vulnerable and needy people to have priority for their accommodation, which inadvertently creates a community full of poor and disadvantaged tenants. Should a tenant become economically active and be able to move out of their Nechells rented accommodation, they are replaced by someone else who is in need, thus continuing the cycle of concentrated geographical poverty – one of the reasons the statistical figures of poverty never go down.

Big problems require big solutions and good quality housing in poor areas is lacking. One such resolution would be the equal dispersal of people in need to all areas of our city. However, due to the ownership of housing stock and the inequality of wealth, as well as the need to sustain communities rather than shatter them, this is not an option – for now. So, what is the housing answer?

Here is the short, medium, and long-term answer for our housing problem.

Short Term

1. All the housing providers, who own stock in Nechells, need to come together and recognise that they can be part of the solution to eradicating poverty and to create a localised housing policy that enables a Nechells based centralised process for managing tenant issues. This will be managed by the Nechells Management Company, providing a more efficient and effective response to local housing needs, by using our maintenance and grounds company to be more pro-active to problems; as well as being more responsive to emergencies and tenants needs.
2. All the housing providers, who own stock in Nechells, need to come together and create a localised housing policy that attracts residents who are not in need, as well as those who are in need. Consider a more affluent area that has a variety of sports clubs, music teachers, dancers, and theatrical groups. The opportunities for local people to engage with a range of recreational activities is due, in part, because the people with the skills to teach offer their services voluntarily. In an area like Nechells, there are few, if any, local residents who have the skills and the time to offer music lessons, teach sporting activities or performing arts. The lack of resources and skills to offer these opportunities increases the disadvantage status of our community. If we attracted people with these skills to live in our neighbourhood, they would be able to bring with them something beneficial and valuable and enable new activities to begin.

Medium Term

3. Nechells does not look appealing. Our visual aesthetics would not attract more affluent people to choose Nechells (which has been proven when housing that has been designed for 'Yuppies' in the south of our community, and commuters in the north, were given over to the needy due to the lack of attraction to the targeted tenants/ buyers). The improvement of the 'look' of Nechells will significantly improve the community spirit, ownership and feel-good factor for those who already live here to (as shown in the results from many art-based projects in disadvantaged communities in Brazil, Philadelphia, Europe and many more) . Creating artwork around our community will improve the visual look of Nechells and improve the physical architecture as well as the spirits of local people.
4. Local people want to own their own property, to leave an asset to their children when they die. So, what if they could 'buy' the property that they rent and can pass their home down to their children? Many housing providers began because of a social response to need, but if we are reducing (to a point of eradication) the needs of residents, why should they have to leave the community they love in order that they can own their own home? One developmental concept is for all residents, whoever they rent from, are given the opportunity to buy their own home. They will pay a reduced sale price (negotiated using our Nechells Estate Agency) to own 80% of their property. The remaining 20% of the property will be given to, and managed by the Nechells Management Company, who would have single control of all the properties. If a local resident wishes to leave Nechells they would have the option to sell to a family member keeping the family in Nechells if the wish), or to the Nechells Management Company if they want to cut ties with Nechells. The 20% ownership by the NMC provides the contractual right to expect a uniformed standard of upkeep for each resident and to make sure there are no private sales to private landlords who are only concerned about profit.

Long Term

5. The answers above do not solve the sustainable and environmental concerns of our housing problems. Having housing that are eco-friendly and generate sustainable energy reduces the amount of money that a family will need to spend on utilities. Windows that are made of clear glass and act as solar panels, reduces the electricity costs. Plants and trees that grow on and around buildings to clean the air and underground electric car charging will all improve the financial expenditures of local residences and improve their health too (again reducing the amount of money spent on medicine, hospital appointments etc.).

Bulk buying of other utilities like gas and broadband, as well as installing gas turbines that turn gas into electricity and water treatment services are all ways in which a community can reduce utility spend. To create a community like this, we will need to knock down and rebuild everything. One of the problems with property redevelopments is that communities are dispersed and shattered, as families are evicted out of the area during the rebuild and then cannot afford to move back in. We would allocate build a road/street on an allocated plot of land and move an entire street of residents into these houses. They will remain there until their street has been rebuilt and will then return to their new homes. Then the second street of residents will be moved into the temporary road until their homes are rebuilt, and so on, until the whole of Nechells is rebuilt. This process will allow Nechells people to remain in Nechells without having to lose their friendships and support networks, whilst gaining a new home at the end of it!

Before we even begin sharing the answers, we need to clearly identify who owns what and why? What are the costs to own, maintain and upgrade properties for Housing Associations/Council and private landlords? What benefits are there for the HAS to own the houses/flat's in Nechells and would they be willing to discuss the above?

Any poverty-stricken community will remain impoverished if local people are unable to improve their own circumstances through generating legal income and/or those who leave the neighbourhood are replaced (by resident social housing organisations) with others who are impoverished.

Many poor communities have a severe lack of basic amenities and services, particularly ones that are usually run by experienced and trained people, such as music lessons, sports clubs, activity clubs, performing arts clubs etc. These types of services are run by volunteers who are skilled in the activity and passionate about sharing their involvement with their chosen hobby, sport, and/or leisure time pursuit. Additionally, more and more services (voluntary and statutory) are being forced to close due to Government and Council cuts, which creates a huge burden on the capacity of services which are still operating in these difficult neighbourhoods. To improve the prosperity of disadvantaged communities we need to provide more opportunities for skilled professionals and individuals/families who are not in need to move into Nechells. Although this would improve the overall statistics of the area (including educational attainment, employment, and healthy lifestyles etc.) it would more importantly improve the voluntary opportunities for creating positive activities, opportunities and role models for children, young people and adults.



Nechells Power +

Reducing/eradicating financial poverty is helped by increasing the amount of money that goes into a person's home at the same time as decreasing the amount of money that has to be spent on bills to run the home. Creating our own network of services, that are focussed on improving peoples' lives and embedded in our strategy rather than on profit for the shareholders, we will be able to reduce the expenditure of families and individuals, as well as increasing additional local employment opportunities.

Utilities

The main three are include gas, electricity and water. We know these are very competitive markets, but we also know that bulk purchase of any of these will enable a reduced cost. If owned/purchased a supply of water, electricity and gas, and then controlled our own distribution, we can offer a level of charge based on the household income and do away with card pay meters, which cause more budgetary problems for those who struggle financially. When we reach the long term stage of the Asset Management, we will rebuild with eco-friendly priorities, which can include our own utility generation (wind and solar).

Connectivity

During the Covid lockdowns, Digital Poverty was raised as an issue, as it became clear that (contrary to affluent peoples' beliefs) not everyone in the country has their own laptop, tablet, smartphone or computer, let alone the connectivity required to enable these technological apparatus to fulfil their purpose. Many families were sharing a cheap smartphone with a cracked screen and limited connectivity, unable to achieve the schooling or work tasks required. Providing our own broadband and phone service will enable a more affordable, better quality and data free solution to Nechells residents and businesses (if they want to buy in to this too). Having a mobile phone service too, to help reduce the costs and time without phones, when they are broken, will improve the connectivity of people when they need it most. This will also enable opportunities for supporting those who live in isolation, as well as those who are in need of urgent assistance.

Shopping

There is no supermarket in Nechells (except the new Co-operative express built in the student accommodation for Birmingham City University), so if a family or individual wishes to do a weekly shop, they will need to travel to Aston, Washwood Heath, Erdington or the City Centre. If a resident has a car, it is not such a problem, but when you have to include taxi fares onto the shopping bill, it becomes very expensive. Many years ago, we ran a Food Co-operative, providing fresh fruit and vegetables, to order, once a week. This was a well used service, until the local shop keepers recognised that people wanted to buy quality fruit and veg', so they began to stock it.

This became more convenient for local people and our service, which had served its purpose, closed. Unfortunately, over time, the quality and pricing of local convenience stores does not compete with supermarkets and we therefore need to consider how Nechells can offer its residents and businesses quality and affordable food and shopping facilities. This can include home grown/allotment produce, for example, as well as commercialised chain stores operating in our community.

Entertainment

When I lived in Zimbabwe, I would often travel to the townships and visit peoples' homes. These were small, corrugated structures that housed several people in a very small, basic and cramped environment. In every home was a TV, the focal point of the home. Although the broadcasting was very poor (quality and choice) it was a must for those who lived in extreme poverty. There may be many negatives of living a life in front of a television, but for those who live in poverty and disadvantage, it may be their only connection to the outside world, or the only sense of sanity and comfort they have. If you live in poverty, entertainment (like Sky, Netflix or Virgin etc.) can be a lifeline, but also very expensive.

Negotiating bulk purchase agreements will be one of the roles of the Nechells Management Company and will hopefully reduce the monthly expenditure for local people.

Insurance

Most people who live in poverty do not have the luxury of being covered by home insurance, whether buildings or contents, let alone those who do not insure themselves correctly for motor vehicles! Creating a community policy, for both the residents and businesses, could be very cost effective, as well as protecting those who most need it.

Nechells Power + is recognising that strength in numbers and bulk purchasing will have a significant effect on our poverty strategy effectiveness. There may be other areas of purchase that can be included in this part of the strategy, including stationary and cleaning for businesses, security guards, premises upgrading, vehicle access and sharing – as well as repairs and purchase. The Management Company will consider all possibilities of bulk negotiation and the savings we can bring to our community.



Changing the visual aesthetics of our community

Although Nechells is not a rundown ghetto, as negatively perceived across the city, it has been neglected by those who chose not to invest here, and there is a desperate need to improve the visual aesthetics across our neighbourhood, for several different reasons.

1. To create a sense of pride, ownership, and community cohesion amongst those who live and work here.
2. To share and celebrate the wide variety of cultures and micro communities in our neighbourhood.
3. To attract new families/individuals who want to buy their own property and invest in Nechells.
4. To attract investment into our community and the surrounding areas.

During the 1990's the Heartlands Corporation changed Nechells by removing many of the blocks of flats and replacing them with new houses and maisonettes. Although this time of development made a significant structural improvement there were many disadvantages that caused separation and isolation,

notably they built 2 major dual carriageways in the middle of Nechells, fracturing us into 3 distinct areas, with lots of divisive issues created, unnecessarily. As there was also only a focus on housing and road development, the decade of change left many business premises, bridges, abandoned land/buildings, parks and historic buildings behind and untouched.

There needs to be a big investment from all 3 sectors to improve all the physical areas of Nechells, particularly being creative with the use of art and sculpture to represent and celebrate the diverse identities of those within our community.

1. The Gateway Group is a collaboration of many city influencers, created to develop a corridor of colour and art from Spaghetti Junction, through Nechells to Millennium Point and the City Centre. This included a cultural artistic journey through Nechells, creating a pleasant reflection of our varied cultural identity and potentially a tourist attraction as part of the Gateway Journey.
2. In order to unite a community of diversity, both generationally, ethnically, culturally and faith wise, we need to provide a service that celebrates the journey's travelled of our local residents. This will be an art-based programme that will begin with story writing and journey development of our local cultural and micro-communities. This process will enable people to feel comfortable in their own community



but, with a mutual commonality with other communities engaged in the same process, we will be able to collectively choose several key attributes of these stories and translate them into artistic expressions. These will then be created as large art forms to be placed around our community, and celebrated together, increasing our social cohesion and building positive relationships, crossing many racial, cultural and faith boundaries.

Indigenous Leadership Programme

'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you feed him and his family for life' (Anne Isabella Ritchie 1880's). Over the past 30 years there have been many, many 'fishermen' that have come into Nechells to sell their 'fish' instead of teaching local residents the skills to survive and thrive. Many of these 'fishermen' have done very well for themselves, financially with funds that have been given to enhance our community but have been swallowed up in 'fish feeding' rather than shared skills; and with an increase in their personal stature, due to a recognition of the difficulties of working in Nechells. With so many organisations and initiatives parachuting into our community it is extremely sad that so few have supported local people to become community leaders in their own neighbourhood. As part of our progressive community development, we need to create true opportunities for local people to lead.

We have also recognised that those who will take more pride and care in looking after our community are those who have a vested interest in improving every aspect of our neighbourhood, predominately local residents, and these are the ones who need to run their community.

The GAP

We've already considered that in order to reduce financial poverty we need to increase the amount of money that goes into a home and reduce the outgoings. Until we reach our ultimate efficiency in our strategic implementation, we need to consider the current structures and process, and how they have a positive or negative effect on us addressing the issues. Take for example, the current benefit system, which stops self-sufficiency as it does not encourage adults to work their way out of financial poverty. One area to focus in on is housing benefit. If you work over 16 hours per week your housing benefit stops, meaning that someone who wants to work, but is unable to find full time work, ends up in rent arrears, for trying to make a change in their own lives. Rent should be the last thing taken away from someone trying to become self-sufficient and treated separately until a tenant reaches an income figure that enables them to cover all their bills and provide an appropriate level of expendable income.

There is a significant gap between the services created by strategic partnerships and the people who live in poverty. Projects are created, businesses/ organisations are commissioned but local people are not engaged effectively enough.



There has always been a void between the great ideas that 'big picture thinking' people have and the grassroots implementation and effectiveness of projects that don't work on the ground. This may be a sweeping statement but why is there still 53% child poverty in our community if these projects are working? Strategic partnerships do not always think strategically, nor do they really get to grips with life on the ground. 'If you want to truly understand the needs of the people you are there to serve, they have to become your needs!'

In Nechells, we used to have the Duddeston Opportunity Centre, an adult learning centre, that was very successful. One of the reasons for this success was the provision of a full time creche for the learners. We need to bring back an adult learning centre where people feel comfortable, accepted, treated with respect and that provides a free creche, eliminating the struggles of childcare whilst trying to improve their career prospects. We can also provide an opportunity for parents to gain a basic qualification in childcare and then those who use the nursery take it in turns looking after each other's children; so with ten parents and ten children, two parents run the nursery one day a week, meaning they can work four days per week with practically no child care costs. We may need to pay one staff member to oversee, or a family worker, but the costs of the nursery would be greatly reduced, and the parents would improve their families lives through being able to work.

The War Zone Advisory Panels will consider all of the current systems, structures, processes and projects that should benefit or influence Nechells, and whether they are effective and truly enabling and equipping people to reduce their poverty status. We will continue to remind people that we do not necessarily need to create anything new, just redistribute the available resources to where they can be most effective!

There are many other 'answers' that can be developed to enable all those involved in the strategy, to fight the many battles. Here's a few more examples of what we can achieve.

In his book *The end of Poverty*, Jeffrey Sachs¹⁵ offers the concept of Community Employees, whereby local people receive 12 months training and offer a basic level of community development and care in the community. These individuals can learn the skills of gardening, DIY, health visitor, elderly care, parent support, play work, education etc.

These local residents will hopefully remain in the community and support other local residents, but also be a link to other services – i.e. Health Visitor or Parent Worker can identify child problems and direct/involve Dr's or Schools.

We need a programme that offers therapy to deal with trauma, particularly for children and young people. Trauma affects us all, but if you are not resilient and have the skills or techniques to overcome trauma, it eats away at you from the inside. As well as enabling and equipping children, young people and adults to become resilient, we also need to support them to work through the many negative imprints on their past and present life.

We need a training centre for parents, in order to teach them the 4 P's of parenting – Play, Provide, Protect, Prepare - and to support them through this often difficult and stressful time of raising children in poverty.

We need a system in place that stops people offending, so that they do not have to go through the criminal justice system! But when they do, a place and a structure to support people from our community who are returning from prison/Youth Offending Institutes. It is not just about housing and probation, but a complete programme for supporting them (addiction, family/relationships, income, work, socialising and entertainment, etc.) to reengage into community life and learn to live a life of opportunity and positivity, whilst being supported by their community, rather than rejected by it.

We need a system to enable all community people to be connected with each other. The most effective form of communication in Nechells is word of mouth, but this will not meet the needs of those who are isolated, not connected to those with the information or disengaged from community based services. The Good Neighbours Coordinators will hopefully fulfil an important role of sharing information, but in addition, a range of approaches should be considered to connect local people, including a radio station, community newspaper, other printed and digital material and supportive gatherings.

Nechells Investment Programme

With the unique geographical position of Nechells, sandwiched between the Aston Expressway and the route for HS2, we have an ideal opportunity to create a Corridor of Colour and transform Nechells as the Gateway to Birmingham. This will include an element of tourism - using art and landscaping designs - as well as for a new journey experience for Birmingham folk. There will need to be an initial investment of considerable size to make this visual change and again we are well placed, in the right moment of time, for investment. However, there will need to be a continual flow of investment to maintain and evolve our journey out of poverty towards prosperity and opportunity. This needs to be integral to the current plan for investment opportunities and must be included within all aspects of the strategy and strategic thinking by the War Zone Advisory Panels and the Nechells Management Company, in order that we are investment ready now with continual investment prospects in all areas – with a significant focus on Nechells being self-sustainable.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, p257

CLOSING STATEMENT

It is a very delicate situation that we are in, exposing local residents to the reality that they live in a community with 53% child poverty. They may be one of the few who are content with their life and circumstances, and sensitivity will be needed to take all local residents on a journey towards a better life. There are many people who do not want to be dependent on others, but they just do not have the resources or confidence to change on their own. Teaching someone to understand poverty and how they can overcome and/or evade the poverty trap will be one of our greatest challenges, but we like a challenge!

Throughout this document you will have seen glimpses of answers, all of which need to be developed and implemented at the same time. Piecemeal projects, focussing on one or two battles, will not win the war on child poverty. Against such a powerful enemy we need a full-on assault, bringing in the big guns for the big wars – front line hand to hand combat as well as stealth assaults. It is complex, it is dangerous, it is challenging, but it is possible. We can eradicate poverty in Nechells, I have no doubt of that, but we need to do it together. The question now is whether you are going to use your influence to be an ally and fight with us and to be part of the solution? We hope that you will join us and help us to provide a way for our poverty-stricken children to finally become free@last.





Registered Charity number: 1101078
Private Limited Company number: 4723576
49 Nechells Park Road, Nechells, Birmingham, B7 5PR
0121 327 5959
info@freetlast.st
www.freetlast.st
www.familyfunzone.co.uk
www.brumting.co.uk

